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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
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CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

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

**Richmond Primary School
Ballygawley**

Inspected: January 2008

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BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Richmond Primary School** iii. **Date of Inspection: 14 January 2008**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 501-6643** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused Inspection**

B.

School Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Year 1 Intake	7	7	15	10
Enrolments				
Primary	92	87	92	96
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): 96.1%

	Primary & Unit	Nursery Unit	Special
Reception			

- D. i. Number of Teachers
 (including the principal and part-time teachers): 5.2
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 18.5% NI PTR: 20.8
- iii. Average Class Size: 19.2
- iv. Class Size (Range): 10 to 25
- v. Ancillary Support:
 Number of Hours **Per Week**:
- | | |
|---|-----------|
| i. Clerical support: | 12½ hours |
| ii. Official Making A Good Start Support: | 10 hours |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 65 hours |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 5.2%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 17.7%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 9.375%

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Richmond Primary School opened in January 2004 as the result of an amalgamation of Ballygawley Primary School and Innishmagh Primary School. The school is situated on the Old Omagh Road on the outskirts of Ballygawley village. The children come mainly from the surrounding rural area. The enrolment of the school currently stands at 96. Approximately 9.3% 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 a group of children from year 6. Sixty-seven questionnaires were issued to parents in the primary school; approximately 25% were returned to the Department of Education (DE), of which four contained additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaires highlighted the commitment of the Principal and the staff to the well-being and education of the children. The governors expressed their appreciation of the dedication and hard work of all the staff, and commented on the very positive ethos that exists in the school. The comments made by the parents have been shared with the Principal and the governors. The children indicated that they feel happy and safe in the school.

1.3 The inspection focused on the work in English and the effectiveness of the school's special educational needs (SEN) provision. In addition it also evaluated the work in information and communication technology (ICT) in promoting and supporting learning and teaching in English and the school's procedures for pastoral care, including child protection.

2. THE QUALITY OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK

2.1 Since the amalgamation, the staff have worked very hard to create a positive ethos based on very good working relationships at all levels. The children are courteous to visitors and display exemplary behaviour. The teaching and support staff work closely as a team and the non-teaching staff make a valuable contribution to the life and work of the school. Good use is made of the learning environment to celebrate the children's work and record their activities and achievements.

2.2 The school gives excellent attention to promoting health and well-being, including opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity. There are effective policies and programmes in place, for example healthy break table in years 1 and 2, healthy living week and communication with parents via letters and newsletters, which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

2.3 The children's experiences are enriched through a wide variety of extra-curricular activities which include music, and sporting activities and also through strong links with the other local primary schools and the feeder post-primary schools. In addition, their learning and social development are enhanced through participation in speech and drama festivals, educational visits, competitions and community events. Visitors to the school are used effectively, on occasions, to support aspects of the children's learning

2.4 There is a strong sense of community within the school and the parents are encouraged to become involved in school events and in supporting their children's learning. The school values the support of the Parents Support Group in raising considerable funds to further enhance the provision and experiences offered to the children.

2.5 The provision for pastoral care and child protection is a significant feature of the school. The school has procedures in place which implement fully the guidance outlined in the relevant DE Circulars. The governors, staff, parents and children are aware of the school's procedures and have had the opportunity to contribute to a range of helpful policies that guide the work of the school. An effective reward system acknowledges positive behaviour as well as the children's efforts and attainments.

2.6 The teachers have worked diligently and 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. A feature of the work in most classes is the extent to which the intended learning outcomes are shared with the children at the beginning of lessons. In the best practice, time is also set aside during and at the end of the lesson to focus the children's attention and to measure the extent to which the learning intentions have been met.

2.7 During the inspection, the quality of the teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to very good. In the best practice observed there was an effective integration of talking and listening, reading and writing, lessons were well paced; activities were matched to children's needs, there was a good balance between practical and written work and effective links were made to the children's learning in other areas of the curriculum. In these instances the children worked well together, and they were enthusiastic and engaged in the lessons. In the less effective practice the lessons were over-directed by the teacher, there was limited opportunity for collaborative work and the activities did not meet the needs of all the children.

2.8 The school has developed effective long-term planning in English which details the programme for talking and listening, reading and writing. The teachers translate these long term plans into half-termly units of work. In addition, they reflect on the quality of the children's learning and use their evaluations to inform future planning. There is a need, however, to further develop this planning to take greater account of the varying abilities of children and to ensure the development of talking and listening skills, in a progressive and consistent manner across the school.

2.9 Throughout the school the children benefit from listening to stories and poems. In the most effective practice observed, the children had opportunities to report on their learning and to take part in effective paired and group work. The teacher's open questioning technique promoted the development of thinking skills and encouraged children to form and express their opinions. In the less effective practice observed, there was limited opportunity for the children to make extended responses and to participate in regular discussion.

2.10 The development of reading is an important focus in the school. The teachers work hard to promote reading for enjoyment and as a means of communication and finding information. They engage in regular novel and story reading to the children, hold annual book fairs and organise a book club. The school has an extensive range of appropriately levelled reading resources which are used for class and home reading. These are supplemented by collections of fiction and non-fiction library books in each classroom.

2.11 The school has identified the need to promote a greater interest and raise standards in reading, particularly amongst the boys. They have recently purchased additional reading resources and literacy games for use at home and in school. Two of the classroom assistants have actively promoted the Better Reading Partnership Programme aimed at raising standards in reading.

2.12 In the early years the children learn to read through a combined “look and say” and phonic approach. At Key Stages (KS) 1 and 2 reading is further developed through regular shared and guided reading sessions which are aimed at the continued development of language, word identification strategies and higher order reading skills.

2.13 By the end of Year 7 most children read with fluency. The school has correctly identified the need to focus more sharply on the development of children’s higher order reading skills.

2.14 The children’s early writing is appropriately based on their personal experiences. As they progress through the school they have the opportunity to write for a broad range of purposes and, where appropriate, for audiences outside the school. Examples of their personal writing by the end of year 7 include biographies, autobiographies, letter writing, poetry, play scripts, descriptions, instructions and report writing. In the World Around Us lessons observed during the inspection, there were also opportunities for the children to design an advertising brochure for their town and to prepare an information booklet on the growth of an apple.

2.15 In the best practice in foundation stage and KS1 children are encouraged to create their own ideas and to write independently across the curriculum. This effective practice needs to be shared and developed across all year groups.

2.16 The school is well equipped to support learning and teaching through the use of ICT. The teachers use ICT effectively in the planning of their lessons and, in a few classes, it is well integrated into learning and teaching. The teachers and children need to use all of the ICT resources more consistently to support the work in class.

2.17 The teachers mark the children’s written work regularly. In the best practice the children’s efforts are acknowledged and praised and the teachers effectively employ assessment for learning strategies to provide focused prompts to plan for and evaluate improvement.

2.18 The school uses a range of standardised and non-standardised testing to assess children's level of achievement. The school performance information gained is currently used to monitor the progress of individual children and to monitor progress and attainment within the school. There is a need for the further development and more rigorous analysis of the school performance data in order to identify under-achievement, to set appropriate targets and to raise the overall standards that the children attain.

2.19 There are clear procedures in place for reporting to parents on their children's progress. In the first term the parents are invited to meet with class teachers to discuss their children's progress and how they might provide additional support at home. Detailed reports are sent to parents in the third term each year; these provide information on attainment, particularly in English and mathematics.

2.20 The school has identified 17 children who require additional support with aspects of their learning, five of whom have special education needs. The current provision for the children is mainly through normal class teaching. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) has devised a useful special needs policy and maintains the SEN register. The policy focuses on early identification of the children's needs and outlines a range of intervention strategies. Individual or group withdrawal sessions are provided for the children in need of additional help with aspects of their learning in Literacy. In addition, some assistance is provided for a small number of children through peripatetic services and effective links have been established with a range of external support agencies.

2.21 The SENCO collaborates with the class teachers to prepare education plans which identify, for the most part, general targets and support strategies to promote improvement and to address each child's particular needs. In line with the review of its assessment procedures, the school recognises the need to ensure that the targets are more specific and measurable in order to evaluate and track each child's progress. There is a need for the staff, to review the current procedures for identification and assessment in order to comply fully with the SEN Code of Practice.

2.22 The Principal has been in post for four years and provides effective leadership for the staff. She has successfully managed the amalgamation of the two schools and sets high standards for herself, her staff and the work of the school. She combines well her teaching role with the administration of the school and is supported ably by the hardworking staff. The School Development Plan (SDP) identifies appropriate areas for development. It will be important to adjust the development plan in line with the areas for improvement identified in the inspection findings.

2.23 The school's staff development programme includes school-based and external in-service training. The staff have benefited from the support made available, particularly for several of the priorities identified in the SDP.

2.24 The quality of the accommodation and the standard of caretaking in the school are excellent.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the very positive ethos which permeates the life and work of the school demonstrated through the exemplary behaviour of the children and the high quality of the pastoral care;
- the attractive and well-organised learning environment which is effectively used to promote learning and to celebrate the children's work and achievements;
- the very good working relationships at all levels and the strong links established with the governors, parents, appropriate support agencies and the local community;
- the quality of the teaching, particularly the good quality observed in approximately one third of the lessons, and the teachers effective planning;
- the interesting and varied range of extra-curricular activities which enrich the children's experiences and development; and
- the effective leadership of the Principal who successfully managed the amalgamation of the two schools and who promotes a strong team spirit among the hardworking staff.

3.2 The areas for improvement include the need to:

- set in place more effective strategies to monitor and evaluate the quality of provision and the attainments of the children; and
- ensure that the learning experiences provided are appropriately differentiated to address more sharply, the ability and needs of all the children.

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

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

APPENDIX

HEALTH & SAFETY

The steep bank to the rear of the school presents a potential hazard to the children and requires constant supervision by the staff during break and lunch times.

Several sections of the school playground and the surrounding grass areas are prone to flooding during heavy rain making these areas inaccessible to the children.

During the inspection concerns were raised by the governors about the close proximity of the Gas Tank to the school playground.

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