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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

Ballynure Primary School
Ballyclare

Inspected: May 2007

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BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Ballynure Primary Ballyclare** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 21.05.07**
ii. **School Reference Number: 301-0802** iv. **Nature of Inspection: FI/En/ICT**

B.

School Year	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Year 1 Intake	29	13	16	18	11
Enrolments					
Primary	132	127	137	123	113
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Class/Classes	0	0	0	0	0
Special 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): 96%

Primary & Reception	Nursery Unit	Special Unit
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- D. i. Number of Teachers
(including the principal and part-time teachers): 6 0 0
(Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 18.8 NI PTR: 20.5
- iii. Average Class Size: 22.6
- iv. Class Size (Range): 12 to 30
- v. Ancillary Support:
Number of Hours **Per Week**: i. Clerical support: 15
ii. Official Making A Good Start Support: 10
iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: 5
- vi. Number of children with statements of special educational needs: 0
- vii. Number of children who are not of statutory school age: 0
- viii. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 3.5%

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Ballynure Primary School is situated in the village of Ballynure. The children who attend the school come from immediate and surrounding neighbourhoods. The school's enrolment has remained fairly stable in recent years and stands currently at 113 children. Just over 3% 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 groups of children from years 6 and 7. Eighty-seven questionnaires were issued to the parents; 48% were returned to the Department of Education (DE) of which 19 contained additional written comments.

1.3 The responses from the parental questionnaires indicated that the parents appreciate the care and individual attention given to their children and the hard work and approachability of the Principal and teachers. The governors expressed their support for the school, and their appreciation of the teachers' efforts to provide a caring atmosphere within the classrooms and a varied extra-curricular programme for the children. The children talked enthusiastically and with maturity about many aspects of school life, including the extra-curricular activities, which they enjoy; from the conversations, there is evidence that they are aware of what to do if they have any worries. The Education and Training Inspectorate has provided the Principal and a representative of the governors with feedback from the questionnaires and the discussions. The inspection findings confirm that the views of the parents, governors and children are well-placed.

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 school provides a caring and welcoming environment in which the children's contributions are valued. The quality of the working relationships between the teachers, and the children is excellent. The children are well-mannered, friendly and keen to talk about their learning; they respond positively and work with high levels of motivation and interest. The behaviour of the children is exemplary. From the earliest years they are developing a good sense of independence, they organise themselves well, show respect for their peers and work well collaboratively. The strong sense of community is strengthened through the interest which the parents and the governors take in the school, and through the good assistance which the teachers receive from the support staff.

2.2 The teachers have created a stimulating learning environment in the classrooms with displays of the children's work and materials which support the curriculum effectively. In addition, they make good use of the hall and the corridors to celebrate the children's work and to reflect the many extra-curricular activities and recent developments in the life of the school.

2.3 A wide range of extra-curricular activities, including sports and participation in competitions, and links with the local and wider community enhance the children's learning experiences. The school makes effective use of a variety of visitors, educational visits and a link with a maintained primary school through Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) to support the children's learning.

2.4 There are significant strengths in the quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection. The school has procedures in place which implement fully the guidance outlined in the relevant DE Circulars. The governors, staff, parents and children are fully aware of the school's procedures and have had the opportunity to feed into a range of helpful policies which guide the work of the school. These policies and the effective pastoral care systems underpin the excellent relationships and the good learning and teaching which take place both within and outside the classroom. Particular strengths are the effective communication with parents and governors when introducing or monitoring new initiatives and the developing voice of the School Council which was elected in a manner which deepened the children's knowledge of citizenship.

2.5 The school gives consistently good attention to promoting health and well-being and has appropriate policies and programmes in place which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles. There is evidence of commitment on the part of the staff to promoting healthy eating and to improving the children's eating habits through healthy lunchboxes and monitoring of the healthy break policy at random and repeated intervals. There are opportunities for children to participate in a range of physical activities. The children demonstrate a good general food knowledge and understanding of the food groups, the function of nutrients and the importance of drinking water to stay healthy and alert.

2.6 The teachers' planning is consistently good across the year groups with details of appropriate topics and themes and related knowledge and skills and understanding. The overall planning for literacy and ICT is of a very high quality and provides agreed and comprehensive guidance for the development of both areas within and across classes. The majority of the teachers have composite classes for which they plan conscientiously with a range of appropriate activities. On a few occasions, the activities need to be more clearly differentiated to meet the needs of all of the children.

2.7 Most of the teaching in the lessons observed was good or better, and on a few occasions it was outstanding. In the best and most frequent practice, the learning outcomes were shared with the children and they were actively involved and engaged in the learning process. The teachers used a wide range of suitable resources and strategies to develop the children's learning and there were good examples of purposeful paired and group work. The teachers used effective questioning to develop the children's thinking and understanding and ICT was integrated well both to stimulate the children's thinking and to encourage their independence in learning. On many occasions the children were able to reflect on their learning through plenary sessions or through peer or self-assessment. On a few occasions, the pace of the lesson needed to be more robust.

2.8 The planning for play-based learning has been reviewed and there is a range of purposeful activities based on themes which help the children understand and learn about themselves and the world around them. The children in years 1 to 3 enjoy and develop independent, social and oral skills in the regular sessions. The adults support the children well and there is a good variety of learning opportunities to develop the children's interests and their independence. The school is aware of the need to develop outdoor play facilities and equipment.

2.9 Across the school the children enjoy their learning in English and other literacy-related subjects. The teachers provide very good opportunities to promote talking and listening. The children talk with confidence in front of their peers and work very well in groups sharing ideas and listening to others. The school is using Circle Time effectively to create good habits in listening to, and responding to others. There is clear evidence as they progress through the school that the children are able to be both self-critical and critical of their peers in a positive way in the spirit of improvement.

2.10 The school promotes effectively an enjoyment of reading, for which most of the children show great enthusiasm. The children's skills are developed well using a range of commercial reading schemes and phonics programmes; in addition, the teachers make effective use of the school library. The teachers provide the children with appropriate strategies to cope with unfamiliar language and the majority of the children read with good fluency and expression. The school has built up an effective bank of reading resources, including a wide range of fictional and non-fictional material. Through the Better Reading partnership, which involves a classroom assistant and a volunteer parent both of whom have been trained, some of the children receive effective support to improve their confidence with good results.

2.11 From an early age children are encouraged to develop their own ideas and to have high expectations with regards to both the content and presentation of their writing. In key stage (KS) 1 the children enjoy and are developing confidence in writing about their own experiences. In KS2 the children have the opportunity to write in an appropriate variety of styles and are aware of different audiences: for example, the children in year 7 have carried out research and produced books for the year 1 children. There are good examples of incorporating other areas of the curriculum into creative writing. The overall attainment of the children by the end of KS2 is of a very high standard.

2.12 The ICT co-ordinator provides good support and guidance for her colleagues. There are clear monitoring processes to track the progress of the individual children and to ensure that they benefit from a wide range of ICT experiences. The children make appropriate use of research skills to support their understanding and to enhance their writing. The school participates in the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) Accreditation scheme with great success. During the inspection the children used a good range of applications to support their learning in literacy; by the end of KS2 the level of attainment is very good.

2.13 The teachers mark the children's work regularly and, in the best practice, they promote improvement through supportive comments and clearly directed areas for the children to consider. The school is promoting peer and self-assessment and there is evidence that the children are able to manage their own learning. To support this work the school is developing the use of target-setting with the children to prioritise areas in which they need to improve.

2.14 Approximately 3% of the children have been identified by the school as requiring additional learning support in either literacy or numeracy. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) uses appropriate standardised and diagnostic tests to identify and track the children's progress; there is a detailed record of progression and suitable adjustments made to the individual programmes as required. Ten children benefit from regular withdrawal support; they learn in a caring and encouraging environment and there is clear evidence that the children are gaining from the extra support and making progress. Several other children are benefiting from a range of well-targeted support from the North-Eastern Education and Library Board agencies.

2.15 The Principal has been in post for five years. She has a clear vision for the school, provides very good leadership and has drawn up a wide range of suitable policies and documents to support the work of the school. Under her informed leadership, and with the good support of the Vice-principal, the staff have developed appropriate curriculum policies to promote improvement in teaching and learning. There is evidence of a good range of monitoring and evaluation processes with the developing role of the co-ordinator as a suitable priority, and the teachers have begun to use a range of data to inform their teaching. The level of morale is high and there is a collegial approach to the work of the school.

2.16 The school development plan (SDP) is comprehensive and has a clear focus on improvement. It has an appropriate balance between curriculum priorities to improve learning and teaching and those which will improve the general life of the school. The staff have attended relevant in-service training linked to the SDP, which has benefited the school.

2.17 The school is well-maintained with an excellent standard of caretaking. The layout and size of several of the rooms restrict the opportunities to deliver aspects of the curriculum effectively. In several rooms there is limited storage space.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the caring, welcoming environment in which the children's contributions are valued;
- the strong sense of school community with good support from the parents and governors;
- the developing opportunities for the children to contribute to the decision-making process in the school;
- the hard-working staff who have developed a collegial approach to improvements within the curriculum;

- the well-mannered and responsive children who are developing well as independent learners;
- the high quality of the planning for literacy and ICT;
- the quality of the teaching which was good or better in most of the lessons observed, and, on a few occasions, outstanding;
- the very good opportunities to develop talking and listening;
- the effective integration of ICT into the curriculum, and, in particular, to support literacy;
- the very high standards in English;
- the effective promotion of healthy eating;
- the very good leadership of the Principal and the effective support of the Vice-principal; and
- the wide range of extra-curricular activities to enhance the children's learning.

3.2 In the areas inspected, the school has major strengths in its educational and pastoral provision. The educational and pastoral needs of the children are being well met. The parents and local community can have confidence in the school's capacity for sustained self-improvement.

No follow-up inspection is required.

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