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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

## **Education and Training Inspectorate**

### **Report of a Focused Inspection**

**Clogher Regional Primary School**  
**Co Tyrone**

**Inspected: January 2009**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

The school is located on the main street in Clogher. The children come from the local area. The enrolment has declined over the past five years and currently stands at 19. At the time of the inspection, approximately 10% of the children were entitled to free school meals and 10% of the children were on the special educational needs register.

### 1.2 FOCUS

The inspection focused on the quality of the children's experiences in literacy and numeracy and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in promoting and supporting learning and teaching. The school's arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection, were also evaluated.

### 1.3 THE VIEWS OF THE PARENTS, TEACHERS, GOVERNORS AND CHILDREN

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

Twenty questionnaires were issued to the parents 50% of these were returned to the Department of Education. Two returns contained additional written comments. Nearly all of the responses indicated a very high level of satisfaction with the provision in the school. In particular, the parents highlighted the caring learning environment, the good links between home and school, and the additional activities organised for the children, for example their participation in the Young Voices Concert in the Odyssey Arena in Belfast and the Tri County Sports Event.

All of the teachers completed the online staff questionnaire; the responses were highly affirmative of all aspects of the work of the school.

The governors spoke very positively about the welcoming atmosphere within the school, the commitment of the acting Principal and the staff's hard work and dedication in the interests of the children and the wider community.

The children in year 6 and year 7 reported that they feel happy and safe in the school and that they know who to speak to if they have any concerns.

The views of the parents, the teachers and the children have been shared with the acting Principal and the governors.

### 1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is very good. Among the strengths are the positive relationships at all levels which foster an inclusive and supportive ethos throughout the school, the consultation with the children, for example, in the creation of the school rules, and the use of praise and encouragement to motivate the children. The

children respond well to the staff's expectations: their behaviour is excellent. The classroom assistants contribute significantly to promoting and maintaining a pleasant, homely working environment for the children. The addition of equipment to support the children's play during break and lunch time enhances the children's playground experiences.

## 1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school has very good comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department.

## 1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity; through for example the healthy breaks programme and the provision of additional playground resources, which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

# 2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

## 2.1 LEARNING

In all year groups, the children are motivated and engaged in the learning process; they interact with one another in group and paired work and there is an appropriate emphasis on the promotion of their independent thinking and learning skills. The majority of the children are responsive, confident and articulate in class discussions. The staff use appropriate and effective strategies to support the learning needs of individual children, including differentiated work and specific special needs support for literacy and numeracy, when appropriate.

Key stage (KS) 2 assessments indicate that the children are performing above the Northern Ireland average and the Southern Board averages in both English and mathematics.

## 2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The quality of provision for English and literacy across the school is good. The literacy co-ordinator has a clear vision for the development of this area of the school's work; it is timely that she plans to review the Literacy Policy. Regular meetings, collaborative planning and close monitoring and evaluation of the children's learning, including the running records in the Reading Partnership Programme, contribute to the good standards achieved in English within the classes. By year 7 almost all the children are attaining standards in English that are in line with their age and ability levels.

In all key stages, the children are motivated and keen to talk about their work. The teachers provide good opportunities for the children to develop their talking and listening skills; often questions are asked in ways which stimulate the children's thinking and develop their ability to express ideas and views competently.

Throughout the school the children are provided with a stimulating, language rich environment; they are exposed to a range of different genre which promotes their interest in books and the written word. In the foundation stage (FS) the effective use of practical equipment, for example, individual whiteboards and magnetic letter shapes supports the

development of word recognition, and shared and guided reading encourages the acquisition of basic reading skills. The introduction of the Reading Partnership Programme and the implementation of several Reading Recovery strategies into classroom teaching are having a positive impact in raising standards further.

In both KS1 and KS2 the children experience a variety of approaches, including shared, guided and independent reading. By the end of KS2, the majority of the children are reading with fluency, understanding and pleasure in line with their ability.

The standard of written work achieved by the children is very good and is celebrated in attractive displays in the classrooms and throughout the school. Information and communication technology is effectively integrated into the classroom activities and the children use it competently as a tool to improve the quality of their written work. The children are provided with opportunities to write for a variety of purposes and audiences and the use of real-life contexts makes this work more meaningful to the pupils. The current focus on grammar and spelling is having a positive impact on the quality of the written work achieved by the children throughout the school.

### 2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The overall quality of the provision for mathematics in the school is good. In the FS and KS1, the children experience a range of well-planned play-based experiences through which they are developing early mathematical language, concepts and understanding appropriate to their age and ability. They are learning about money, number and shape, through for example, their play in the Charity Shop and in designing and constructing vehicles to transport their provisions.

The scheme of work is detailed and provides guidance for the teachers to plan effectively for a broad and balanced coverage for the mathematics curriculum. The strengths include the children's competence in learning through practical activities, the links they are able to make between mathematics and real life situations and their ability to explain operations using appropriate mathematical language.

The current action plan has identified appropriately, the further development of a programme for the teaching of mental mathematics. A particular strength of the programme is the teachers' ongoing evaluation of the children's developing core competences. This informs appropriately future learning and teaching. During the inspection, the children responded well to a variety of interesting and, at times challenging activities around shape and space.

Over the past two years most of the children, by the end of KS2 achieved standards in line with expectations for their age and ability levels.

By the end of KS2 the children are confident in their understanding of place value, can work flexibly with numbers, understand well the relationships between fractions, percentages and decimals, are competent in estimating and measuring and can apply their understanding and skills to solving problems and carrying out investigations.

The school has appropriately begun to integrate ICT more consistently into the planning for mathematics in order to enhance and extend the children's learning experiences more effectively.

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

#### **3.1 PLANNING**

The teachers have worked co-operatively in planning for learning and teaching. They have adopted a common format for planning their work across the curriculum and there is a good match between the planning and classroom practice. The mid-term planning reveals a good emphasis on the intended learning outcomes for the children and on progression in their learning.

#### **3.2 TEACHING**

The teachers are extremely hard-working and conscientious and know the children very well. During the inspection the quality of teaching observed was consistently very good. A feature of the work in classes was the extent to which the intended learning outcomes were shared with the children at the start of a lesson and time set aside at the end for discussion to ensure that these had been achieved. The purposeful activities were matched well to the range of the abilities of the children, and the lessons paced effectively. In the lessons, the children were engaged, animated and challenged and had good opportunities to work independently, in pairs or in small groups.

#### **3.3 ASSESSMENT**

The school uses a range of assessment procedures to monitor the children's learning. The outcomes of end of KS data are thoroughly analysed and benchmarked in order to inform planning, teaching and learning. The children's work is monitored regularly; the teachers' marking is positive and, in the best practice, indicates how the children's work might be improved. Children's records, together with samples of their class work are built up to provide an overview of progression in their learning. The parents are well informed about their children's progress; an individual parent teacher meeting is held during the school year and an annual written report is prepared for parents.

#### **3.4 SPECIAL/ADDITIONAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

The school has identified five of the children as being in need of additional learning support in English and mathematics. The school promotes a strong sense of inclusion in which each child is valued. A significant strength of the provision is the early identification policy which focuses on intervention strategies based on effective diagnostic analysis and teacher observations. The educational plans contain clear and measurable short term goals and the children's progress is tracked appropriately by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO).

In the regular withdrawal sessions the children receive intensive reading and phonics support through the Reading Partnership programme. In addition, the withdrawal classes include a range of activities to develop the children's practical and mental mathematics. The children learn in a supportive environment and they respond positively to the encouragement given to them by the staff.

The SENCO monitors the children's progress closely, targeting help where it is needed. The children who make satisfactory to good progress in the additional learning support classes are appropriately discontinued, but continually reviewed.

#### **4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

##### **4.1 LEADERSHIP**

The acting Principal has been in position for three years and is ably assisted by the hard-working teachers, classroom assistants and support staff. During this period she has had to deal with the difficult challenges affecting the small rural schools in the area. She is dedicated and committed to the life and work of the school and to the well-being of the children; she has a very good knowledge and understanding of its context and knows the children and their families well. She has developed a strong team spirit and builds well on the good relationships established at all levels to promote the positive ethos in the school.

The literacy and numeracy co-ordinators provide good leadership. They have devised useful action plans which focus on raising standards and monitor and evaluate the learning in literacy and numeracy by overseeing the teachers' planning and examining the children's books.

##### **4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT**

While the acting Principal monitors and evaluates much of the work of the school there is a need to review the current School Development Plan (SDP) to ensure it complies fully with The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005 and also to begin the formal process of self-evaluation.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

##### **5.1 The strengths of the school include:**

- the high quality of the pastoral care provision and the commitment of the staff to the welfare of the children;
- the very good quality of the teaching observed;
- the children's participation in the learning process, and the good standards they achieve in literacy and mathematics;
- the high quality and very effective provision for the children identified as requiring additional help with aspects of their learning; and
- the effective leadership of the acting Principal and the hardworking teachers and support staff who work well as a team.



5.2 The areas for improvement include the need to:

- ensure the SDP complies fully with The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005 and to begin the formal process of self-evaluation.

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 areas for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address.

5.4 It will be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision and school budget, in order to address the current and future needs of the children and the staff.

5.5 The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the school's progress on the areas for improvement.

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