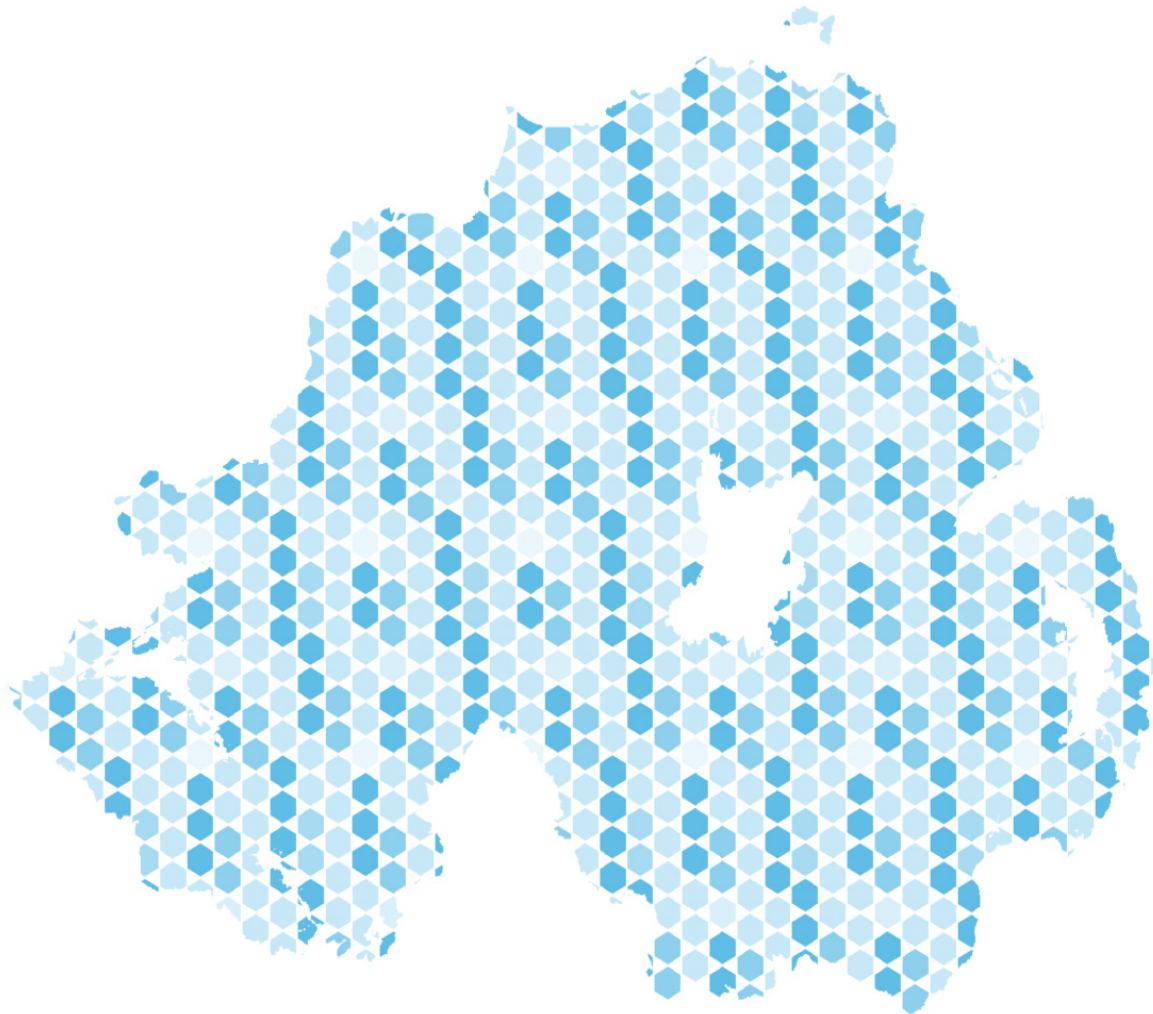


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Hart Memorial Primary School
and Nursery Unit, Portadown

Report of an Inspection
in May 2010

CONTENTS

Section		Page
	STATISTICAL INFORMATION	
1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS	3
3.	THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING	5
4.	LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	7
5.	CONCLUSION	8
6.	THE NURSERY UNIT	9
	STATISTICAL INFORMATION (NURSERY UNIT)	

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

Hart Memorial Primary School is a controlled school which is situated on Charles Street, in Portadown. The enrolment has fluctuated slightly over the past five years and currently stands at 244; in addition, 52 children are enrolled on a part-time basis in the nursery unit (NU). Almost all of the children in the primary school come from the immediate area; the children in the NU come from the immediate and surrounding areas. At the time of the inspection 38% of the children were entitled to free school meals and 28% of the children in the primary school and nursery unit were identified as requiring help with aspects of their learning. There are 12 children who have English as an additional language. A report on the provision in the nursery unit is included.

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 teachers and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection, as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and groups of children from years 6 and 7.

One hundred and twenty-five questionnaires were issued to parents in the primary school; 54 (43%) were returned to Inspection Services Branch (ISB), including 28 which contained an additional written comment. Most of the responses from the questionnaires indicated a high level of satisfaction with the provision in the school. In particular, the parents valued the caring, family ethos, the regular information they received about events within the school and the dedicated and hard-working Principal, teachers and non-teaching staff. The very small number of concerns raised has been discussed with the governors and the Principal.

Fourteen of the 16 teachers and 19 support staff completed the questionnaire. Most of their responses were supportive of the Principal and of the work of the school.

In the NU, 22 (42%) of the 52 questionnaires issued to the parents were returned to ISB and eleven contained an additional written comment. Almost all of the responses indicated a high level of satisfaction with the provision in the NU and acknowledged, in particular, the calm, well-organised learning environment, the regular information provided about their child's progress and development and the caring, helpful staff.

The governors expressed strong appreciation of the ongoing work of the whole staff in creating a bright, well-maintained learning environment for the children. In particular, they paid tribute to the Principal for her commitment and vision for the continued development of the school. They also raised concerns about the fabric of the building and the funding to support an additional full-time nursery class.

In discussions held with the year 6 and 7 children, they spoke enthusiastically about the support they receive from their teachers and about the wide range of after-school activities available to them. They also indicated that they feel safe in school and know who to speak to if they have any concerns.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school and nursery unit is outstanding. Among the strengths are the very good working relationships at all levels, the wide range of formal and extra-curricular activities provided to support the children's personal, social and emotional development, the good development of the children's understanding of rights and responsibilities and the effective links established with a wide range of external support agencies. The school celebrates the achievements of the children and the staff: the children in the primary school have good opportunities to contribute to decision making about the life of the school through the school council.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school and the nursery unit have very good, comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children; these arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education (DE).

1.6 HEALTHY EATING and PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school and nursery unit give very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. This is evidenced in the NU through the opportunities for the children to grow, care for and handle a range of fruit and vegetables and through regular energetic play. In the school, the gardening club and wide range of after-school sporting clubs encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles. The school also hosts a Slimming World programme for the parents and members of the community.

1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The school and NU have developed strong links with the parents. They are encouraged to become involved in many aspects of school life, for example through participation in the school's recently re-established Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and their assistance with school trips. The PTA assists the school with fund raising and the organisation of social events for the children and their families and has made a significant contribution to the establishment of the school's museum. The parents are kept well informed about important dates, events and achievements through the school prospectus, the school's 'From the Hart' newsletter and the school website.

The school has worked successfully to maintain and develop strong links with the local and wider community; they are involved in a range of programmes with agencies such as, the local Neighbourhood Renewal, the Blossom Sure Start and the Business in the Community. They also benefit from participation in the Schools Community Relations programme and the British Council's Comenius Primary Languages Programme.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

The children are friendly, courteous and very well-behaved; they settle quickly to their work, demonstrating good organisational skills and levels of independence; they co-operate respectfully with their teachers and, when given the opportunity, collaborate well in pairs and small groups to solve problems and carry out investigative learning activities. In the foundation stage (FS) and in the majority of the key stage (KS) 1 classes, they engage enthusiastically in their learning and are keen to talk about what they are doing. The school places an important emphasis on the development of the children's thinking skills and personal capabilities and encourages them to reflect on the skills they are acquiring and those which they need to employ in particular learning contexts.

In the NU, the quality of the provision for learning is outstanding. It will be important for the senior management team (SMT) to ensure that this outstanding provision for early learning is appropriately disseminated to teachers in the school, particularly in FS, in order to build more effectively on the children's experiences and attainments on entry to year 1.

The children in FS learn through a combination of well-planned play and formal activities; the learning activities are often planned using a thematic approach and the children's responses to the activities are recorded systematically following the teachers' observations. The teachers need to ensure that there is an appropriate link made between their observations, assessment and planning in order to identify clearly the progression in learning for individual children.

An analysis of the KS2 assessment data over the past four years shows that in English, the school's performance is consistently above the Northern Ireland (NI) average and, in mathematics, it is in line with or above the NI average. Compared with schools in the same free school meals category, the levels of attainment in English and mathematics are consistently above the average.

Whilst the standards achieved by the children at the end of KS2 are good, the school has identified a significant number of the children who are under-achieving; they have also, appropriately, identified the need to increase the numbers of children attaining higher levels in both literacy and numeracy.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

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

The literacy co-ordinator has been in post for ten years. She has been pro-active in introducing a whole-school phonics programme and developing the use of ICT to support literacy in a range of contexts, notably in digital story-telling. Over the last two years she has made a good start in establishing a cycle for monitoring the teaching and planning for literacy as part of the school's self-evaluation process. She has appropriately identified the need to develop the children's oral skills, has prioritised it in the literacy action plan and has accessed training in order to implement the Talk to Write programme as a whole-school initiative.

In most of the lessons observed, the children were given good opportunities to develop their thinking skills and personal capabilities. In the majority of the lessons observed talking and listening were developed well through effective questioning and paired or group work. In the less effective practice the children were not encouraged to develop their responses fully. There is a need for the teachers to agree an oral language programme in order to ensure continuity and progression in the children's learning and to raise their levels of attainment in this important aspect of literacy.

In the FS and KS1 the children's phonological awareness is developed effectively through a structured reading scheme and phonics programme. Enjoyment of reading is encouraged through timetabled silent reading sessions, library visits and the provision of well-stocked class libraries. The children from year 4 and year 7 who were observed reading, did so fluently, accurately and with understanding and were able to talk enthusiastically about their favourite authors and books. By the end of KS2 the reading standards for the majority of the children are good; they are reading at a level corresponding to, or above, their chronological age.

The literacy co-ordinator and the special needs co-ordinator (SENCO) liaise well; they identify those children who have additional needs in literacy and ensure that they are given very good support through a range of interventions such as the Reading Partnership programme. There are very good school-based resources, as well as a wide range of attractive, appropriately banded and levelled texts which are used effectively to provide continuity in the children's reading.

In the FS, the children are encouraged to become independent writers through play and a planned programme of structured activities. The standard of work in the children's books is mostly of a very good quality and demonstrates that the children's writing skills are developing well. There is evidence of good extended writing, including creative tasks, in the majority of the classes in KS1. In KS2 the standard of writing is also good; in the majority of the classes, however, there is an emphasis on shorter responses and secretarial accuracy. In order to develop a more effective writing culture within the school, the children in KS 2, in particular, need to have more opportunities to write for a wider range of purposes and audiences.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The overall quality of provision in mathematics is good.

The co-ordinator, who is also the Vice-principal, has been in post for two years. He has raised the profile of mathematics in the school through, for example, the school's participation in Maths Week and the attractive, interactive displays of the children's work. Through the analysis of the school's data, he has identified appropriate areas for whole-school development, such as processes and data handling and has identified groups of children who require targeted support in their learning. He has also led workshops to develop the use of ICT to support learning and teaching in mathematics. He has appropriately identified the need for improved planning for progression in the children's learning, for the further development of the monitoring and evaluation procedures and for more rigorous planning to guide the future development of mathematics.

Most of the lessons observed during the inspection incorporated a mental mathematics activity. In a majority of these lessons the pace was good and the activities engaged, challenged and motivated the children; in the best mental mathematics sessions observed, the teachers used effective questioning to challenge and extend the children's reasoning and provided opportunities for the children to articulate their thinking processes.

During discussions with a group of children from year 4, they spoke with confidence about their learning experiences and demonstrated an understanding of all areas of the numeracy programme. In similar discussions with a group of year 7 children, they demonstrated sound understanding of important mathematical concepts, such as metric measures, but were less flexible in their working with number.

The teachers provide the children with a wide range of experiences in number, shape and space, measures and data-handling; this includes the effective use of practical equipment and regular opportunities for work in pairs and small groups. Particular strengths of the provision are the very good opportunities for the children to apply their mathematical knowledge and understanding in meaningful contexts across the curriculum and for them to write about their mathematical learning. In the best practice, the majority of the lessons observed, the teachers provide opportunities for the children to engage in problem-solving and investigative activities, both incidentally and through their planned programme. This very good practice needs to be applied more consistently across the school. In the less effective practice, the teachers' expectations of what the children could attain were too low and the slow pace of the lessons undermined effective learning.

There is a useful whole-school programme for mathematics; the school has appropriately identified the need to review the programme and to ensure that it is implemented more consistently by all of the teachers to guide the development of their medium and short-term planning and to ensure greater continuity and progression in the children's learning.

The teachers make effective use of a range of ICT, including interactive whiteboards and programmable devices to support learning and teaching in mathematics.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The teachers plan their work conscientiously. In the best practice, they translate the school's overall planning effectively into their medium- and short-term plans, ensuring progression and continuity in the children's learning. They take explicit account of their previous evaluations of the children's learning and identify clearly how they plan to meet the range of abilities within the class. This good practice needs to be developed and implemented more consistently throughout the school.

3.2 TEACHING

The teachers are dedicated and hard working; they demonstrate a high level of professionalism and a willingness to adapt to new teaching approaches.

During the inspection, the quality of the teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding. It was good or better in almost all instances.

In the best practice observed, the teachers shared the learning intentions with the children; they related the learning activities to everyday experiences and had high expectations of what the children could achieve. In these lessons, the children were actively engaged in the learning process, they were prompted to use self-help strategies and they were given time and encouragement to articulate their thinking. This good practice needs to be disseminated and further developed throughout the school. In the less effective lessons, there was over-direction by the teacher, the learning activities were insufficiently matched to the varied needs and abilities of the children and there were missed opportunities to build on the children's ideas.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

The teachers mark the children's written work regularly. In the majority of the classes the marking is of a supportive nature. In the best practice, the teachers are beginning to advise the children, orally or in writing, on how to improve the quality of their work; in a small number of the classes the teachers are encouraging the children to reflect purposefully on their own learning and to engage in constructive peer assessment. This good practice needs to be shared, further developed and applied more consistently throughout the school.

The school carries out a range of standardised testing in English and mathematics. The outcomes from these tests are used well to track individual progress, to make provision for those children who are experiencing difficulties with aspects of their learning and to identify those children who would benefit from participation in one of the school's short-term support programmes. The school is also beginning to use the information to identify areas for whole-school development. This work needs to be further developed to include setting targets for improvement for individuals and groups of children in order to raise further the levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy. The school has recently begun to use an assessment manager computer system to generate information and reports on individual children. It will be important to develop the use of this system further in order to streamline recording and to facilitate the tracking of the children's progress at individual, class and whole-school levels.

The parents in the school and NU are kept informed of their children's progress through an annual interview, informal meetings and an annual written report at the end of the academic year.

3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The quality and effectiveness of the provision for children with special educational needs (SEN) is good. The provision for SEN is given a high priority within the school and NU. Twenty-eight per cent of the children have been identified by the school as being in need of additional learning support; almost one quarter of these children have also been identified as having social, emotional and behavioural needs.

The SENCO has been in post for twelve years; she maintains effectively an overview of the policy and provision for SEN and has recently joined the SMT. The school has acknowledged the need to review the SEN policy, to evaluate more rigorously the action planning process for SEN and to manage more systematically the evidence of the children's progress and development.

The school recognises the importance of early identification of the children's needs and uses the teachers' knowledge and experience, together with a wide range of standardised tests, to identify early those children requiring additional support. In the school, appropriate intervention is planned to support the children in both literacy and numeracy. This support is provided either through in-class assistance from the class teacher or through withdrawal sessions provided by the learning support staff who have been trained in the Reading Partnership, Hi-Five and Catch-Up Maths programmes. The school's records indicate that these withdrawal sessions are effective in raising the children's levels of attainment in both literacy and numeracy.

The class teachers take responsibility for the implementation of individual education plans (IEPs). In the best practice, the IEPs outline concise targets to address specific needs. The school has appropriately recognised the need to review the content of all the IEPs and to disseminate and implement more consistently the best practice in target-setting.

Good communication is maintained with the parents and there are good links to support the transition of those children with SEN from the nursery to the primary school, and from the primary to post-primary schools, to which they transfer.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The Principal has been in post for four years. She provides very good leadership in the management and development of the school. She is enthusiastic, energetic and totally committed to making the best possible provision for the children and their families. She provides clear direction, sets high standards for all aspects of the school's provision and motivates and actively supports all members of the school community in striving to meet those standards.

She is very supportive of the work of the NU which she values as an integral and important part of the school.

She is ably supported by the hard-working Vice-principal and the senior management team (SMT). The membership of the SMT has recently, and appropriately, been extended to include the SENCO; it would now be timely for the team to undertake appropriate senior management training in order to further assist them to carry out their role in the continued development of the school.

Within the past year an appropriate emphasis has been placed on developing the role of co-ordinators within the school to enable them to monitor and evaluate effectively the quality of provision within their area of responsibility, to identify priorities and to set targets for future development.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

There is a well established culture for self-evaluation within the school. The Principal has carried out extensive consultation with the parents, teachers, support staff and the children. The outcomes from these consultations, together with information gained from the analysis of the school's internal data, have been used effectively to inform planning for the school's development in areas such as pastoral care and the development of the role of the co-ordinators and classroom assistants. The school management team has identified the need to develop further the monitoring procedures within the school in order to evaluate strategically the quality of the learning and teaching and to more fully inform the school development planning process.

The nursery unit has been included in the school's development plan; an associated action plan has been drawn-up which identifies relevant targets for the ongoing development of the work of the nursery unit

The school development plan (SDP) is compliant with the Department of Education School Development Plan Regulations/Schedule 2005/19.

4.3 ACCOMMODATION

The school building is approximately 75 years old and presents the natural difficulties associated with a building of that era. However, the teaching and support staff have worked hard to create and maintain a bright, stimulating indoor and outdoor learning environment and have made optimum use of all available accommodation. The standards of caretaking and cleaning are excellent.

4.4 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The school is very well resourced to support learning and teaching. The resources are well maintained, easily accessible and fit for purpose.

The governors are highly supportive of the Principal and of the work of the school. They are kept well informed of developments within the school and are keenly aware of the challenges which the school currently faces, particularly in relation to accommodation and financial management.

5. CONCLUSION

The strengths of the school include:

- the friendly, courteous, and well-behaved children;
- the outstanding pastoral care provision;
- the good or better quality of the teaching in most of the lessons observed and the very effective contribution made by the support staff to the learning experiences and outcomes for the children with additional needs;
- the good standards of literacy and numeracy achieved by the children by the end of KS2;
- the outstanding quality of provision in the nursery unit; and
- the very good leadership shown by the Principal and the hard working Vice-principal, teachers and support staff.

An area for improvement is:

- the need to evaluate more effectively the quality of teaching for its impact on the children's learning in order to promote improvement and to raise further the children's levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy.

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 will monitor the school's progress in the area for improvement.

6. THE NURSERY UNIT

6.1 The main strengths within the nursery unit's educational and pastoral provision are as follows:

- the nursery unit has a very positive ethos based on excellent relationships at all levels. The staff create a calm, caring and supportive atmosphere; the children are motivated and show good concentration and co-operation in their chosen activities. The very attractive and stimulating environment both indoors and outdoors arouses the children's curiosity and results in purposeful, productive and enjoyable learning experiences;
- the well-planned programme is broad and balanced and offers excellent opportunities for learning in all the areas of the pre-school curriculum. Many of the children use appropriate mathematical language as they engage in the wide range of activities; they show interest in books and can retell their favourite stories. The children's art work is of a high standard, it shows good attention to detail. There is evidence that all of the children are making good progress in their learning;
- there are excellent links and communication with the parents and appropriate outside agencies;
- the high quality interaction between the staff and the children, promotes settled and productive play. They encourage the children to observe, to think, and to make choices; the children's efforts are valued and they are given much encouragement and praise;
- there is excellent provision for children who require additional support with aspects of their learning; the children are fully integrated into all aspects of the nursery programme and the staff encourage them to be as independent as possible. There is effective liaison with the parents and other professionals; the children demonstrate good progress in their learning; and
- the teacher-in charge has a high level of professional competence and exerts a significant, beneficial influence over all aspects of the nursery unit's work. She is a good role model through the quality of her work with the children and sets high standards for herself and others. There is excellent co-operation among the hard-working and dedicated staff team who work together effectively in the best interests of the children.

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this nursery unit is outstanding; the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. The nursery unit has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON HART 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	26
Under 3 years of age*	0	0
With statement of SEN**	0	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4***	2	2
At CoP stages 1 or 2***	3	3
With English as an additional language	0	1

* 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.	6%
Average attendance for the previous year.	87.6%

2. Duration of Sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
-	2 ½ hours	2 ½ hours

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-Time	Part-Time
Teachers	0	2
Nursery Assistants	0	0
Qualified Nursery Assistants	1	0

Number of: ****	
Students	3
Trainees	1

**** Total placements since September of current year

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

Number issued	52
Percentage returned	42%
Number of written comments	11

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