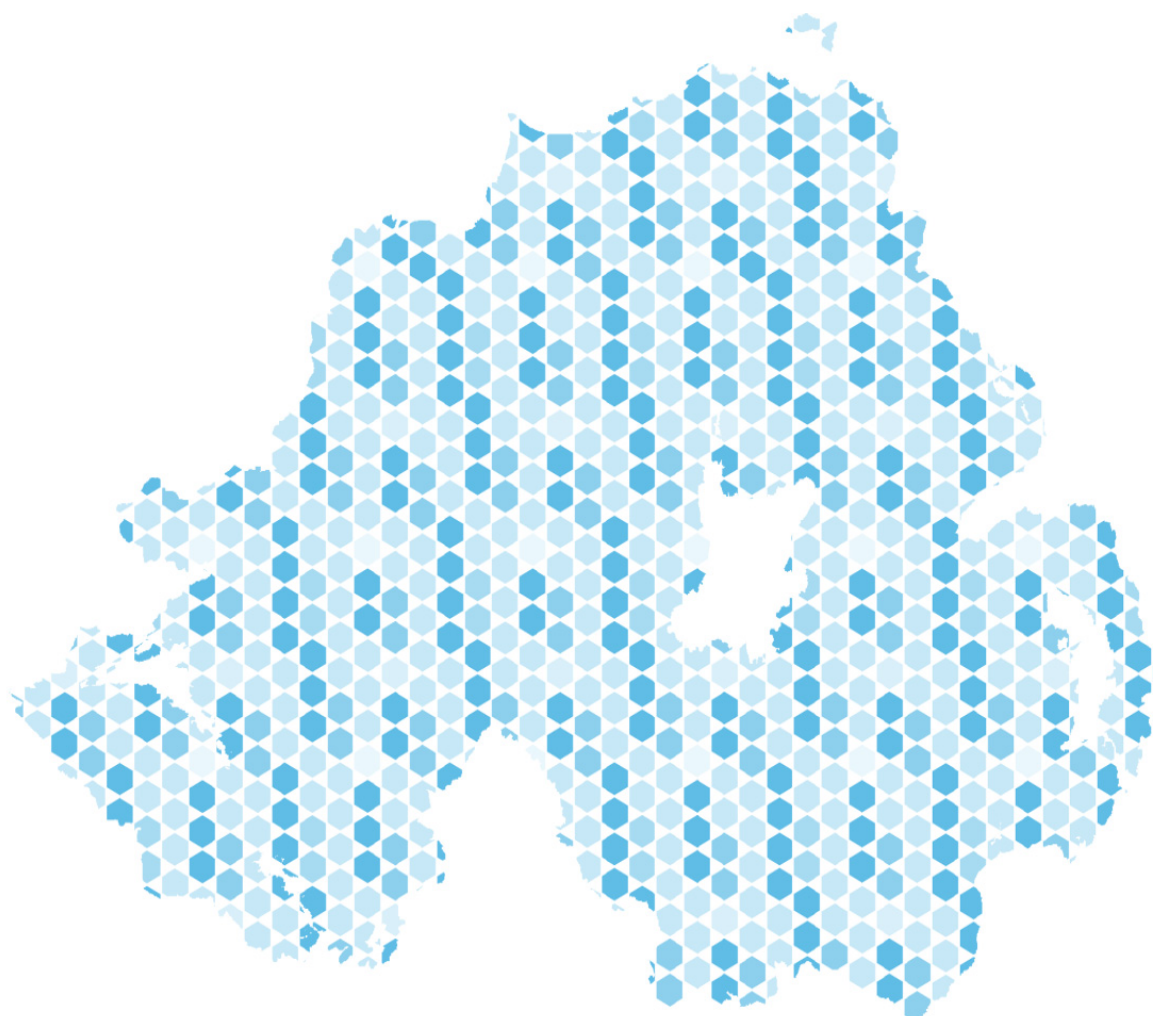


# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Edmund Rice Primary School,  
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: Edmund Rice Primary Belfast** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 28/02/11**  
 ii. **School Reference Number: 103-0329** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Year 1 Intake	33	42	40	31	46
<b>Enrolments</b>					
Primary	333	317	289	278	283
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):

92.2%

**NI Avg Att: 94.9%**

<b>Primary &amp; Reception</b>	<b>Nursery Unit</b>	<b>Special Unit</b>	<b>Irish Medium Unit</b>
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- D. i. Number of Teachers  
 (including the principal and part-time teachers): 14 0 0 0  
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)

- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 20.02 NI PTR: 20.7

- iii. Average Class Size: 21.77

- iv. Class Size (Range): 14 to 29

- v. Ancillary Support:

Number of Hours **Per Week:**

- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| i. Clerical support:  | 46  |
| ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support:           | 45  |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 387 |

- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 7.06%

- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 35.3%

- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0

- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 68.55%

- 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** 66.67% **Mathematics** 74.36%

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Edmund Rice Primary School is situated in Pim Street, off the Antrim Road in north Belfast. The enrolment has decreased over the past five years from 333 and currently stands at 283 children. Almost all of the children who attend the school come from the local area. Approximately 70% of the children are entitled to free school meals (FSM). The school has identified 35% of the children as requiring 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 staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection, as well as meetings with the chair of the Board of Governors (governors), a group of parents attending accredited literacy and numeracy courses in the parents' centre, and a group of the children from year 6.

One hundred and forty questionnaires were issued to the parents; 18% were returned to Inspection Services Branch. Eleven returns included additional written comments. The parents expressed a high level of satisfaction with the educational and pastoral provision provided by the school. In particular, they acknowledged the helpful and supportive staff and the courses provided in the parents' centre which help them to support their children's development and learning.

Almost all of the teachers and ten members of the support staff responded to the online questionnaires. Almost all of these responses were very positive and highly affirmative of the work of the school.

The chair of governors expressed strong support for the school. In particular he commented on the caring family ethos and the work being done with the parents to help them support their children's learning. On behalf of the governors he expressed their high regard for the work of the Principal, the school management team (SMT) and the teaching and non-teaching staff.

The year 6 children talked openly, positively and enthusiastically about their experiences in school. They value the support of their teachers and the extensive extra-curricular activities which are available including sports, drama and cookery. The children indicated that they feel safe and secure in school and aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being.

#### 1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is outstanding. The teachers have worked hard to create a caring school community working with the children and their parents to maintain a supportive and inclusive environment. The school identified the importance of working closely with the parents and the local community and this ongoing and highly effective work is a particular strength of the school.

The teachers know the children well, are aware of their needs and support the children through a holistic approach to sustain their personal, social and emotional development. The teachers recognise and reward the children's good behaviour and celebrate their achievements through pupil of the week and month awards and the displays of the children's work around the school. There are very good working relationships at all levels and the children and staff display mutual respect for one another.

#### 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.

#### 1.6 PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives very good attention to promoting physical activity through the children's regular participation in a well-planned physical education programme. Their learning in physical education lessons is enhanced through participation in a wide range of extra-curricular sports activities.

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

The school ensures that the parents are kept well informed of their child's progress through two parental meetings and an annual written report and are made aware of curricular developments through focused information evenings. The school also informs parents of special events through newsletters and the school website gives good access to current school policies.

The school successfully promotes, develops and maintains effective links with the parents and local community, through the 'Extended Schools Parent Programme'. The school engages meaningfully with the neighbouring primary school and two nursery schools to promote a shared partnership between the schools, parents and the community and support them in the process of life-long learning. This work is led very effectively by the Parent Support Officer who has identified the needs of the parents and the local community to ensure that the provision is appropriate and addresses their needs. A significant feature of the work undertaken, to engage with parents and provide them with the skills to enable them to support their children's learning, is the extent to which the school has made provision for externally accredited courses. Through the partnership, the parents access a range of courses including history, essential skills, reading partnership, art and community leadership. The school currently employs two classroom assistants who accessed their qualifications through the programme. The school has very effective links with a large number of external agencies which provide further support for parents. The children benefit from the valuable curricular links made with the post primary schools in music, numeracy and technology.

## **2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS**

### **2.1 LEARNING**

The children settle quickly into effective routines which support their learning. They persevere in their work and engage effectively in group tasks and when working in pairs. When presented with more challenging activities they demonstrate their ability to solve problems and complete investigations. The school has identified the need for the teachers to maintain appropriately high expectations of what the children can achieve.

An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 assessment data over the past four years shows that in English and mathematics the school's performance is below the Northern Ireland average. When compared with schools in the same FSM category, the levels of attainment in English and mathematics are in line with the average, and, over the corresponding period, show an upward trend.

For those children with special educational needs, the school's internal data indicates that, when comparing their standardised scores in English and mathematics with tests of ability, most of the children are achieving at a level in line with their ability.

Appropriately, the school has prioritised, in the school development plan (SDP), the need to improve further the children's standards in literacy and numeracy.

### **2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY**

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

The literacy co-ordinator provides good leadership for the development of literacy throughout the school and has recently overseen a review of the literacy policy. She works closely with her colleagues to support learning and teaching and to identify appropriate areas for improvement at class, year group and whole school level. She is aware of the need to review the methods of monitoring and evaluating the provision to ensure that the good practice and standards in place are maintained and developed further. While planning for literacy is varied across the school it provides a good framework for progression in talking and listening, reading and writing.

The teachers place emphasis on helping the children to acquire good thinking and oral skills. In the foundation stage (FS) the children talk clearly and confidently about their work and are encouraged to listen attentively to others. In KS1 and KS2, most of the teachers use effective questioning, as well as paired and group discussion, to enable the children to make good extended oral responses about a range of topics including current affairs. On a few occasions opportunities were missed to build on the children's responses and to develop the learning further. The children interact well with one another and respond appropriately to their teachers and to their peers.

The majority of children achieve good standards in reading and by the end of KS2 most of the children are reading in line with their ability. Throughout the school there is a good focus on phonics and on providing the children with good quality shared, modelled, guided and silent reading experiences. During the inspection, groups of children in the FS and KS1 demonstrated confidence and good word attack skills when encountering new words in reading sessions, and in KS2, the children read with fluency, expression and understanding. The children in year 6 discuss their text preferences, favourite authors and characters. The school has an attractive, well-stocked central library which further enriches the children's

reading experiences. The class libraries provide good opportunities to support reading across the curriculum. Additional support is provided through the Reading Partnership Programme for those children who require help with their reading. There is clear evidence to show that nearly all of the children who are involved in this programme make significant progress from their baseline starting points.

The development of the children's writing across the school is good. The staff have placed an appropriate emphasis on developing the quality of the children's handwriting. More attention needs to be given to developing a more consistent approach to the presentation of the children's work. In the FS the children are supported well to develop letter formation, to write words and to express their ideas in simple sentences. They have good opportunities in the well-planned play activities which enable them to work confidently and to produce pieces of independent writing of a high standard. In KS1 the children develop increasing accuracy, fluency and clarity in their writing and can express their ideas in a more extended, structured and coherent way. In KS2 the children develop their writing further through story writing, poetry and project work involving personal research. Information and communication technology is used effectively to improve the presentation of written work and to support the editing and drafting of the children's writing. Drama is incorporated well into some creative writing lessons to stimulate imagination and, on occasions, local authors have been invited into the school to share their writing experiences with the children.

## 2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

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

The children are provided with a good range of learning experiences in number, shape and space, measures and handling data. The recently introduced commercial scheme has provided the teachers with helpful support in planning for a range of practical activities which enhance the children's learning and in meeting the challenges presented in many of the classes by the wide range of the children's ability. In the majority of the lessons observed, effective use was made of mental mathematics exercises to develop mathematical thinking and, in the best practice, skilful questioning by the teacher encouraged the children to explain how they arrived at their answers; in this way the children were helped to develop flexibility in their approaches to solving mathematical problems. There is a wide range of ability in most of the classes. This presents a significant challenge for the teachers which they have addressed well.

In most classes effective use was made of the interactive whiteboard to stimulate and motivate the children. The teachers have developed a good range of resources for the whiteboards and make effective use of them to engage the children in their learning and to reinforce key learning points. In addition, the teachers make good use of a wider range of ICT resources in the well-equipped computer areas to support learning and to assess learning.

In general, the quality of the children's recording of their work is not good enough. In addition, the teacher's marking does not promote consistently improvement in the quality of the children's work presented in their books.

At the time of the inspection the co-ordinator for mathematics and numeracy had been in post for just over a year. Since his appointment he has led a comprehensive review of the approaches to the teaching of the subject and has produced a detailed action plan to address the areas identified for improvement. This review has identified appropriately the



need to increase the opportunities provided for the children to undertake problem-solving and investigative work and to raise the standards achieved by the children. There is a need for the SMT to develop a more systematic approach to monitoring and evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the provision and for the teachers to make the necessary adjustments to the practice in the classrooms.

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

#### **3.1 PLANNING**

The quality of the planning to support the learning and teaching is good. The teachers' individual planning provides a good framework for the teaching, including the identification of clear lines of progression, the teaching strategies to be used and includes the integration of ICT in the children's learning. The school has identified the need to develop the planning to ensure further consistency and is piloting formats to support a thematic approach to planning across the school.

#### **3.2 TEACHING**

During the inspection, the quality of the teaching observed in almost all of the lessons was good or better.

In over half of the lessons the quality was very good or outstanding. In the best practice the teachers made the learning outcomes explicit at the beginning of each lesson, through discussions, to prepare the children for their learning. The pace of the lessons was appropriate and activities were linked to the interests of the children and the teachers made clear connections across the curriculum. The teachers engage the children in meaningful activities and there are very good levels of differentiation, including the use of individual targets, to support and challenge the children in their learning. The teachers made very good use of effective questioning to stimulate thinking and to develop extended oral responses from the children. There is an appropriate emphasis on promoting independent thinking and learning. Very good use was made of the success criteria during the plenary sessions to consolidate the learning. The classroom assistants make a very significant contribution to the effective learning and teaching.

#### **3.3 ASSESSMENT**

The Vice-principal, acting as assessment co-ordinator, has worked hard to develop systems of analysing and sharing data to help bring about improvements in learning and teaching. The school makes good use of a wide range of standardised tests to track longitudinally the children's progress. This performance data is analysed effectively to identify promptly those children who are having difficulty with aspects of their learning. The school has identified the need to develop further the use of data to inform planning and teaching and for the setting of appropriate targets for improvement.

In the best practice the teachers mark the children's work regularly, provide constructive feedback and engage with parents on how their child's work can be improved. There is a need for the sharing of this good practice to ensure a consistency of approach across the school.

Very effective links and structures are in place for liaising and sharing relevant information with both nursery and post-primary schools to provide a coherent learning programme for the children at the transition points in their development. The quality of the work undertaken to ensure progression in the children's learning is outstanding.

### 3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The overall quality of the provision for children who require additional support with aspects of their learning is very good.

The quality of the leadership within special educational needs (SEN) is very good. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) has been in post since 2006, and combines the role of SENCO with that of a year 6 teacher. She is very committed to the children in her care and works effectively with the teachers and co-ordinators in identifying need and agreeing the provision for those children who require support. In accordance with the school's well-conceived SEN policy, she maintains detailed records and co-ordinates well the school's provision. She liaises effectively with a wide range of external support agencies to ensure there is regular communication with parents about the progress made in reaching the targets identified in the education plans.

The school's data indicates that most of the children on the SEN register are achieving the targets outlined in their educational plans. To improve the standards further there is a need for the SMT to put in place a more systematic monitoring, evaluation and review of the implementation and outcomes of the children's education plans.

## 4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

### 4.1 LEADERSHIP

The overall quality of leadership and management in this school is good.

The quality of the leadership provided by the Principal is outstanding. Since taking up his appointment six years ago, the Principal has worked very effectively to develop important links with the parents and the local community. He has worked with great energy and commitment to develop a clear strategic vision for the school which has an appropriate focus on supporting the parents and on meeting the needs of all the children through a clear emphasis on standards and achievements. As a consequence of this work he has overseen important improvements in the standards the children attain.

The Principal and members of the SMT, led effectively by the Vice-principal, have undertaken significant work in analysing the children's performance data. This important work has identified areas which need to be developed further to effect continued improvements in the standards achieved by the children. Building upon this good start there is a need for the SMT to put in place a more systematic monitoring and evaluation of the implementation and outcomes of the initiatives to improve further the quality of the children's work. The school's commitment to continued improvement is evident in the well-conceived strategy to develop further the leadership role of the co-ordinators.

### 4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

An effective SDP is in place and is clearly focused on raising further the standards achieved by the children in literacy and numeracy. The associated action plans indicate a focus on widening the approaches to monitoring and evaluating the learning and teaching more systematically across all of the classes and to involve the subject co-ordinators in this process. The school gives very good attention to and meets fully the requirements of the Education (School Development Plans) Regulations NI 2005 Order.

#### 4.3 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The school governors make a very positive contribution to the life and work of the school; they are fully involved in the strategic planning and policy development and support effectively the Principal and staff in the implementation of the SDP.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the ethos of the school which promotes the children's learning behaviour;
- the quality of the teaching observed during the inspection with over half the lessons being very good or outstanding;
- the good standards achieved by the children in literacy and numeracy which have improved steadily over the past four year period;
- the outstanding links made with the parents and the community which are having a beneficial impact on the children's achievements;
- the very effective transition arrangements which are designed to ensure progression in learning at the transition stages; and
- the outstanding leadership provided by the Principal.

5.2 The area for improvement is:

- the need to develop and implement further the processes for monitoring and evaluating the quality of the children's work.

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is very good. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

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