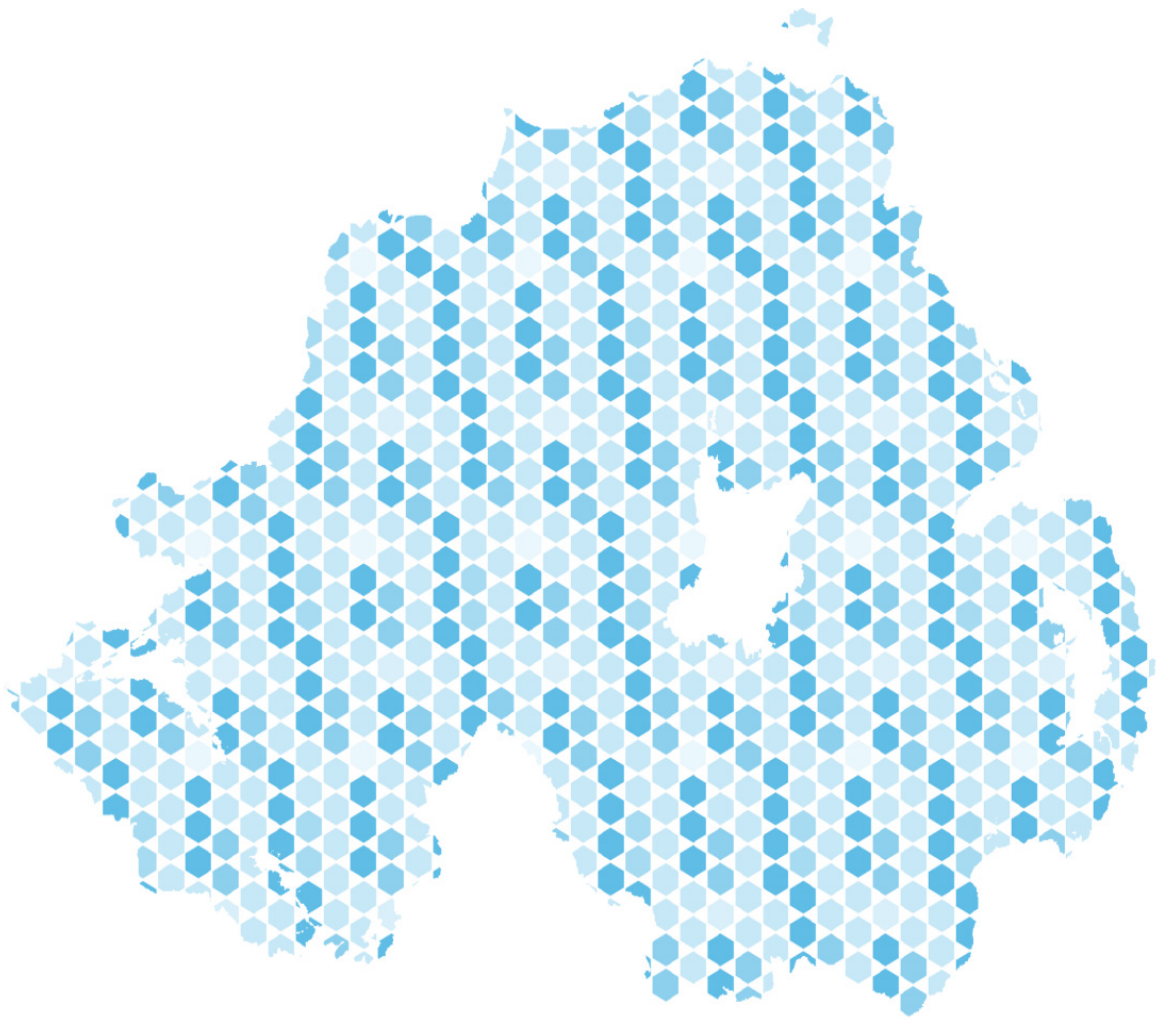


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Hardy Memorial Primary
School and Nursery Unit,
Richhill

Report of an Inspection
in November 2011



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In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Hardy Memorial Primary School and nursery unit are situated in the centre of the village of Richhill, in County Armagh. The children come from the village and the surrounding rural area. The enrolment has decreased over the last four years and currently stands at 382, including 53 children in the nursery unit. Approximately 14% of the children are entitled to free school meals and about 15% have been identified as needing additional support with aspects of their learning, including a very small number of children who have statements of special educational need.

The nursery unit is situated within the school; 26 children attend in the morning and 27 children attend in the afternoon.

1.2 FOCUS

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy;
- the quality of provision for learning; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

In addition, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning, and the school's arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection were evaluated.

1.3 THE VIEWS OF THE PARENTS, TEACHERS, GOVERNORS, SUPPORT STAFF AND CHILDREN

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents, the teaching staff and the support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection, as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and a group of the children from year 6.

Of the 106 questionnaires issued to the parents, 58 (55%) were returned to Inspection Services Branch, including 17 which contained additional written comments. Almost all of the questionnaires expressed high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In their written comments, the parents highlighted the warm and welcoming ethos of the school, the high level of care and support provided by the staff, and the wide range of extra-curricular activities provided for the children.

In the nursery unit 65% of the parents responded to the questionnaires and 12 included additional written comments. Almost all of the responses indicated that the parents regard the nursery highly; they acknowledged the well-settled and happy children and valued the work of the staff in creating a caring and enjoyable environment for the children to learn in.

All of the staff responded to the online questionnaires with a few supplying additional comments. The responses indicated very high levels of satisfaction in relation to all aspects of school life.

An analysis of the questionnaires and the comments made by the parents and the staff were shared with the Principal and the governors.

In discussions held with the governors, they spoke positively about the commitment of the Principal and the staff to meeting the individual needs of the children, the school's close links with the local community, and the opportunities provided for all the children to participate in, and contribute to, a wide range of school activities and events.

The year 6 children talked enthusiastically about the many aspects of school life they enjoyed. They valued the support given by their teachers and their role in the school council. They indicated strongly that they feel happy in school and know what to do if they have any worries about their care and well-being.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school and the nursery unit is very good.

The strengths include: the supportive and inclusive ethos; the very good working relationships at all levels; the attention given to celebrating the children's achievements and promoting their self-esteem and self-confidence; and, the wide range of activities, events and trips which promote well the children's personal and social development. In addition, the children contribute meaningfully to discussions and decisions about aspects of school life that directly affect them through the recently established school council; their opinions and ideas are valued and acted on.

The teachers work hard to meet the pastoral needs of all the children and where appropriate, they make very effective use of external support services to address specific issues and support individual children.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION/SAFEGUARDING

The school has very good comprehensive arrangements for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education (DE). In the nursery unit, the arrangements in place for safeguarding the children are satisfactory; these arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by DE but the following minor areas need to be addressed:

- the staff needs to carry out a daily risk assessment of the outdoor play area; and
- the school needs to provide the parents with more detailed information about the arrangements that are in place for the intimate care of the children.

1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school and the nursery unit give good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. In the nursery unit the children participate in the Boost Better Breaks scheme and enjoy regular opportunities to engage in energetic outdoor play. Throughout the school, the promotion of healthy breaks, the inclusion of health-related topics, and the good range of physical activities promote well the children's understanding of healthy lifestyles.

1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The school has worked hard to develop positive and effective communications with the parents. The nursery unit enjoys very good links with the parents; the parents receive regular newsletters and information about events in the nursery and about the planned learning programme for the children. The children's learning is enriched through purposeful educational visits, for example, to the local post office and garden centre.

The parents are informed about the work of the school through newsletters, curriculum information meetings, the recently launched school website, a texting service and the high quality school magazine. In a few classes, the teachers provide the parents with useful information about the curriculum and how they might support their children's learning. It is appropriate that the school has identified the need to develop this very good practice across the school.

The school has established effective links with the local community to enrich the children's learning experiences, for example, through the use of the recreation centre, local businesses and visitors to the school. The teachers make very effective use of the local environment and the cultural heritage which develops well the children's sense of place and belonging. The children have benefitted from the additional learning resources which have been purchased from the significant funds raised by the active Parent Teacher Association (PTA).

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

The children are highly motivated and demonstrate positive attitudes towards learning. They communicate confidently and effectively with each other, their teachers and visitors. In the foundation stage (FS), the children learn through songs and rhymes and a combination of formal and play-based activities. As they progress through the school, the children develop their personal and social skills well; they work effectively in pairs and groups and show respect for the views and opinions of others. When given the opportunities by the teachers, the children are creative, eager to extend their learning and can take appropriate responsibility for their own work, achieving suitably high standards.

An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 assessment data over the past four years shows that in English and mathematics the school's performance is above the Northern Ireland (NI) average. Compared with schools in the same free school meals category, the children's levels of attainment in English are in line with the average and in mathematics, mostly above the average.

The school's internal records and the performance data demonstrate that by the end of KS2, the majority of children with special educational needs are making good progress in their learning and are achieving in line with their potential.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The overall quality of the provision for English and literacy is good.

The literacy co-ordinator is highly committed to improving further, the quality of the children's learning experiences and attainments. She has identified appropriately the priorities to help develop literacy throughout the school, including a review of planning and the more effective use of the available performance data. The English and literacy programme is appropriately

broad and balanced, ensuring that literacy skills are well integrated to benefit learning across the curriculum. The co-ordinator needs to monitor systematically the implementation of the current action plan in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the actions on improving the provision for the children and raising further the standards they attain.

In all key stages, when carefully planned opportunities are provided, most of the children demonstrate very good talking and listening skills in a range of contexts. They listen to, and consider the contributions of others, and convey their ideas and views in discussions with increasing maturity and fluency. In the best practice observed, the teachers and classroom assistants extend the children's communication through good quality interactions and support them skilfully to structure their ideas and develop their range of vocabulary. In all key stages, good use is made of an appropriate range of drama-based strategies to stimulate the children's interest and develop their creativity.

By the end of KS2, most of the children read at a good or better level or in line with their ability. The children develop their skills systematically as they progress through the school's reading programme. A recently introduced structured spelling programme and agreed teaching approaches are currently being embedded. The children enjoy reading and give well informed opinions about the various texts they are exposed to. Carefully planned reading activities were observed in all key stages; these activities helped the children to extend their understanding and enjoyment of what they were reading. Many of the children in the FS use a good range of strategies confidently to help them read unfamiliar words and in KS1 and KS2, groups of children were observed reading with fluency, expression and understanding. By the end of KS2, the most able readers respond with maturity and interest to more demanding texts and talk knowledgeably and enthusiastically about many aspects of their reading.

The overall quality of the children's writing is good. In the FS, the children experiment with early writing in a variety of contexts. In KS1, this is extended further. However, the teachers in the FS and KS1 need to provide more challenging opportunities to encourage the children to write independently in order to improve further the quality and extent of their writing by the end of KS1. By the end of KS2, the children develop their writing skills further across various contexts and forms and most produce extended writing of a good or better standard. Throughout the school there are examples of writing activities which link well to other aspects of the children's learning and the presentation of the children's work is of a very good standard.

It is appropriate that the school has identified the need to widen the range of teaching strategies used to support the development of the writing process and for the teachers to build a greater shared awareness of how to ensure progression in the children's writing to bring about further improvement.

In all key stages, the children work regularly on a range of ICT activities which complement and support their work in literacy. By the end of KS2 the majority of children attain the standards expected in the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment ICT accreditation scheme.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The quality of provision in mathematics and numeracy is good.

The numeracy co-ordinator provides very good leadership and is highly committed to the ongoing development of the provision for numeracy and mathematics. He has put in place effective systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of the numeracy provision across the school. These systems include reviewing the teachers' planning, scrutinising the quality of work in the children's books and analysing performance data to help inform learning and teaching.

While the school's programme for mathematics is suitably broad and provides the children with a wide range of experiences over the seven years, there is a need for this to be reviewed and developed further, particularly in FS and KS1, in order to ensure more appropriate challenge and progression across each area of the mathematics curriculum.

In most classes, the mathematics lessons incorporate an appropriate range of teaching approaches, practical activities and discussion sessions. In a majority of the lessons observed, a good range of resources including ICT programs were used well to support the learning and teaching. Most of the mathematics lessons include short sessions of mental mathematics in which the children respond well to a variety of interesting and challenging activities. During the inspection, the children worked well in groups, sharing their ideas and reasoning to develop further their mathematical thinking.

In KS2, the children's mathematical learning is developed very effectively, and by year 7 they have gained a broad range of mathematical knowledge and skills. The teachers set the learning in meaningful contexts which are based on the children's experiences and interests. They make effective and skilful use of routines and incidental opportunities to develop successfully the children's numeracy skills, and to link mathematics with other areas of the curriculum. The teachers give the children appropriate time and encouragement to ask questions, communicate their findings and explain the mathematical processes they used.

The highest attaining children demonstrate their knowledge of important mathematical ideas and concepts. By the end of KS1, the children have a good knowledge and understanding of number facts but are less secure in the application of number and their understanding of shape and space. By the end of KS2, most of the children achieve very good standards in mathematics: they are very confident in their mathematical thinking; they can work flexibly with numbers; have a good understanding of data handling; can solve problems; and carry out investigative activities competently.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The teachers have begun to review and develop their medium and short term planning in literacy and numeracy. As a result, the planning focuses more effectively on well-defined learning intentions and this is having a positive impact upon the learning and teaching. The teachers complete useful written evaluations of the extent to which the learning intentions were met.

In the FS, in the most effective practice, the teachers take appropriate account of the children's prior knowledge and plan purposeful learning activities which connect the children's learning across the curriculum and which promote well the development of their literacy and numeracy skills. In addition, the teachers complete detailed evaluations and

observations and use these to identify the children's stages of development and to inform planning for individual children. The teachers in the FS, including the nursery unit need to collaborate more effectively to share this good practice and to implement it more consistently, to ensure that the children make more appropriate and consistent year-on-year progress.

3.2 TEACHING

Most of the teaching observed was good or better, with a significant minority being very good. Throughout the school, the teachers work hard to plan and resource their lessons. In the most effective practice: the lessons were well structured and focused clearly on what the children were going to learn; the teachers built well on the children's prior knowledge and interests; the learning activities were set in real and relevant contexts for the children; and the teachers used effective questioning strategies to challenge the children's thinking and to generate purposeful discussion.

In the less effective practice the lessons were over-directed by the teacher and the activities were not sufficiently demanding or well-paced for all of the children.

Support for the children with special educational needs is provided through a combination of in-class work and withdrawal sessions for literacy and numeracy. Those children who receive support in the withdrawal sessions benefit from effective individual and small group teaching. The quality of the in-class support varies; in the most effective practice, the teachers and classroom assistants work well with the children to provide well-focused support.

The school needs to disseminate the aspects of the most effective practice in order to ensure consistently high-quality teaching and learning experiences for all the children.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

The school is currently developing its approach to the management and use of assessment information. At a whole-school level, the analysis of performance data has enabled the senior management team (SMT) to identify key areas for the development of literacy and numeracy.

A wide range of standardised tests is used to obtain information about individual children's levels of attainment and to identify those children who are underachieving. The impact of the analysis of the data varies across the school; in the best practice, teachers are using the available information to refine their planning and identify specific strategies and activities to address the needs of targeted groups of children. The school has plans to develop their use of assessment data further and the inspection strongly endorses this intention.

The teachers mark the children's written work regularly and provide positive affirmation for the children's achievements. Where this is most effective, the teachers provide comments, prompts and questions which enable the children to improve their own work and to set personal learning targets.

In the nursery unit the parents are kept well informed about their children's progress through two formal progress meetings. They also receive a copy of the statutory transition report. Throughout the school, the parents are kept well informed about their children's work through progress meetings in the first term, a comprehensive written report at the end of the school year and an open-door policy should the parents wish to discuss any aspect of their child's progress.

3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The overall provision for children with special educational needs (SEN) is good.

The school identifies well, and at an early stage, the children who would benefit from additional support with aspects of their learning. The Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) works hard to diagnose the children's learning difficulties and to create, in conjunction with the class teachers, detailed Individual Education Plans (IEP) that meet the children's specific needs. The IEPs are of a good quality, and have clear and measurable targets and helpful strategies to support the children's learning.

The SENCO has introduced a systematic approach to the storing of information on the interventions and the progress made by the children; she now needs to develop the current action plans and the processes for monitoring aspects of the provision in order to evaluate more fully the impact of the SEN support on the children's learning.

The SENCO communicates well with the class teachers and classroom assistants and maintains good links with the parents to keep them updated on their child's progress. Both the SENCO and the teacher in the nursery unit have developed effective links with a wide range of medical and educational support agencies in order to access appropriate guidance and support to meet the needs of individual children.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management is good

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The Principal has been in post for 21 years. He knows the children well and is deeply committed to meeting their educational and pastoral needs. He fosters a strong sense of collegiality and teamwork amongst the staff and has developed and maintained an attractive and well-resourced environment for the children and the staff. He has been successful in establishing and developing links with a range of stakeholders to promote the school and to enrich the learning experiences for all the children. The school is highly regarded by the parents and the local community.

The Principal is supported effectively in this work by a dedicated Vice-principal who provides very good pastoral leadership throughout the school and by the SMT. The Principal and the SMT are supportive of the work of the nursery unit. They have appropriately identified the need to develop further the curricular links between the nursery unit and FS in order to ensure continuity and progression in the children's learning. In doing so, it will also be important for the SMT to develop appropriate procedures to monitor and evaluate the quality of provision within the nursery unit and the standards which the children achieve.

The co-ordinators provide effective curricular leadership in taking forward the school improvement actions. They demonstrate a commitment to ongoing improvement and they recognise, correctly, the need to develop a more systematic and rigorous approach to self-evaluation.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The school meets the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005 and sets out a range of targets for the medium and longer term. These need to be reduced and prioritised, taking account of the inspection findings, for the next cycle of development planning. In addition, the action plans need to be focused more sharply on the specific teaching strategies needed to help bring about further improvement in the children's learning experiences, and, on how the outcomes for the children will be evaluated.

4.3 ACCOMMODATION

The school building has been upgraded and extended over time and effective use is made of all the space available for learning. All staff work hard to provide an appealing and child-friendly environment, celebrating the children's work and achievements through attractive displays in the classrooms and shared areas. The school is maintained to a very high standard.

4.3 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The governors are well-informed about the work of the school and they support the Principal and the staff in the implementation of the SDP. They contribute well to the life and work of the school.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the confident and articulate children who participate well in and enjoy their learning;
- the very good quality of the pastoral care provision;
- the quality of the teaching observed, most of which was good or better;
- the good standards achieved by the children in literacy and the very good standards achieved by most of the children in numeracy by the end of KS2;
- the good leadership provided by the Principal and the support provided by the Vice-principal, SMT and the governors; and
- the opportunities provided for the children to extend their learning through a wide range of non-formal and extra-curricular enrichment activities;

5.2 The area for improvement is the need to:

- disseminate the very good practice identified to help improve further the quality of the provision for all the children, and the standards attained by the children at the end of KS1.

5.3 In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified an area for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) will monitor the school's progress on the areas for improvement.

6. THE NURSERY UNIT

6.1 Key findings of the inspection:

- there is a welcoming, inclusive ethos within the nursery unit; the warm, respectful atmosphere and the adults' appropriate use of praise develop the children's confidence and self esteem. The children in both the morning and afternoon sessions are well settled; they demonstrate enthusiasm and enjoyment in their learning and most are developing good sharing and turn-taking skills;
- there is a good balance between free play and adult-directed activities. The children have adapted well to their new environment; they are familiar with the playroom routines are independent in their choice of resources and in their personal care;
- there are satisfactory to good opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The development of the children's language and of their understanding of the world around them is a particular strength of the provision;
- the adult interactions with the children are consistently good: the adults engage appropriately in the play activities; they listen to the children's suggestions and use effective questioning to build on their ideas and interests. Where appropriate, they provide guidance to help the children develop their co-ordination and gross motor skills, for example in using the outdoor play equipment;
- the planning identifies clearly the planned learning outcomes for the children and is amended appropriately in response to the children's ideas, suggestions and spontaneous play. The staff completes detailed evaluations of the children's responses to the learning activities and use these effectively to identify and provide for their individual needs;
- the staff provides well for children who require additional support with aspects of their development. They have developed effective links with a wide range of medical and educational support agencies in order to access appropriate guidance and support to meet the needs of individual children. The parents are consulted about their children's individual learning programmes and are kept well informed about their progress through review meetings, telephone reports or through the use of a daily diary; and
- the teacher-in-charge is enthusiastic and committed to the continued development of the nursery unit to meet the needs of all of the children. She leads the staff effectively in the day to day work in the nursery unit and is a good role model in her work with the children. The staff works well together as a team; they engage in ongoing reflection and review of the planned learning activities and assessment of the children's needs.

6.2 An area for improvement is the need to:

- review the lay-out of the playroom and some aspects of the daily routines in order to promote further the development of the children's independence and their sense of responsibility for the learning environment.

6.3 In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the nursery unit is good. The nursery unit has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified an area for improvement which the nursery unit has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Inspectorate will monitor the nursery unit's progress on the area for improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON HARDY MEMORIAL PRIMARY SCHOOL NURSERY UNIT

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending full-time	0	0
Attending part-time	26	27
Under 3 years of age*	0	0
With statement of SEN**	0	2
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	1	1
At CoP stages 3 or 4***	0	0
At CoP stages 1 or 2***	0	0
With English as an additional language	0	3

* On 1 July.

** Special Educational Needs.

*** The stages refer to those set out in the Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs.

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	1
Average attendance for the previous year.	94.2%

2. Duration of Sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
N/A	2½ hours	2½ hours

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-Time	Part-Time
Teachers	1	0
Nursery Assistants (qualified)	1	0
Nursery Assistants (non-qualified)	0	1

Number of: ****	
Students	0
Trainees	1

**** Total placements since September of current year

4. Parental Questionnaires (to be completed by Inspection Services Branch)

Number issued	25
Percentage returned	44%
Number of written comments	3

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