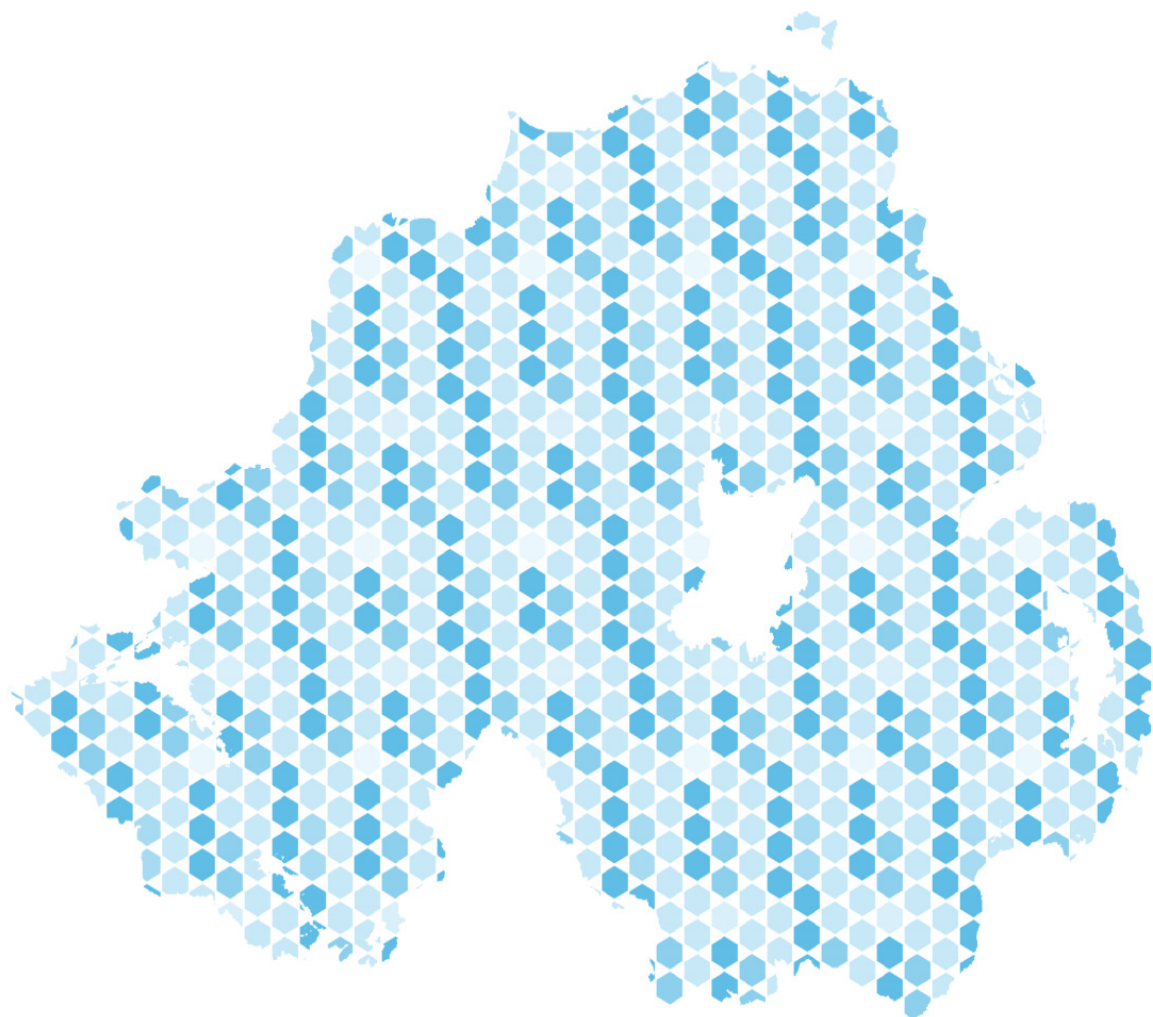


# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Braniel Primary School and  
Nursery Unit, Belfast

Report of an Inspection  
in February 2011

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In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

## BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Braniel Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 21/02/11**  
 ii. **School Reference Number: 401-1683** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

<b>School Year</b>	<b>2006/07</b>	<b>2007/08</b>	<b>2008/09</b>	<b>2009/10</b>	<b>2010/11</b>
Year 1 Intake	32	38	34	34	44
<b>Enrolments</b>					
Primary	291	290	274	259	263
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Unit	78	72	75	72	78
Special Unit	0	0	0	0	0
Irish Medium 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): 94.6% **NI Avg Att: 94.9%**
- |  | <b>Primary &amp;<br/>Reception</b> | <b>Nursery<br/>Unit</b> | <b>Special<br/>Unit</b> | <b>Irish Medium<br/>Unit</b> |
|--|------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
|--|------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
- D. i. Number of Teachers  
 (including the principal and part-time teachers): 16 2 0 0  
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 19 NI PTR: 20.7
- iii. Average Class Size: 20
- iv. Class Size (Range): 16 to 32
- v. Ancillary Support:  
 Number of Hours **Per Week**:
- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| i. Clerical support:  | 30    |
| ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support:           | 102.5 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 72.5  |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 1.5%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 15.5%
- viii. Number of children who are not of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 15.5%
- x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2009/10 who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics:
- |  | <b>English</b> | <b>Mathematics</b> |
|--|----------------|--------------------|
|  | 80.1           | 81.3               |

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Braniel Primary School is situated on a large site on the edge of Braniel estate. The majority of the children come from the immediate surroundings. The enrolment of the school has fluctuated slightly over the past three years and currently stands at 263 children within the primary school; the enrolment in the Nursery Unit stands at 78. Approximately 15% of the children are entitled to free school meals. The school has identified 15% of the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning.

### 1.2 FOCUS

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy;
- the quality of provision for learning; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

In addition, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning, and the school's arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection were evaluated.

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

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents, and the teaching and support staff 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 the children from year 6.

Seventy-six questionnaires were issued to the parents of the nursery unit; approximately 39% were returned to the Inspection Services Branch (ISB) and 14 contained additional written comments. Almost all comments were highly supportive of the nursery and included mention of the friendly, highly motivated staff and the well organised learning environment. One hundred and thirty one questionnaires were issued to the parents of the primary school; approximately 37% were returned to the ISB and fifteen contained additional written comments. A majority of the comments reflected favourably on the professionalism and approachability of the staff.

Fifteen of the teaching staff and five members of the support staff responded to the online questionnaires. Most of the responses were positive although a small number identified the need to improve working relationships within the school.

An analysis of the questionnaires and the written comments was shared with the Principal and the governors.

In the discussions held with the governors they expressed strong support for the life and work of the school and the nursery unit and in particular praised the commitment of the Principal and the hard work of the staff.

In discussions held with the year 6 children they talked openly, positively and with great enthusiasm about their experiences in the school; for example they reported that the wide variety of reward systems employed encouraged them to work hard and helped develop their confidence. The children indicated that they know what to do and who to turn to if they have any concerns regarding their work or their safety and well-being.

#### 1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school and the nursery unit is very good. In particular, there is a strong and effective emphasis on the development of the children's confidence and self-esteem. All of the teachers, well supported by the Principal in this area, promote and reward positive behaviour through their consistent application of a wide range of strategies and rewards. There is an appropriate and well-conceived balance between sanctions and rewards, and the Principal has played a key role in ensuring this balance operates effectively and in the best interests of the children. The children have the opportunity to influence decisions about school life through the recently formed school council. The range of extra curricular activities and opportunities to participate in inter-school competitions enhances the learning experiences for the children.

#### 1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school has very good comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. The arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. The school has identified the need for the governors to update aspects of the training in safeguarding in line with the availability of the South-Eastern Education and Library Board training courses.

#### 1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. Across the school the children have regular opportunities for energetic outdoor play and sports, which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles; for example, last year the children participated successfully in the Northern Ireland Creative Movement Aerobic Championships.

#### 1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

There are good links between the school and the local community. The parent-teacher association is supportive of the school; for example, helping to refurbish the library and purchasing additional reading resources. The parents receive regular newsletters and information about events in the school and the school website contains photographic records of recent activities for each class.

The school has developed very effective links with other local schools through sports and drama events and competitions such as hosting the Maths Challenge.

Good links have been established with local businesses and the community and these extend the children's understanding of the wider world; for example a whole school presentation from Take Action Against Polio during the inspection. The school makes good use of the expertise of statutory organisations and external agencies to enhance the provision for the children.

## **2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS**

### **2.1 LEARNING**

The children settle quickly to work and are well-engaged in their learning; they enjoy their activities and experiences, listen attentively, respect the staff and, when given the opportunity, they work well collaboratively and in small groups. The behaviour of the children during the inspection was very good.

An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 assessment data shows that the school's performance in English has fluctuated. In three of the last four years the performance has been above or in line with the Northern Ireland average and the average for schools in the same free school meals category.

An analysis of the KS2 assessment data over the past four years shows that, in mathematics, the school's performance has improved from being below the Northern Ireland (NI) average to being in line with the NI average. Compared with schools in the same free school meals category, the levels of attainment in mathematics are just below the average.

### **2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY**

The overall quality of the provision for English and literacy is very good.

The weekly and half-termly planning for literacy provides a very good framework for progression in talking and listening, reading and writing. The literacy co-ordinator monitors and evaluates the quality of the provision effectively; for example, she observes lessons and gives the teachers supportive feedback which clearly indicates ways to improve their teaching of English. She has also identified important areas for the development of literacy which are strongly linked to the school development plan (SDP).

The teachers support the development of the children's spoken language and thinking skills well through effective, open-ended questions which enable the children to make extended contributions to discussion in the classroom. In the foundation stage (FS), the teachers consistently encourage the children to answer in full sentences; the children's oral skills are further developed through songs, rhymes and well-structured play-based learning activities. There is a good range of opportunities for the children in KS1 and KS2 to work in pairs or small groups and engage with a variety of audiences. The children interact well with one another and respond appropriately.

The school has a systematic programme in place for the development of the children's reading skills; as part of the literacy action plan, the teachers have reviewed the teaching of shared and guided reading, good practice has been identified and very good support materials have been disseminated. Across the school a phonics scheme is consistently applied to support the reading programme. By the end of KS2 most of the children are reading in line with their ability; they are fluent, expressive and confident when encountering new words. The enjoyment of reading is promoted further through timetabled silent reading in class, visits to the school library and through the "Time to Read" initiative for children in year 5. Most of the children in year 3 who are involved in the Reading Partnership programme make significant progress.

Most of the children achieve very good standards in writing. Their achievements are celebrated in prominent displays in classrooms and corridors. In the FS the children are encouraged to "have a go" at writing and experiment with print for a variety of purposes during structured play and in formal lessons. In KS1 the children become increasingly

independent as writers through a wide range of opportunities to write in contexts which are well matched to their ability and experiences. The children in KS2 write competently in a range of genres and for different audiences. The teachers' thoughtful verbal and written comments help the children improve the quality of their writing.

Information and communication technology is used effectively for research, particularly in topic work, to improve the presentation of written work and to support the editing and drafting of the children's writing.

## **2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY**

The quality of the provision in mathematics and numeracy is good.

The programme for mathematics provides the children with a wide range of experiences in number, shape and space, measures and data-handling. The numeracy co-ordinator has a clear vision for the development of mathematics within the school and she provides very good support for the teachers through, for example, the development of a scheme of work for mental mathematics. Lines of progression have been developed to support teachers in their planning for continuity, progression and differentiation in their classes. The school has identified appropriately the need to develop the monitoring and evaluating role of the co-ordinator.

In the FS the teachers are developing mathematical concepts, skills and language through a variety of games, activities and practical mathematics lessons. In most of the lessons observed at KS1 and KS2, the children were given opportunities to consolidate and extend their learning through an appropriate range of teaching activities such as paired and group work, practical tasks, discussion, investigation and problem-solving. Sessions of mental mathematics were a feature at the start of the lessons and were used well to enhance the children's understanding. In the best practice, the children were given opportunities to develop their ability to reason, explain and present their mathematical findings and to broaden their mathematical language.

During the inspection the children in year 4 demonstrated their ability to think mathematically across all areas of the curriculum and to talk with confidence about their learning. They had a good knowledge and understanding of time, shape and space and place value. In year 7, the children demonstrated excellent knowledge and understanding of number facts, shape and space, and data-handling. They also showed awareness of effective mental mathematics strategies, with some flexibility in their mathematical thinking. By the end of KS2, almost all of the children achieve good standards in mathematics and are working at a level in line with, or above, their ability.

Effective use is made of a range of ICT, including interactive games, websites and programmable devices to support learning and teaching in mathematics.

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

### **3.1 PLANNING**

There is very thorough and consistent planning undertaken by all the teachers which supports well the day to day work of the school including giving effective guidance to support staff. In almost all cases, the teachers' evaluations of learning inform effectively future planning.

## 3.2 TEACHING

During the inspection, the quality of teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to very good, with most of the lessons being good or better. In the best practice, lessons were well paced and managed with appropriate challenge for all the children; learning intentions were clearly shared and revisited in the course of the lesson with children availing of the opportunity to talk about their learning at the end of the lesson. Learning was often linked to real life contexts and effective links were also made across curriculum areas.

Where the practice was less effective, the pace was slow, learning intentions unclear, the level of challenge was not matched to the abilities of all the children and there were missed opportunities to develop the learning in literacy and numeracy.

## 3.3 ASSESSMENT

The teachers mark the children's written work regularly and supportively and provide prompt oral feedback to improve learning; in particular the school is piloting a system focusing on writing which enables the teachers and the children to evaluate the effectiveness of the work.

The school uses a range of standardised and non standardised tests; the teachers have recently begun to use assessment data in order to track individual children and identify underachievement. The school has identified this appropriately as an important area for development in the SDP. From as early as pre-school the children are involved in self assessment with the 'I Can' initiative continuing into FS.

## 3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The quality of the provision for special educational needs (SEN) is very good.

The recently appointed special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) provides very good leadership and management of the provision. She draws up effective individual education plans (IEPs) for children who require them, in consultation with the class teacher, parents, classroom assistants and external agencies, where appropriate. The children are involved in the target-setting process and in their regular review. The withdrawal support for literacy is closely linked to the targets set in IEPs and to the work in class. The children respond well to this support, are gaining in confidence and all are making satisfactory to good progress. The classroom assistants work well alongside class teachers to support the wide range of needs of the children.

The children who make appropriate progress are removed from the Register but are monitored to ensure they continue to build on their successes. The school recognises the need to analyse more systematically the diagnostic and standardised performance data to enable them to evaluate more effectively the extent to which its SEN arrangements lead to improvements in the standards achieved by the children.

# 4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

## 4.1 LEADERSHIP

The overall quality of leadership and management is good.

The Principal is in her third year in the post and has worked hard and been successful in raising the profile of the school in the local community and beyond. She has provided very good leadership in learning and teaching through, for example, delivering whole school

training in the use of data to promote improvement and developing the roles of the co-ordinators. Additionally, in this relatively short time she has overseen major refurbishment of the school estate including the erection of new boundary fencing, the improvement of traffic safety outside the school and a new access system for the whole school. Senior management now needs to develop further the collegial approach to school development and decision making in line with the school target to develop an assessment team.

#### 4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The SDP sets out appropriate priorities for the medium and longer term. The accompanying action plans underpin well and provide the necessary detail required to complement the whole school priorities. The SDP is compliant with the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005.

#### 4.3 ACCOMMODATION

Very good use is made of all the available space in the school; the staff work diligently to create inviting learning environments in the classrooms and in the corridors, providing areas to celebrate the children's learning. The school buildings and grounds are maintained to a very high standard.

### 5. CONCLUSION

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

- the well-mannered, respectful children who engage enthusiastically in their learning;
- the very good quality of the provision for children who have special educational needs;
- the very good quality of the pastoral care provided for the children;
- the good standards achieved by the children in English and mathematics;
- the quality of the teaching observed during the inspection, most of which was good or very good; and
- the very good curricular leadership of the Principal.

#### 5.2 The area for improvement is the need to:

- raise further the standards through, for example, the more effective use of performance data as identified in the School Development Plan.

5.2 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 an area for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the school's progress on this area for improvement.

## 6. THE NURSERY UNIT

6.1 The main strengths within the nursery unit's educational and pastoral provision are as follows:

- the friendly, caring atmosphere in the nursery unit and the exemplary behaviour of the children;
- the good, and on occasions very good, learning opportunities provided in all areas of the pre-school curriculum;
- the skilful interactions of the staff which help to promote the children's self-confidence and independence;
- the comprehensive methods of planning and monitoring and recording the children's progress;
- the good support provided for the children with special educational needs; and
- the good teamwork among the dedicated teaching and support staff.

6.2 The inspection has identified the following area for improvement.

- There is a need to review aspects of the organisation of the day to ensure that all time is used more effectively to promote learning.

6.3 In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the nursery unit is good. The nursery has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified an area for improvement which the nursery has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the nursery's progress on this area for improvement.

# **STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON BRANIEL PRIMARY SCHOOL NURSERY UNIT, BELFAST**

## **1. Details of Children**

<b>Number of children:</b>	<b>Class 1</b>	<b>Class 2</b>
Attending full-time	26	0
Attending part-time	0	52
Under 3 years of age*	0	29
With statement of SEN**	1	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4***	1	0
At CoP stages 1 or 2***	0	0
With English as an additional language	0	1

\* On 1 July.

\*\* Special Educational Needs.

\*\*\* The stages refer to those set out in the Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs.

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	5%
Average attendance for the previous year.	92%

## **2. Duration of Sessions**

<b>Full-time</b>	<b>Part-time: am</b>	<b>Part-time: pm</b>
4½ hours	2½ hours	2½ hours

## **3. Details of Staff**

<b>Number of:</b>	<b>Full-Time</b>	<b>Part-Time</b>
Teachers	2	0
Nursery Assistants	0	0
Qualified Nursery Assistants	2	0

<b>Number of: ****</b>	
Students	4
Trainees	0

\*\*\*\* Total placements since September of current year

## **4. Parental Questionnaires (to be completed by Inspection Services Branch)**

Number issued	76
Percentage returned	39%
Number of written comments	14

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