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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
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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

Damhead Primary School
Coleraine

Inspected: January 2009

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BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School:** Damhead Primary Coleraine
 iii. **Date of Inspection:** W/B 12/01/2009
 ii. **School Reference Number:** 301-2225
 iv. **Nature of Inspection:** FI/En/Ma/ICT

B.

School Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Year 1 Intake	28	22	20	20	28
Enrolments					
Primary	162	173	167	162	171
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): 96.9%

Primary & Reception	Nursery Unit	Special Unit
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- D. i. Number of Teachers
 (including the principal and part-time teachers): 7.5 - -
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 22.8 NI PTR: 20.8
- iii. Average Class Size: 24.4
- iv. Class Size (Range): 21 to 32
- v. Ancillary Support:
 Number of Hours **Per Week**:
- | | | |
|------|--|------|
| i. | Clerical support: | 22.5 |
| ii. | Official Making A Good Start Support: | 25 |
| iii. | Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 104 |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 3%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 18%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 6.4%

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Damhead Primary School is situated three miles south of Coleraine, County Londonderry, on the road to Ballymoney. Most of the children travel to school by car from within a radius of approximately six miles; a small number travel by bus. The enrolment has been steady in recent years; the current figure is 171. Six per cent of the children are entitled to receive free school meals. Eighteen per cent of the children have been identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning.

1.2 FOCUS

The inspection focused on the quality of the work in English/literacy and mathematics/numeracy, including the contribution of information and communication technology (ICT) in promoting and supporting the learning in these two areas. 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 of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents and the teaching staff to complete confidential questionnaires prior to the inspection, as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and a group of children from year 6. One hundred and twenty-eight questionnaires were issued to the parents; 44% of these were returned to the Department of Education (DE) and 23 contained written comments. Six of the staff responded to the online questionnaire with one additional written comment. The responses from the parental questionnaires indicated that the parents feel that their children are safe, secure and well-settled at the school.

The governors expressed their appreciation of the positive ethos within the school, the high quality of the pastoral care and the school's reputation within the local community.

The teachers indicated that the pastoral care provided for the children is a strength of the school. They reported that they enjoy working at the school and believe they have opportunities to be involved in the decision-making processes.

The children in year 6 spoke very positively about their experiences in school. They reported that they feel safe and knew to whom they should turn, if they had any concerns about their care and well-being.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) has reported to the Principal and a representative of the governors the main issues emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is very good. The school is characterised by its supportive and inclusive ethos. The atmosphere is warm and friendly, and the working relationships at all levels are mutually respectful. The staff, teaching and non-teaching, are hard-working and dedicated; they promote strongly a positive climate of pastoral care and concern for the children, ensuring the creation of a safe and secure environment in which the children feel at ease. As part of the 'Buddy System', the year 7 children have the opportunity to link with the year 1 children during lunch time. The older children reported how much they enjoy this responsibility.

The children are well-mannered and welcoming to visitors. They are courteous and display exemplary standards of behaviour. Good efforts are made to ensure that the learning environment in the classrooms and corridors is attractive. The bright displays in the classrooms and in the corridors throughout the school celebrate the children's work, record their activities and achievements and provide a supportive environment for learning and teaching. The quality of the cleaning and caretaking is very good.

The school regularly awards achievement incentives to encourage the children's sense of self-esteem and self-confidence. The classroom assistants contribute significantly to promoting and maintaining a pleasant working environment for the children.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect broadly the guidance issued by DE, but the following minor area needs to be addressed: the need to consult more fully with parents when reviewing the policies identified in DE Circular 2003/13.

1.6 HEALTH EATING/PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, through, for example, having healthy breaks and an information evening for parents and children to encourage the adoption of healthy lifestyles.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

The children work well in class, demonstrating a high level of motivation and perseverance in their work. By key stage 2 (KS2), they are capable of working collaboratively in groups, each child taking his or her role within the group with willingness and confidence.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The quality of the provision for literacy is good. The staff have reviewed the literacy policy and have agreed and implemented useful schemes for phonics, reading, writing and spelling. Information and communication technology is used well to extend the children's experiences in literacy and they are confident and competent in their use of computers to support their

work. During the inspection, some very effective lessons were observed in both key stages in which interactive whiteboards, as well as the mobile laptop computers, provided extension and challenge for the children.

There is a good emphasis on the development of the children's oral skills. They listen attentively to each other and their teachers. In a small number of classes, discussions tend to be dominated by the teachers and there is insufficient opportunity for the children to build on their oral language skills. In the best practice observed, skilful questioning by the teachers was used to extend the children's language and ideas. In these lessons, the children responded positively to the teacher's challenging questions. By the end of KS2, the children discuss a wide range of issues; many are able to make sustained contributions.

Reading is taught systematically and effectively through the use of a wide range of appropriate support materials such as novels, 'big books' and reference materials. As the children move through the school, the teachers employ strategies such as shared, guided, modelled and independent reading to extend the children's experiences and improve their reading ability. The children enjoy reading, and talk with enthusiasm about what they have read. Two of the classroom assistants have recently trained as 'Reading Partners' to work with year 3 children to support them in their reading. By the end of KS2, the children achieve good standards in reading in line with their abilities.

In recent years, the school has focused on developing the children's writing skills and providing them with an appropriate range of opportunities for writing. As the children progress through the school, they are introduced to a range of forms and styles linked appropriately with other areas of the curriculum and to their interests. By year 7, the examples of the children's personal writing include poetry, letter writing, book reviews, descriptions, stories and reports.

By the end of KS2, a majority of the children achieve or surpass the expected level of attainment in English, and approximately one-sixth achieve the highest level of attainment. Despite the range and quality of the writing observed during the inspection, there is a need to raise the standards the children achieve in literacy.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The quality of the mathematics provision is satisfactory. The teachers plan the children's experiences using whole-school guidance that provides a broad and balanced coverage of number, shape and space, measures and handling data. They are aware of the need for review in light of the revised curriculum; a greater emphasis on mathematical processes and mental mathematics strategies is also needed. The children are given suitable opportunities to develop their mathematical knowledge and understanding through a range of experiences, including using practical equipment and being able to work in pairs and groups. Appropriately, the children also apply their mathematics in context within other areas of the curriculum, for example, displaying graphically the effect of exercise on heart rate. To ensure progression in the children's mathematical learning and a raising of the standards they achieve, the teachers need to provide more challenging activities, for example, problem-posing as well as problem-solving; to extend the opportunities for the children to explain their mathematical reasoning; and, to develop further links with other areas of the curriculum or everyday situations.

The teachers use effectively the interactive whiteboards and appropriate programmes to enhance their teaching, to engage the children's interest and to promote mathematical understanding.

By the end of KS2, a majority of the children achieve or surpass the expected level of attainment in mathematics, and approximately one-third achieve the highest level of attainment. During the inspection, while the older children demonstrated their knowledge of important ideas and concepts, for example, place value and multiplication facts, they were unsure of the most effective mental mathematics strategies and were slow to demonstrate flexibility in their mathematical thinking. Appropriately, the school has identified the need to develop further these aspects of the children's mathematical understanding and skills in order to raise the standards the children achieve in numeracy.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The teachers' daily planning is effective and they prepare well for their lessons. The staff are in the process of reviewing and revising their medium-term planning in line with the broad aims of the new curriculum. Appropriately, the teachers are evaluating their planning and teaching to aid this review. In the best practice, teachers are including the conclusions from the ongoing assessment of the children's learning in their evaluations. Overall, however, the teachers need to focus more on whether the children have achieved the intended learning.

3.2 TEACHING

The quality of the teaching in three-quarters of the lessons observed was good or better, and in about one-fifth, it was outstanding. In most lessons observed the intended learning was clear and shared with the children; the activities and experiences were well planned and matched well to the children's abilities; there was a good balance between individual, paired and group activities; appropriate resources supported the children's learning; there was effective support from the classroom assistants; and, there was appropriate pace and challenge.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

The teachers mark the children's work regularly and thoroughly. In the best practice, particularly in literacy, the teachers supplement their encouraging comments by helpful insights that indicate how the children can improve their work. Other effective Assessment for Learning strategies are used; for example, the children have opportunities to communicate simply their self-evaluations to the teacher. The teachers' assessments are supplemented appropriately by the use of a range of standardised tests.

3.4 ADDITIONAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The school has a very inclusive and welcoming ethos for children with additional needs. Thirty-one children have been identified as requiring help with their learning. The school uses the teachers' knowledge and experience to identify early those children requiring additional help and provides appropriate and effective intervention through which the children make progress. This assistance is provided for the children through support in class,

withdrawal sessions and team-teaching. The recently appointed special educational needs co-ordinator is systematic and effective in her work; she works diligently to liaise with and support the teachers and they, in turn, take responsibility for the in-class implementation of Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Pertinent IEPs featuring concise targets have been drawn up; these are subject to regular review and to further development. The school receives beneficial multi-disciplinary support for those children requiring specialised help through, for example, the services of the North-Eastern Education and Library Board Literacy Teaching Support Service and Educational Psychology Service.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The Principal has been in place for 13 years, during which time the enrolment and reputation of the school within the community have grown. She has shown commitment and dedication to the life and work of the school, and embraced willingly the additional duties and work linked to the new school building. She has developed good working relationships amongst the staff.

The governors and Principal have identified the need to review the roles and responsibilities of the co-ordinators. The inspection findings strongly endorse this priority, particularly their role in leading the monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the children achieve higher standards in literacy and numeracy.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The school's process for improvement is linked to a satisfactory school development plan (SDP).

There are some effective policies and action plans in place, for example, those relating to Personal Development and Mutual Understanding which support a positive learning environment. It is important that the management and staff take account of the children's standards in literacy and numeracy when prioritising areas to improve. The SDP is compliant with the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005, although it needs to reflect better the aims of DE Circular 2007/11.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the inclusive and welcoming ethos;
- the courteous, well-behaved and polite children;
- the good or better quality of most of the teaching;
- the very good arrangements for pastoral care;
- the very effective support for, and inclusion of, the children requiring additional help with their learning; and
- the hard-work and dedication of the Principal, teachers and non-teaching staff.

5.2 The areas for improvement include the need:

- to revise the SDP to ensure that there is an appropriate focus on literacy and numeracy;
- to improve the monitoring and evaluation of the provision and the standards the children achieve in literacy and numeracy; and
- to review the roles and responsibilities within the school.

5.3 In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this school is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively.

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

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