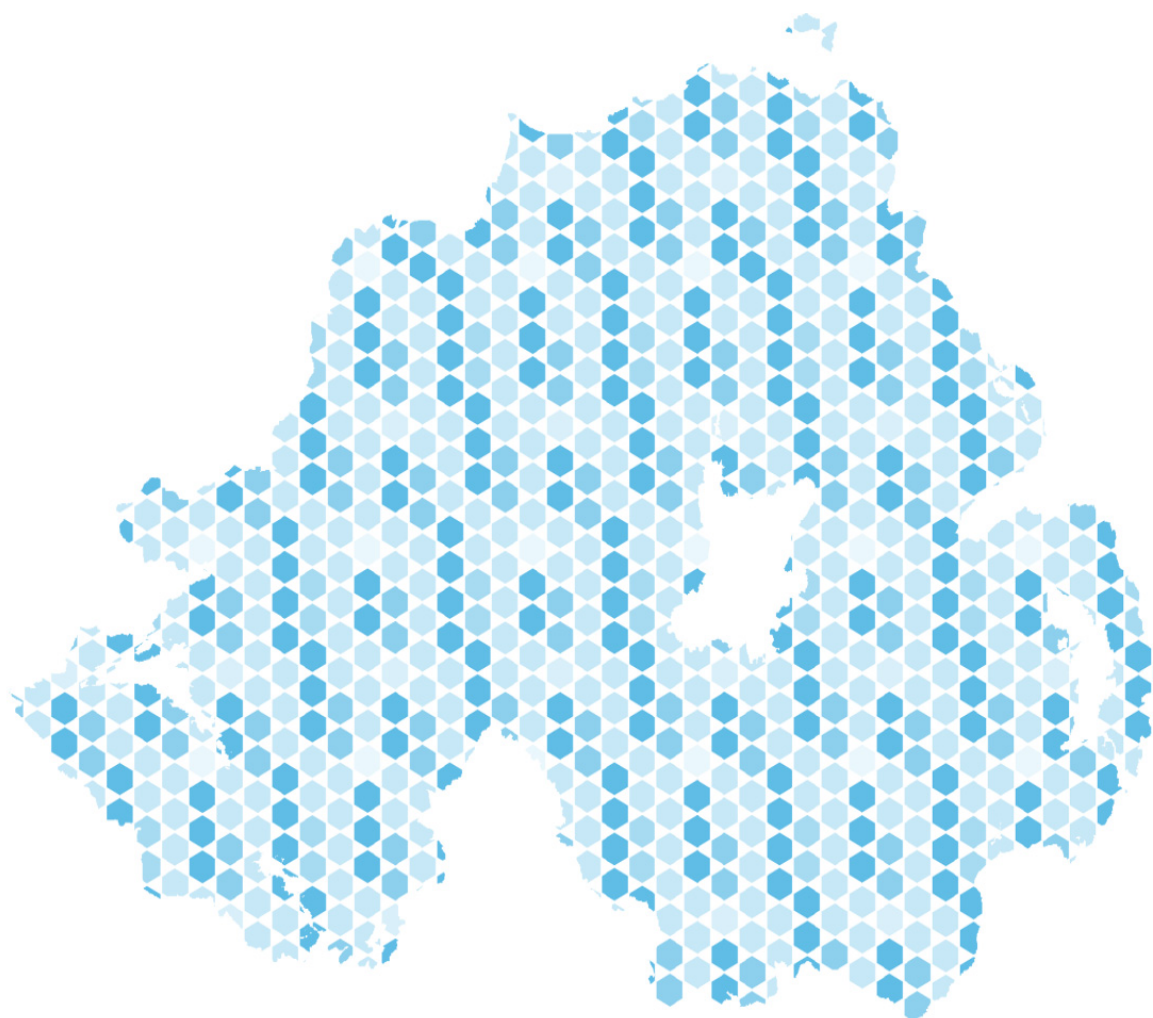


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Bunscoil an Iuir, Newry

Report of an Inspection
in October 2010

CONTENTS

Section		Page
	STATISTICAL INFORMATION	
1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS	2
3.	THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING	4
4.	LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	5
5.	CONCLUSION	6
	APPENDICES	

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: Bunscoil an Iuir, Newry** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 18/10/10**
- ii. **School Reference Number: 504-6597** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Year 1 Intake	16	23	21	21	12
Enrolments					
Primary	84	102	104	109	109
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Unit	0	0	0	0	0
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): | | 93.2% | NI Avg Att: 94.9% | |
| | | | Primary &
Reception | Nursery
Unit | Special
Unit |
| | | | | | Irish Medium
Unit |
| D. | i. | Number of Teachers
(including the principal and part-time teachers):
(Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours) | 6.4 | 0 | 0 |
| | ii. | PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): | 17.03 | NI PTR: 20.7 | |
| | iii. | Average Class Size: | 18.2 | | |
| | iv. | Class Size (Range): | 12 to 24 | | |
| | v. | Ancillary Support:
Number of Hours Per Week: | | | |
| | | i. Clerical support: | | 27.5 | |
| | | ii. Foundation Stage Classroom
Assistant Support: | | 40 | |
| | | iii. Additional hours of other
classroom assistant support: | | 0 | |
| | vi. | Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: | | 1.83% | |
| | vii. | Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: | | 9.17% | |
| | viii. | Number of children who are not of statutory school age: | | 0 | |
| | ix. | Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: | | 23.85% | |
| | x. | Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2009/10
who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics: | English
72.73% | Mathematics
81.82% | |

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Bunscoil an Iúir is an Irish-medium, co-educational primary school situated off Kilmorey Street, near the city centre of Newry. The school was established in 1988 and achieved grant-aided status in 1998. The enrolment has increased gradually over the past five years and stands currently at 109. The school has a wide catchment area drawing its pupils from both the greater South Down and South Armagh areas. Around 24% of the children are entitled to free school meals. The school has identified just over 9% of the children as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning and behaviour.

The caretaker has been prominent in fostering the environmental awareness of the children. He has developed a creative outdoor area to provide the children with an enhanced experience of a natural habitat; the school won the Newry and Mourne District Council Wildlife Gardening competition for the ingenious use of small space.

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 staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection as well as a meeting with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors), and a group of children in year 6.

Seventy-seven questionnaires were issued to parents; 46 (60%) were returned to Inspection Services Branch and 24 contained additional written comments. The responses from the questionnaires and written comments indicate high levels of satisfaction with the work of the school. The parents value, in particular, the friendly, caring atmosphere, the strong sense of community and the hard work of the teachers. The children in year 6 reported that they felt safe and happy in school. They know where to get help in the event of any concern.

The governors are very supportive of the life and work of the school. They are proud of its distinctive Irish language ethos and the prestige it enjoys within the local and wider community. They mentioned that they are aware of their role and challenge function to promote a successful school in the interests of the learners.

Four teachers and six support staff completed confidential questionnaires with three teachers and four support staff providing additional written comments. Most of the teaching staff who responded raised concerns in relation to a number of areas including a lack of involvement in the school development planning process and a need for greater teamwork at all levels; these issues were explored with the Principal and the governors.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The school is characterised by a warm, caring ethos; the pastoral care of the children is good. All staff, teaching and non-teaching, contribute positively to the children's well-being. The children's achievements and efforts are recognised at the weekly assemblies. The children are well-behaved and mannerly; they show respect to their teachers and to one another. The working relationships between the teachers and the children are very good. The school promotes positive behaviour and has in place a suitable policy and arrangements to address any bullying issues that may arise.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school has very good comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education (DE).

1.6 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The school provides end-of-year reports and formal meetings to keep the parents informed of their children's progress. The parents are encouraged also to talk to staff about their child's progress on a regular basis and know that they do not have to wait for an organised parent/teacher interview. There is an Irish-medium mini-club which is available to children in years 1-3 each day after school; in addition, an after-school homework club caters for 16 children from across both key stages. The school's extended provision adds greatly to the children's experiences through a wide range of sporting, musical and cultural activities.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 DE BENCHMARKING DATA

An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 assessment data over the past four years shows that in Irish, English and mathematics, the school's performance is below the Northern Ireland average. When compared with schools in the same free school meals category, the level of attainment in Irish, English and mathematics is below the average.

2.2 LEARNING

The children have a positive attitude and settle immediately to their work. They are attentive and listen well to each other and to their teachers. They enjoy group and paired activities but often whole-class work predominates. When given the opportunity they can give extended responses to the teacher's questions. The older children are beginning to develop independence in their learning.

2.3 IRISH, ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The overall quality of provision in Irish and English is inadequate and the children's achievements and their standards in bi-literacy are consistently below the expected levels.

The school is reviewing its schemes for literacy and the co-ordinator has drawn up a helpful action plan. As a result of an audit of provision, the teachers are focusing currently on shared and guided reading approaches followed by assessment and resources. English is introduced formally to the children's curriculum in year 3.

The teachers and support staff generally promote well the development of the children's oral communication skills. Talking and listening are used effectively in most classes through whole-class questioning and the teachers encourage extended oral responses from the children with varying degrees of success. Within the foundation stage (FS), the children develop their spoken Irish and appropriate attention is given to the acquisition of vocabulary. In most of the lessons observed in the FS, however, there were missed opportunities to build on the children's previous learning in relation to the development of language and communication, and emergent reading and writing skills. A majority of the children are achieving a standard below that which is expected for their age.

In KS1, the children develop their spoken Irish and English well and demonstrate high levels of proficiency. In KS2, the children have gained very good oral skills in both languages.

Appropriately the teaching of reading has been identified by the school as an area for development. The children in KS1 have a range of reading opportunities and they enjoy shared and guided reading activities. The teachers make use of several commercial reading schemes supplemented by class novels. The older children engage in periods of silent reading and they also complete book reports. However, the majority of the children at both KS1 and KS2 are achieving a standard below that which is expected for their age. There are inconsistencies in the teaching of reading skills and in implementing a consistent phonics scheme to enable the children to deal with unfamiliar words. The children's reading levels within and across the key stages need to be monitored more rigorously. In addition, there needs to be a greater emphasis on the development of a book-rich environment throughout the school including additional reading resources as the children have to share their class novels.

The teachers are beginning to develop their approaches to creative writing and samples of the children's written work are now retained to monitor their progress. In the FS, the children can write letters and simple sentences, and, as they progress they experience good opportunities for modelled and creative writing, and comprehension work. The older children enjoy a wider range of writing experiences including poems, letters and simple pen pictures about themselves. There are some good instances of the children writing using empathy and responding to the class novel in English. This practice should become more widespread in both Irish and English. There is scope to celebrate and display the children's work more prominently in the classrooms, and the school needs to review the range and balance of the writing that the children experience across the curriculum. The more able pupils require greater challenge with well-planned extension activities. The approach to the development of literacy is too fragmented; a more integrated approach is required linking more closely the skills of reading, writing and talking and listening.

2.4 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Information and communication technology is used well in a minority of lessons to support the children's acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills. The children use the interactive whiteboards to test and develop their mental mathematics and the teachers exploit key words and phrases in both Irish and in English as an aid to promoting the children's writing skills. In addition, the children are beginning to email their homework to their teachers; they record news and weather bulletins with a view to improving their presentation skills. There were, however, some instances of ineffective use of ICT which resulted in poor classroom management. In general, the teachers need to integrate ICT more purposefully into their lessons.

2.5 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The overall quality of provision in mathematics is inadequate.

While a small number of the children in each year group attain the expected standard in mathematics, overall the provision for mathematics and numeracy is inadequate.

There is a variation in the quality of teaching of mathematics. A minority of the work observed was good, in particular in KS2, whereas a significant minority needs to improve. In the best practice, the children were given time to think about their work and encouraged to share their understanding with others. In the less effective practice, the work was over-directed by the teacher and there was an over-emphasis on pencil and paper exercises. On occasions, particularly in the FS and KS1, the tasks provided were poorly matched to the differing needs of the children and there was insufficient focus on the learning outcomes expected. In KS2 there was a better balance between practical, oral and written work which provided increased opportunities for the children to develop a sounder understanding of all areas of mathematics. The teachers throughout the school need to invest in a wider range of more challenging investigative and problem-solving activities to develop more fully the children's ability to think mathematically and to raise further the standards achieved, particularly by the more able children.

The whole-school planning and management of mathematics requires greater cohesion in order to raise the children's standards of attainment. The teachers require a planned programme of staff development, focusing on teaching strategies to support the wide range of abilities within their classes; appropriately, the school development plan (SDP) identifies this need; and external support is due to commence this term to help build the capacity and expertise of the staff in ensuring that the quality of the provision in mathematics is consistently good across the school.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The school has an agreed format to its planning across the curriculum. It comprises both weekly and half-termly schemes of work which contain an appropriate emphasis on key learning outcomes, pupil activities, resources to be used and opportunities for assessment. The few instances of effective joint planning which have led to good learning and teaching need to be extended in order to ensure a more collaborative approach across the whole staff. The planning overall is targeted at the whole class; it does not take sufficient account of the learning needs and outcomes for individual children and groups of children.

3.2 TEACHING

Most of the teaching observed during the inspection was satisfactory or better and a small number of lessons were very good. In a minority of the lessons, however, the quality of the teaching observed was inadequate. In the best practice observed, the work provided was well matched to the level of ability of the children. The lessons were also characterised by a suitably brisk pace and a range of purposeful activities which engaged the children fully; the children worked effectively in groups or pairs and they responded with enthusiasm and were motivated to learn. In these instances, ICT was also used well by the children to achieve the learning outcomes set for them.

Where teaching was less effective, the needs of all of the children were not met fully, and the teachers did not build upon the children's prior knowledge and achievements. There was a predominance of teacher-led approaches in a majority of these lessons and opportunities to develop language and mathematical thinking, and the children's skills, were missed. Often, due to the prolonged whole-class nature of the interaction, the children became disinterested and made slow progress.

At the FS, the children learn through a range of play-based and more formal activities. However, there is inconsistency in the quality of adult interactions with the children, and in the teaching strategies employed which affect adversely the learning outcomes for the children. The teachers need to begin immediately to develop further the play-based learning provision and to use it more effectively to support the development of the children's skills and learning across all areas of the curriculum, especially in literacy and numeracy.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

The teachers mark the children's work assiduously and, in the best practice, give effective feedback to the children to improve their work. This practice needs to be disseminated more fully throughout the school. Detailed portfolios relating to the children's work are passed on and shared each year. The school has made a good start to monitoring the children's progress through the use of standardised and non-standardised tests and in using effective methods of tracking pupil progress, benchmarking performance and target setting. The teachers need to interpret the data more systematically in order to relate it more closely to their classroom practice. The staff are gaining a better understanding of the assessment levels at the end of each key stage; they would benefit from participating in moderation activities and working in clusters with other schools. It is inappropriate for the school to enter children in year 7 for the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) Irish examination; the children would benefit more from a stronger focus on the primary curriculum.

3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The school's provision for the children who have special educational needs (SEN) is inadequate.

The school has identified just over 9% of the children with additional learning or behavioural needs, including a small number of children with statements of educational need. The children requiring help receive in-class support from their teachers and classroom assistants; a small number of children are withdrawn individually for extra support for specific learning difficulties, provided by the peripatetic services of the Southern Education and Library Board. A significant minority of the children are gaining gradually in confidence and skills, and have made satisfactory progress. However, there needs to be a more cohesive whole-school approach to SEN, particularly in the area of early diagnosis and individualised intervention. The teachers need to ensure that each child makes the progress of which he/she is capable.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The quality of strategic leadership across the school is inadequate.

4.2 The Principal has been in post since 1997 and she has worked hard to raise the profile and standing of the school which celebrated its twentieth anniversary recently. She gives a high priority to the future sustainability of the school and has overseen a growth in the enrolment in recent years. The Principal knows the children well and is caring and committed to their welfare.

4.3 The staffing comprises a teaching Principal and five assistant teachers. Although two of the teachers are long serving, the remainder have qualified within the last eight years. The teaching Principal has a wide remit; she leads several important curricular areas. In order to promote a more collegial, whole staff approach to the work of the school and to develop the middle management tier, it is essential for the governors to support her in relinquishing a number of her roles and responsibilities. Although the subject co-ordinators have made a good start to developing their curricular areas, more needs to be done if the whole-school targets for improvement are to be met. More regular, frequent and focused staff meetings to address shared whole-school targets would benefit the teachers in supporting the children's learning.

4.4 The school is beginning to collate data and to monitor pupil performance in order to inform learning and teaching. It will be important that the teachers gain an overview of the trends in pupil attainment. The school recognises this as an area for improvement.

4.5 The teachers require further staff development opportunities; their development priorities will need to be reviewed in light of the inspection findings, and focused support put in place to ensure that the needs of all of the children are met. There is a need for better dissemination across the school of the good practice which already exists.

4.6 The SDP contains too many priorities and associated action plans for the school to take forward realistically. It will be necessary for the Principal, along with the teachers, to reduce the number of priorities and to re-focus the strategic direction of the school in order to effect improvement, raise standards in literacy and numeracy and implement more fully the requirements of the revised curriculum and, in particular, the development of the children's skills. The organisation of the day should also be reviewed to ensure that all available time is used effectively to promote the children's learning.

4.7 It is opportune that the recently constituted Board of Governors in adopting their challenge function, play a more active role in supporting the Principal and teachers to concentrate collectively on raising standards of achievement for all of the children. The governors will need to give significant time to assist the teaching Principal in the development of policy and in the implementation of a revised SDP.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the positive ethos of the school;
- the mannerly and well-behaved children;
- the good working relationships between the teachers and the children;
- the children's high level of proficiency in spoken Irish;

- the good quality of pastoral care; and
- the support of the parents and governors for the work of the school.

5.2 The areas for improvement include the need:

- for better strategic leadership by both the governors and the Principal to effect improvement and to raise the standards achieved by all of the children;
- for the Principal and the teachers to implement more fully the revised curriculum, in particular, the development of the children's skills in literacy and numeracy; and
- for a more collegiate approach to include the development of a middle management tier to provide firmer curricular direction to the work of the school.

5.3 In almost all of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is inadequate; the areas for improvement outweigh the strengths in the provision. The inspection has identified significant areas for improvement in standards, in learning and teaching, and in leadership and management, which need to be addressed urgently if the school is to meet effectively the needs of all of the children. The school will require well-focused, external support to help them take forward the areas identified for improvement.

5.4 The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement, over a 12-18 month period.

ACCOMMODATION

- The school is situated in confined premises at the back of a Business Park in Kilmorey Street, Newry.
- Yard space, play areas and storage space are very limited.
- The school lacks a playing field/green area to develop and encourage physical activity and to assist with the delivery of key areas of the curriculum.
- The number of toilets is inadequate for the current enrolment.

HEALTH & SAFETY

- There is traffic congestion at set-down and pick-up times.
- The rear entrance gate to the school premises is left open during the school-day.
- The heavy doors on the toilets are too difficult for the younger children to open and close.
- The toilets lack suitable visibility.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2010

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the ETI website: www.etini.gov.uk

