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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*



Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Focused Inspection

Maine Integrated Primary School Randalstown

Inspected: May 2007

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BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Maine Integrated Primary Randalstown** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 28.05.07**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 306-6652** iv. **Nature of Inspection: FI/En/ICT**

B.

School Year	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Year 1 Intake	12	10	10	19
Enrolments				
Primary	16	28	42	73
Reception	0	0	0	0
Nursery Class/Classes	0	0	0	0
Special Unit	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%

Primary & Reception	Nursery Unit	Special Unit
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- | | | | |
|---|----------|--------------|---|
| D. i. Number of Teachers
(including the principal and part-time teachers):
(Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours) | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): | 18.25 | NI PTR: 20.5 | |
| iii. Average Class Size: | 18 | | |
| iv. Class Size (Range): | 11 to 21 | | |
| v. Ancillary Support:
Number of Hours Per Week : | | | |
| i. Clerical support: | | 1 | |
| ii. Official Making A Good Start Support: | | 1 | |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | | 45 | |
| vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: | | 4.1% | |
| vii. Number of children who are not of statutory school age: | | 0 | |
| viii. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: | | 9.6% | |

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Maine Integrated Primary School is situated on a permanent site in temporary accommodation on the outskirts of Randalstown. The children who attend the school come from the village and the surrounding neighbourhoods. Since its foundation, just over four years ago, the school's enrolment has increased steadily and stands currently at 73 children. Just under 10% of the children are entitled to receive free school meals.

1.2 The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection, as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and with a group of children from years 5 and 6. Fifty-four questionnaires were issued to the parents; 33 were returned to the Department of Education (DE) of which 16 contained additional written comments.

1.3 The responses from the parental questionnaires indicated that most of the parents appreciate the family atmosphere within the school, the care given to their children and the approachability of the Principal and the teachers. The few issues raised were discussed with the Principal and the governors. The governors expressed their support for the school and its appreciation of the hard work and vision of the Principal and the teaching staff. The children from years 5 and 6 with whom the inspectors met, reported that they felt safe and happy in school, appreciated the friendly, welcoming atmosphere and indicated that the teachers would do their best to sort out any worries which they might have. The inspection findings endorse the favourable comments made by the governors, the parents and the children.

1.4 The inspection focused on English, including the contribution of information and communication technology (ICT) in supporting learning and teaching in literacy, the provision for special educational needs, and on the school's arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection, and health and well-being.

2. THE QUALITY OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK

2.1 The teaching and support staff have created a caring, welcoming and stimulating environment in which the children and their contributions are highly valued. There are very good working relationships between the teachers and the children. The children are well-mannered, friendly and keen to talk about their learning; most of them respond positively, display good motivation and interest, and work well independently or in groups. The behaviour of the children is generally very good. On occasions, a few children present with challenging behaviour and the teachers deal with them in a well-structured, patient and encouraging manner. The school is endeavouring to develop good habits of self-organisation and independence across the year groups. There is a strong sense of community as evidenced in the keen interest which the parents, the governors and the staff take in the school.

2.2 Within the classrooms and in the restricted corridor areas, there are good displays which celebrate the children's work, provide support for literacy and numeracy and reflect aspects of the pastoral care provision.

2.3 There are many strengths in the quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection. The school has recently reviewed its procedures and is working towards full compliance with the guidance outlined in the relevant DE Circulars; there remain a few areas for improvement. Among the strengths are: the supportive ethos in which the children feel at ease, the effective School Council, and the increasing opportunities for the children to participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including trips to places of interest and competitions with other schools. There are effective house and merit systems in operation to promote positive behaviour and to reward good work. The areas for improvement identified include the need to:

- inform parents about how they can make a complaint about the safety of their children;
- develop further a recording system for incidents of complaints made to the school;
- ensure that any visitors to the premises report to the office; and
- ensure that a governor trained by the Education and Library Board in child protection vetting procedures sits on interview panels.

2.4 The school gives good attention to promoting health and well-being and has appropriate policies and programmes in place, including a Food and Nutrition Policy, a Fruit on Friday healthy break, and a breakfast club to encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles. The school also has a cookery club, introduces the children to new fruits and vegetables, and there are incentives to reinforce healthy food choices. The children demonstrate reasonable food knowledge and have good opportunities to participate in a range of physical activities throughout and after the school day.

2.5 The teachers' planning is good and the school is developing appropriate systems of monitoring the planning to ensure that there is progression within and across the year groups. In particular, the teachers make effective use of evaluations to highlight what has gone well and to inform improvements. They plan diligently for the composite classes with a range of differentiated tasks and activities. There is a need to ensure that the activities provide appropriate challenge for the different levels of ability.

2.6 All of the teaching in the lessons observed was good or better; on a few occasions it was excellent. In the best practice, the intended learning outcomes were shared and the success criteria were discussed with the children. The teachers used a variety of suitable teaching strategies, which included effective questioning, and the children participated actively in the learning process. The children reflected on their learning through plenary sessions at the end of most lessons.

2.7 In years 1-3, the children have appropriate opportunities to develop their learning and their understanding through well-planned play-based activities linked to the main literacy themes. Often the activities are integrated successfully into the main lessons; the children enjoy the activities and develop independent and oral skills with good support from the adults.

2.8 The teachers provide good opportunities to promote talking and listening through the use of interesting stimuli which engage the children's curiosity and promote successfully the development of language associated with a topic. There is a wide range of effective strategies to encourage the children to listen to the opinions of others. The children talk confidently in front of their peers and work well in groups as they share and develop their ideas.

2.9 The school promotes the children's reading skills well through a range of commercial schemes and phonics programmes. The school has invested in a good bank of additional reading resources; there are attractive class libraries within each room. Most of the children enjoy reading and they read with fluency and confidence in front of their peers. The teachers provide the children with appropriate strategies to cope with unfamiliar language.

2.10 From an early age, the children are encouraged to write in a wide range of styles and for different types of audience. The teachers use a variety of suitable approaches to support the children's writing, including modelling and, in the best practice, discussion of ways in which they can improve their style. The standard of writing and presentation varies within and across classes. There is a need to encourage the children to take more responsibility for their own learning in this area, to set themselves appropriate targets for improvement and to develop more ways of self-correcting. As the first cohort of the school will not undergo key stage 2 tests until next year, it is difficult to assess currently the standards of attainment. The school still needs to address the wide variation in standards which are evident within the classes.

2.11 There is no cabling to the school to enable them to connect to programmes supplied by Classroom 2000 (C2k); consequently the children have little or no opportunity to use ICT to enhance their learning. The ICT co-ordinator has carried out an audit of her colleagues to assess the limited but effective use of ICT, including the use of video and DVDs. It is imperative that the school receives adequate support in rectifying this situation so that the children, and the staff, benefit from the support of ICT in their teaching and learning.

2.12 The teachers provide encouraging comments when marking the children's work. It is timely that the school has been reviewing the effectiveness of marking practices. A recently introduced revision to marking, which encourages the children to set personal targets, complements the annual informative reports to parents. The reports give a good indication of the children's progress and provide useful targets to guide the children and their parents. The school has begun to collate progress profiles of the work of individual children; the profiles have the potential to guide the planning for teaching and learning, and to provide a clear indication of overall progress across the school.

2.13 Approximately 10% of the children have been identified by the school as requiring additional learning support in either literacy or numeracy. The school uses a range of data, including their own diagnostic tests to identify and track the children's progress; the majority of the children are supported adequately through the teachers' planning within the class. The individual education plans have realistic and measurable short-term and long-term targets. Several of the children benefit from a range of well-targeted support from North-Eastern Education and Library Board agencies.

2.14 The Principal has been in post since the foundation of the school. She provides very good leadership, inspires and supports her colleagues well and plays a key role in developing the vision of the school along with the staff and the governors. She encourages a collegial approach to effecting improvement and receives good co-operation from her colleagues.

2.15 There is a wide range of suitable policies and documentation to support the work of the school. The school development plan (SDP) is comprehensive with an appropriate focus on the improvement of, and consistency in, learning and teaching. The school has adopted a series of suitable measures to monitor and evaluate its progress; it is now time to draw the various initiatives together to provide a more coherent approach to an overall improvement strategy.

2.16 The teaching staff have attended a series of appropriate in-service training courses to support the SDP. There is evidence that the training is having a beneficial effect on the learning and teaching. There is a need to review how the school can make better use of the expertise of classroom assistants to support the learning and teaching.

2.17 The school is a series of mobile classrooms most of which provide adequate accommodation. The layout and size of several of the rooms restrict the opportunities to deliver aspects of the curriculum effectively. There are several shortcomings in accommodation which are referred to in the Appendix.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the caring, welcoming environment in which the children feel valued;
- the strong sense of school community with good support from the parents and governors;
- the generally well-behaved, responsive and confident children;
- the hard-working and dedicated staff who have developed a collegial approach to improvements within the curriculum;
- the quality of the teaching which was good or better in all of the lessons observed, and, on a few occasions, excellent;
- the effective promotion of healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle; and
- the vision, commitment and very good leadership of the Principal.

3.2 The main areas for improvement include the need to:

- ensure that ICT is effectively integrated into the learning and teaching; and
- build on the good start made to self-evaluation and the review of assessment through more rigorous monitoring, with a particular focus on achieving more consistency in the quality of writing.

3.3 In the areas inspected, the school has a few strengths in its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified important areas for improvement which need to be addressed promptly if the school is to meet effectively the needs of all the learners.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing these areas for improvement.

APPENDIX

ACCOMMODATION

- It is inappropriate that adults should be sharing toilet accommodation with some of the younger children.
- There is no supervised area for sick children when they need to leave class.
- The office accommodation is inadequate and does not allow for confidential meetings with parents.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- There are safety hazards with traffic on the main road at busy times in the morning and afternoon.
- The staff room is small; at lunch time, it is hazardous as there is a large oven to keep food warm and a playgroup uses the facilities to wash dishes.

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