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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

**St Mary's Primary School
Glassdrumman**

Inspected: May 2008

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BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A.
- i. **School: St Mary's Primary
Glassdrumman**
 - ii. **School Reference Number: 503-6001**
 - iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 27.05.08**
 - iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Year 1 Intake	7	15	10	11	13
Enrolments					
Primary	69	75	73	72	70
Reception	6	4	6	4	4
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): 95%

		Primary & Reception	Nursery Unit	Special Unit
D. i.	Number of Teachers (including the principal and part-time teachers): (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)	4.22	0	0
ii.	PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio):	18.8	NI PTR: 20.8	
iii.	Average Class Size:	18.8		
iv.	Class Size (Range):	17 to 22		
v.	Ancillary Support: Number of Hours Per Week :			
	i.	Clerical support:	12	
	ii.	Official Making A Good Start Support:	10	
	iii.	Additional hours of other classroom assistant support:	49	
vi.	Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs:		2.6%	
vii.	Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register:		31%	
viii.	Number of children who are not of statutory school age:		4	
ix.	Percentage of children entitled to free school meals:		20%	

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 St Mary's Primary School is situated in a pleasant rural environment in the village of Glasdrumman, on the main road between Newcastle and Annalong, in County Down. The children come from the village and the surrounding rural area. While the enrolment has remained steady in recent years it has, since the inspection of 1996, declined overall by 25%. Approximately 20% of children are entitled to free school meals and 31% have special educational needs (SEN).

1.2 The arrangements for pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for parents and teachers to complete a confidential questionnaire as well as meeting with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and a group of children from year 6. Fifty questionnaires were issued to parents; approximately 50% were returned to the Department of Education (DE) of which 14 contained additional written comments. Almost all of the responses from the parental questionnaire expressed strongly their support for the work of the school and, in particular highlighted the helpful and supportive staff and the good links with the local community. The few concerns raised were discussed with the Principal. The full-time teachers completed an online questionnaire and their responses were very positive on many aspects of the school's provision including, the caring pastoral provision, the effective team work and good links with the parents. The governors expressed their confidence in the work of the school and referred particularly to the leadership of the Principal, the welcoming ethos, and the high regard for the school within the local community. The year 6 children reported that they felt safe and secure, knew where to seek help in the event of a concern and that they enjoy the range of experiences which they receive in school.

1.3 The inspection focused primarily on the work in mathematics and numeracy and the effectiveness of the school's SEN provision. In addition, the inspection evaluated the work in information and communication technology (ICT) in promoting and supporting learning and teaching in mathematics. The inspection also evaluated the school's procedures for pastoral care, including child protection and the support for the health and well-being of the children.

1.4 The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection has important strengths. The school has procedures in place which implement the guidance outlined in the relevant DE circulars and has identified appropriately an area for improvement which it is currently implementing. Among the strengths are the caring, inclusive and supportive ethos which permeates the school; the well-behaved, courteous and welcoming children; the quality of the working relationships throughout the school; the contribution made by the support staff to the children's well-being and their learning experiences; the quality of the personal development programme which includes the use of circle time; and the children's participation in the wide ranging extra-curricular programme.

1.5 An area for improvement identified includes the need to review the pastoral care policies and procedures in further consultation with the parents and the children.

1.6 The school gives very good attention to promoting health and well-being, including opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity. There are effective programmes in place, for example, healthy break promotion and provision, theme days and communication with parents, which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

2. THE QUALITY OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK

2.1 A caring, courteous, friendly and inclusive atmosphere contributes to the positive ethos of the school. Good routines are well established and, while the ambience is relaxed, there is a good sense of order. Most of the children display excellent standards of behaviour; in class, they settle well to their work, follow instructions and persevere with the tasks they are set; most display a strong commitment to learning; often, they listen attentively and co-operate readily with their teachers and with one another. Indoors, there are colourful displays of the children's personal work, photographs, books and information on local and topical issues; outdoors, there are areas of environmental interest and effective provision for physical play. The staff broaden the learning experiences of the children through involving them in links with other schools and as a result the children have benefitted from a range of educational visits; for example, the school has a long standing and very successful link with a local controlled school involving both the staff and children in curricular work and in residential activities.

2.2 The staff are professional and conscientious in their preparation for lessons and work hard for all of the children. The quality of most of the teaching is good. In the best practice, the teachers engaged the children in worthwhile and challenging activities that were well matched to individual needs. A strong feature of the effective teaching was the imaginative use of ICT by the teachers. To ensure even greater consistency in learning and teaching, the teachers should continue to discuss their strategies and share good practice; further, the work in all classes should be more fully monitored and evaluated.

2.3 The planning for and co-ordination of mathematics is very good. A comprehensive policy and programme have been devised and there are detailed schemes of work which provide guidance to support learning and teaching. The teachers and the co-ordinator of mathematics monitor the performance and standards achieved by the children from year to year; there is a need to make even more effective use of the statistical information available, in order to set realistic targets for the children, and to influence and modify classroom practice. In addition, there is an appropriate action plan for mathematics which sets out appropriate priorities for development.

2.4 In each class, the teaching approaches used ensure that there is a suitable balance between effective whole-class teaching, practical activities, questioning and discussion about mathematics. In key stage 1 cross-curricular work is a good feature of the teaching and is effectively supported by play and activity based learning. In both key stages, the children's interests, home lives and experiences combined with the school's indoor and outdoor environments are used effectively to provide meaningful and familiar contexts to assist mathematical learning.

2.5 In class, a strong focus is placed on sharing the learning outcomes with the children and on the effective consolidation of mathematical topics. The children are keen and willing to work on the many and varied practical, collaborative and written tasks that they are given and work hard to be successful. In all classes, the quality of presentation of work in the children's books is considered appropriately, and for some this could be better. All of the children make steady progress in their mathematical learning and many display an obvious enjoyment of the lessons, for a few, the level of attainment is very good.

2.6 The emphasis being placed on flexible thinking, mental work and mathematical processes is having a very positive effect on developing the children's confidence in dealing with mathematical and problem solving activities. Recent staff development, supported by external advisers has had a positive impact on staff development, on teacher competence and confidence in improving the children's mathematical thinking. To enhance standards, more attention should be given to seeking ways of developing even more investigative activities into the mathematics programme and to emphasise more strongly the value of mathematics for life. Over time, the focus should be on the children developing even more flexibility and spontaneity in their thinking and in being confident in approaching or tackling unfamiliar situations or problems.

2.7 The children enjoy a wide range of experiences using ICT throughout the school; further, it is effectively and, sometimes very imaginatively, used to support the development of the children's numeracy. The school has invested in the provision of whole-class presentation technologies, in particular interactive whiteboards. As a result, a number of good examples of the use of ICT to enhance whole-class teaching were noted. In mathematics lessons, the children's motivation and engagement were greatly enhanced by the effective exploitation of visual images, graphs, digital text and by means of video conferencing links with schools in other countries. All of the children's experiences in the progressive use of ICT are planned for and carefully recorded.

2.8 Through a combination of observation, and the use of standardised and diagnostic tests, the school has identified 31% of the children as requiring additional support with their learning. The Principal, as acting special educational needs co-ordinator, and in consultation with the class teachers and the children's parents, develops the individual educational plans; these are reviewed regularly and appropriate targets are set. The best plans set out meaningful and well-focused learning targets and teaching strategies. The class teachers, supplemented by the effective support of the classroom assistants, provide most of the additional support for the children who respond well and are gaining in confidence in developing their numeracy skills. A small number of children who have specific learning or behavioural needs receive additional support from the Southern Education and Library Board Curriculum Advisory and Support Staff and out of school from outreach centres.

2.9 The work in mathematics is marked regularly and often there are supportive, personalised comments which are both constructive and encouraging; the best marking identifies strengths and areas for improvement. The school, however, recognises the need to promote more fully a much stronger focus on marking for improvement and on target setting by the children themselves.

2.10 The school reports that the staff have come through a difficult professional period which impacted upon morale but that they are now well placed to move forward with confidence.

2.11 The school is organised and managed effectively. The Principal is committed to the life and work of the school, and to the well-being of the children and staff. He brings a strong pastoral focus and enthusiasm to his work and is supported ably by all the staff and by the governors. The Principal has a clear vision for the school and under his leadership good progress has been made on a range of suitable pastoral and curricular developments. In his teaching he is an effective role model for the staff, and he is committed to setting and achieving high standards in learning and teaching. He promotes a collegiate approach to

decision making and is working hard to strengthening the role of the subject co-ordinators. The school has been developing, over time, an increased self-evaluative culture in guiding its work, for example, all of current work is guided by a well-conceived and regularly reviewed school development plan in which, the Principal and staff have identified key areas for further improvement which this inspection endorses.

2.12 The quality of the accommodation is good; there are sufficient outdoor and indoor areas for physical activity and a range of environmental features. The school is generally presented and maintained well, although, some repainting is required to enhance the general learning environment.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 Strengths of the school include:

- the very positive, caring and inclusive ethos and the very good working relationships at all levels;
- the exemplary behaviour of the children and their positive attitude to learning;
- the good standard of most of the teaching in mathematics, effectively supported by ICT;
- the leadership, dedication and commitment of the Principal and the good teamwork which he has developed;
- the strong support of the parents and the governors and, the school's good standing in the local community; and
- the wide range of extra-curricular activities which enrich the children's experiences;

3.2 In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided in this school is very good. 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.

3.3 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.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- To review security at all of the entrance doors to the school.

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