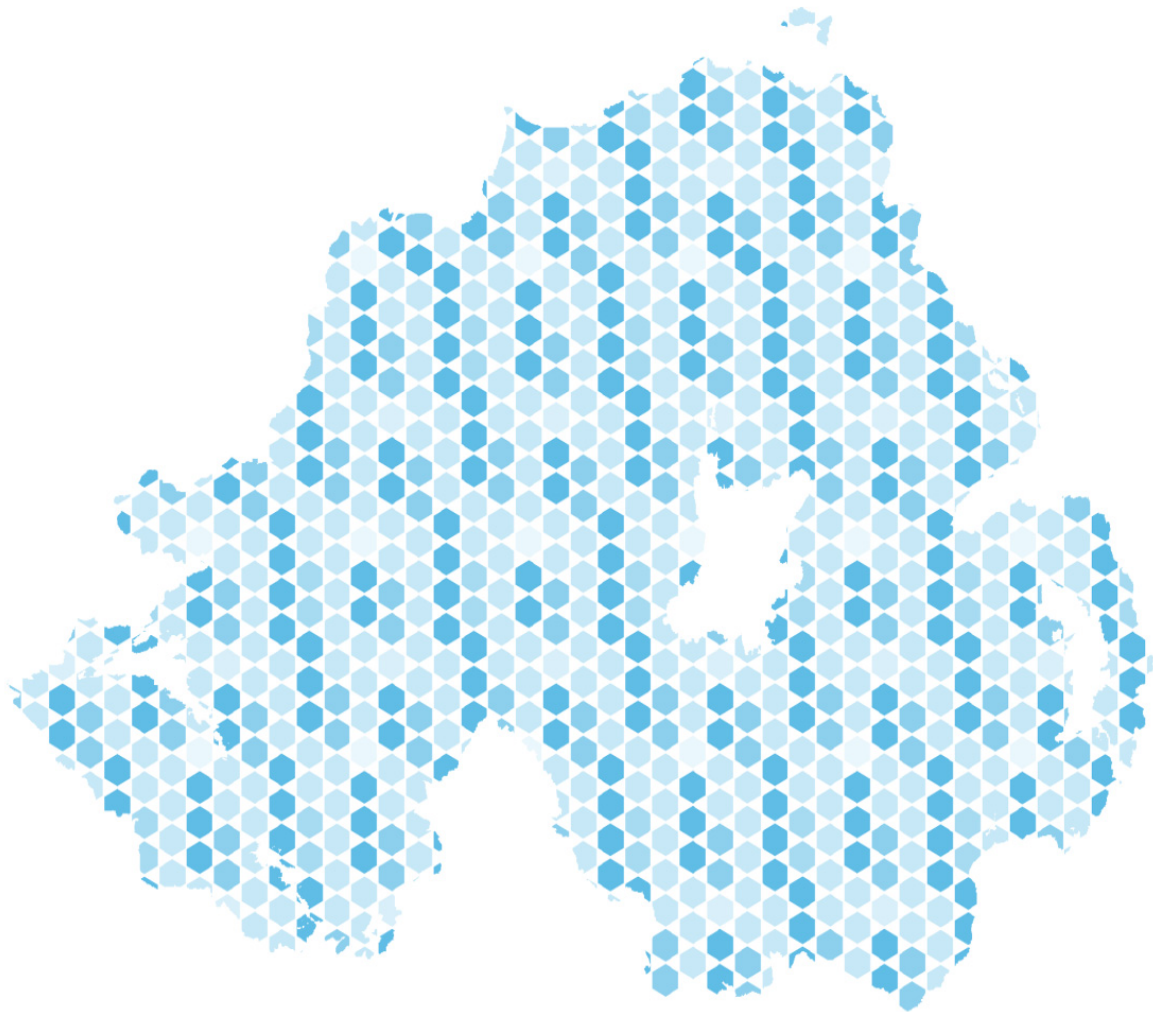


# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Mossgrove Primary School and  
Nursery Unit, Newtownabbey

Report of an Inspection  
in September 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

## BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Mossgrove Primary Newtownabbey** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 26/09/11**  
 ii. **School Reference Number: 301-3323** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Year 1 Intake	28	23	28	27	29
<b>Enrolments</b>					
Primary	207	180	183	185	185
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Unit	52	52	52	52	52
Special Unit	0	0	0	0	0
Irish Medium Unit	0	0	0	0	0

The enrolment for the current year is the figure on the day of notification of inspection. For previous years it is the figure in the annual return to the Department of Education.

The calculations at C and D should be based on the total of the primary and reception enrolments only.

- C. Average Attendance for the Previous School Year  
 (expressed as a percentage): 94.8% **NI Avg Att: 94.7%**

Average Attendance for those children on the  
 Special Educational Needs Register: 92.3%

Primary & Reception	Nursery Unit	Special Unit	Irish Medium Unit
------------------------	-----------------	-----------------	----------------------

- D. i. Number of Teachers  
 (including the principal and part-time teachers): 10.04 1 0 0  
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)

- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 18.43 NI PTR: 20.2

- iii. Average Class Size: 26.43

- iv. Class Size (Range): 23 to 29

- v. Ancillary Support:  
 Number of Hours **Per Week**:
- |   |    |
|---|----|
| i. Clerical support:  | 15 |
| ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support:           | 35 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 15 |

- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 1%

- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 17%

- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0

- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 12%

- |   |                         |                              |                     |
|---|-------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|
| x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2010/11 who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics, and Irish (in Irish-medium schools): | <b>English</b><br>62.5% | <b>Mathematics</b><br>66.67% | <b>Irish</b><br>N/A |
|---|-------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Mossgrove Primary School is situated in the town of Glengormley, County Antrim. The enrolment in the school has remained steady over the last four years and currently stands at 184; in addition, there are 52 children in the nursery unit. Most of the children come from the surrounding area. At the time of the inspection 12% of the children were entitled to free school meals (FSM) and 17% of the children were identified as needing additional support with aspects of their learning.

### 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 and the teaching and support staff to complete confidential questionnaires prior to the inspection, as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and a group of children from year 6.

One hundred and fifty questionnaires were issued to the parents of children in the primary school; approximately 23% were returned to Inspection Services Branch (ISB) and 21 contained additional written comments. Thirty-five questionnaires were issued to the parents of children in the nursery unit; approximately 23% were returned to ISB including a small number which contained additional written comments.

The responses from the parents indicated a high level of satisfaction with the educational and pastoral provision of the school. In particular, the parents acknowledged the well-organised and caring atmosphere within the school and the strong sense of community which permeates all aspects of school life. A small number of parents expressed concerns in relation to meeting their children's individual needs; these concerns have been discussed with the governors and with the Principal. The responses from the parents of children in the nursery unit were wholly positive.

A majority of the teachers and a small number of the support staff completed the confidential online questionnaire; one additional written comment was submitted by a member of the teaching staff. Nearly all of the responses were very positive and highlighted the support of the staff for the work and life of the school. The few issues raised by the support staff through the questionnaire have been discussed with the governors and with the Principal.

The children in year 6 talked very openly, positively and with great enthusiasm about their experiences in the school. They value the help and support of their teachers and enjoy the range of after-school activities. They indicated that they know what to do and who to turn to if they have any concerns regarding their work or their safety and well-being.

The governors expressed their support for the work of the school and nursery unit; in particular, they highlighted the work of the principal, the high staff morale and the family-orientated atmosphere within the school.

#### 1.4 PASTORAL CARE

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

Among the strengths are the welcoming, inclusive and supportive ethos throughout the school and nursery unit, and the effective strategies used to promote positive behaviour. The school has started the process of developing a school council to involve the children more fully in the process of making decisions which directly affect them.

#### 1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

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

#### 1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school and nursery unit give good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity through, for example, the growing of vegetables in the nursery garden, the promotion of healthy breaks and the emphasis given to healthy lifestyles in the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding programme.

#### 1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The school and nursery unit enjoy very good links with the parents and the local community.

The parents receive regular newsletters and information about events in the school and nursery unit, and the school website contains a useful message board and photographic records of recent activities for each class.

The school has developed very effective links with local schools through for example, sports, music, drama and dance. In addition, effective curricular links have been established with Glengormley High School, a specialist school for ICT, and with the Pushkin Trust. Good links with local businesses and the community and involvement in schemes such as the Young Enterprise programme extend the children's understanding of the wider world. The school makes excellent use of the expertise of statutory organisations and external agencies to enhance the children's learning experiences.

## 2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

### 2.1 LEARNING

The majority of the children demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and high levels of interest in their work. They settle quickly and work well in pairs and small groups, taking turns and encouraging and supporting one another in their learning. Across the school, the Classroom Assistants give effective support to the children.

At foundation stage (FS), the children learn through a range of songs, rhymes and activity-based experiences which support the development of early literacy and mathematical language and concepts. They use equipment independently, discuss their learning, and a few collaborate on shared tasks; most are able to sustain appropriate periods of concentrated play.

Throughout the school, the children use a range of ICT applications and their ICT skills are good.

The majority of children with special educational needs make good progress. Early intervention enables them to become more independent and confident as they progress through key stage (KS) 1. By the end of KS2 they demonstrate good levels of progress, show increasing self confidence and are secure and happy in their classes.

An analysis of the KS2 assessment data over the past four years shows a considerable fluctuation in the standards attained by the children in literacy and numeracy. In three of the four years the school's performance in English was above the NI average. Compared with schools in the same FSM category, the levels of attainment in English were above that of similar schools in two out of the four years.

During the same four year period, the school's performance in mathematics was below the Northern Ireland (NI) average in two out of the four years. Compared with schools in the same FSM category, the levels of attainment in mathematics were below those of similar schools in three out of four years.

The senior management team (SMT) has prioritised the need to improve further the standards in literacy and numeracy attained by the children and has also, appropriately, identified the need to develop further the statutory assessment processes within the school.

## 2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The overall quality of provision in English and literacy is good.

The co-ordinator has recently taken on responsibility for leading the development of literacy across the school. Under her guidance, an audit of the current provision has been undertaken; this has appropriately identified the need to raise the standards that the children attain and to review the whole-school programme for writing to ensure consistent progression in the development of the children's skills. This work now needs to focus clearly on the actions that will bring about the required improvements.

When given the opportunity, the children demonstrate good skills in talking and listening. In KS2, the effective questioning by the teachers and the challenging paired and group activities provide the children with opportunities to develop extended oral responses.

The children in FS are provided with a broad range of reading activities including those presented through play and through shared reading with the teacher. Reading is developed appropriately in the FS and KS1 through a balanced programme of phonics, shared and guided reading experiences and the use of a range of commercial reading schemes which have been organised to provide a systematic approach to the development of reading skills. As the children progress through the school, their reading skills are developed further as they access a variety of reading materials, including fiction and reference books, both in the school library and in the individual classrooms. Reading is promoted through events such as the book fairs and Extreme Reading competition. By the end of Year 7, most of the children read with fluency and with confidence.

The standard of the children's written work is good. In the FS, the children become familiar with different forms of print and experiment with informal mark making. Their letter formation, word building skills and knowledge of the basic conventions, such as simple sentence structure, are developed through shared writing activities. In KS1 and KS2, the children develop their writing through the very good opportunities they are given to write for a range of audiences and purposes, particularly through thematic work linked to the World Around Us.

### 2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The overall quality of provision in mathematics and numeracy is satisfactory.

The co-ordinator has recently taken on responsibility for leading the development of mathematics throughout the school. She has led the staff in the completion of an audit of the current programme for number and has, appropriately, identified the need to review the programme in order to ensure more consistent progression in the children's learning experiences. It will also be important for the staff to review the whole programme for mathematics in order to ensure that there is sufficient progression in the development of key concepts, skills and language across each area of the mathematics curriculum and that each area is revisited regularly within each year group.

The numeracy action plan outlines broadly the planned areas for development during the current year. It will be important to review the plan in light of the inspection findings and to focus it specifically on the actions to bring about improvement in the standards the children achieve.

In the most effective practice observed during the inspection, the teachers made effective use of routines and incidental opportunities to integrate mathematics naturally into the children's learning; they set the planned learning and problem solving within meaningful contexts for the children and used effective questioning to extend the children's understanding. In these lessons, the teachers focused appropriately on the quality of the children's mathematical responses and turned these skilfully into opportunities for further learning. In the less effective practice, there was over-direction by the teacher and there was insufficient emphasis on the development and use of accurate mathematical language.

Most of the lessons observed included a mental mathematics activity. In the most effective practice these activities were well paced, appropriately challenging and provided the opportunity to consolidate the children's understanding of key concepts. In the less effective practice, they focused on a narrow range of strategies and were too long.

In observation of the children at work and in discussion with groups of children from years 5 and 7, a small number demonstrated flexibility in their thinking and applied a range of strategies in completing mental calculations. However, a majority of the children lacked confidence and accuracy when carrying out mental calculations preferring to adopt pencil and paper methods; they did not apply the strategies taught and were insecure in their understanding of concepts such as time, area, perimeter and aspects of capacity.

The school has identified a significant number of children, across the ability range, who are not achieving the standard in mathematics of which they are capable. The school has begun to carry out further diagnostic screening for these children in order to identify gaps in their learning and to provide an appropriate programme of support for them.



By the end of KS 2 a majority of the children achieve satisfactory standards in mathematics. The teachers make effective use of ICT resources, including the interactive whiteboard to support learning and teaching in literacy and numeracy.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING**

#### **3.1 PLANNING**

The school has appropriately identified the need to adopt a more consistent approach to whole-school planning. The teachers have worked hard to develop their short-term planning and in particular, thematic planning has been developed well to connect the children's learning across the curriculum. In the best practice, the teachers complete comprehensive evaluations which inform and guide their subsequent planning. The teachers now need to review the whole school planning in order to ensure that there is coherence and consistent progression in the learning experiences for all of the children across the key stages.

#### **3.2 TEACHING**

During the inspection, the quality of the teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to very good; in most of the lessons observed, it was either good or very good. In the remaining 20% of lessons observed, there was a need for improvement in the quality of teaching. In the most effective practice, the teachers were creative in their choice of learning activities; opportunities to develop the children's thinking skills and personal capabilities were well integrated into the lessons, and effective classroom management strategies engaged the children well in the learning. In the less effective practice, the teachers did not take adequate account of the children's previous learning experiences; there was an over-reliance on worksheets and insufficient pace and challenge.

#### **3.3 ASSESSMENT**

The teachers mark the children's written work regularly. In nearly all instances, they provide constructive feedback to the children, orally or in writing, on how the children can improve the quality of their work. In most of the classes, the teachers also make effective use of a range of strategies to encourage the children to reflect on their own learning and on their levels of understanding.

In the FS, observations are used to identify the children's stages of development and to inform planning for individual children, particularly in relation to their personal development. It will be important to build upon this good work in order to ensure consistency and to meet the needs of all of the children across the curriculum. It will also be important for the teachers to take more account of the children's pre-school experiences and stage of development.

The school uses a range of standardised testing to obtain information about individual children's levels of attainment, to identify those children who are underachieving and those requiring further diagnosis of their learning needs. The SMT has, appropriately, highlighted the need to carry out a more rigorous analysis of the outcomes from the testing and to use the information more strategically to identify key areas for whole-school development.

The parents are kept well informed about their children's progress, strengths and areas for support through progress meetings in the first and second term and a comprehensive written report at the end of the school year.

### 3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The overall quality of the provision for children identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning is good.

The teachers use the detailed information provided by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) to guide their classroom practice. They display a strong commitment to including every child in the lessons at a level appropriate to their individual need. Those children in withdrawal learning support receive effective individual or small group teaching based on sound knowledge of their needs and good use of information provided by other professionals and by the children's families. The withdrawal support teacher, in collaboration with class teachers and the SENCO, prepares a detailed diagnosis of difficulty and there is meticulous ongoing recording of the children's progress. In the withdrawal sessions there is clarity about what the lessons are designed to achieve and the Individual Education Plans (IEPs) guide the work effectively. The lessons are well-paced and delivered within a warm, positive ethos which both challenges the children and builds up their confidence and self esteem.

## 4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

### 4.1 LEADERSHIP

The overall quality of leadership and management in this school is good.

The Principal, who has been in post for three years, has provided very good strategic leadership in guiding the school through a period of change. She is highly committed to meeting the needs of all of the children and the wider community, and sets a positive tone for the work of the school through her very good working relationships with the children, the staff, the parents and the governors. She promotes a collegiate approach to decision-making within the school and provides effective support and guidance in the professional development of the staff. At the time of the inspection, the school had experienced a number of recent changes to the staffing and management arrangements; the vice-Principal had been in post for three weeks, a new SMT had been created and co-ordinators had been appointed to lead key curricular areas. It will now be important for the SMT and the co-ordinators to undertake appropriate management training in order to develop a shared understanding of their roles, to ensure the strategic monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of learning and teaching and to bring about the necessary improvement in the standards achieved by the children, particularly in numeracy.

### 4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The Principal and staff have worked together effectively to create a whole-school approach to self-evaluation and school development planning. The provision has been audited, priorities and staff development needs identified and useful action plans have been drawn up. The school now needs to develop and refine the action plans to address more clearly the actions that are needed to effect improvement in the standards the children attain. The school development plan (SDP) complies with the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010 and sets out a range of priorities.

### 4.3 ACCOMMODATION

The school has benefited from a number of recent improvements to the fabric of the building. The staff work hard to create bright and inviting classrooms and make good use of all the space available to support the children's learning, particularly for individual and small group withdrawal. The standard of caretaking and cleaning is very good.

#### 4.4 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The governors are fully involved in the strategic planning and policy development for the school and make a very positive contribution to the life and work of the school. They support effectively the Principal and the staff in the implementation of the SDP.

### 5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the very positive ethos which is underpinned by the high quality of the pastoral care provision and the very good working relationships at all levels;
- the good quality of the provision in the nursery unit;
- the good or very good quality of the teaching in most of the lessons observed;
- the good support for the children who have additional learning needs and the good progress they make;
- the good standards attained by the children in literacy; and
- the very good leadership of the Principal, supported by the hard-working staff who have responded positively to the recent developments to promote improvement.

5.2 An area for improvement is the need to:

- develop further the monitoring and evaluating processes in order to inform planning, learning and teaching and to effect improvement in the standards achieved by the children, particularly in numeracy.

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:

- The positive and inclusive ethos of the nursery and the very good relationships at all levels. The majority of the children are well settled and respond positively to the adults' expectations for good behaviour and respect for one another.
- There is a good balance of free play and adult-directed activities. The daily routines ensure that there are good opportunities for the children to develop their self-management skills. The children enjoy stories, songs and rhymes, and increasingly many of their early drawings and paintings show signs of representational detail.
- The instances of good quality staff interaction in promoting the children's care, development and thinking and their commitment to improving the quality of the provision.
- The staff make regular observations of the children's responses to their play activities and are building up individual profiles of their achievements. The planning identifies a range of themes and topics to be covered throughout the year.
- The staff provide well for children who require additional support with aspects of their development. They carry out detailed observations of these children and draw up appropriate individual action plans to support their learning.
- There are well developed pastoral links between the nursery unit and the FS. These links support the smooth transition of the children to year one in the primary school.
- The thoughtful development of the outdoor learning environment to enhance the quality of the learning experiences for the children across all areas of the pre-school curriculum.

6.2 The teacher-in-charge is reflective in her practice and evaluates aspects of the programme regularly. She has detailed action plans which identify relevant areas for improvement, for example, to develop the outdoor learning environment in order to support the children's learning. The staff have developed a few effective methods of self-evaluation and there is evidence that the process has led to improvements in the children's learning.

### 6.3 An area for improvement is the need to:

- develop further the planning and assessment methods in order to ensure that the information gained through the observations of the children's play is clearly linked into the future plans and that there is a sharper focus on promoting the learning inherent in the planned programme.

6.4 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 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 MOSSGROVE PRIMARY SCHOOL NURSERY UNIT,  
NEWTOWNABBEY**

**1. Details of Children**

<b>Number of children:</b>	<b>Class 1</b>	<b>Class 2</b>
Attending full-time	0	0
Attending part-time	26	26
Under 3 years of age*	0	10
With statement of SEN**	0	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4***	0	0
At CoP stages 1 or 2***	0	0
With English as an additional language	0	0

\* 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.	4%
Average attendance for the previous year.	91.2%

**2. Duration of Sessions**

<b>Full-time</b>	<b>Part-time: am</b>	<b>Part-time: pm</b>
-	2½ hours	2½ hours

**3. Details of Staff**

<b>Number of:</b>	<b>Full-Time</b>	<b>Part-Time</b>
Teachers	1	0
Nursery Assistants	0	0
Qualified Nursery Assistants	1	0

<b>Number of: ****</b>	
Students	1
Trainees	0

\*\*\*\* Total placements since September of current year

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

Number issued	35
Percentage returned	22.9%
Number of written comments	2

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IN PEOPLE**