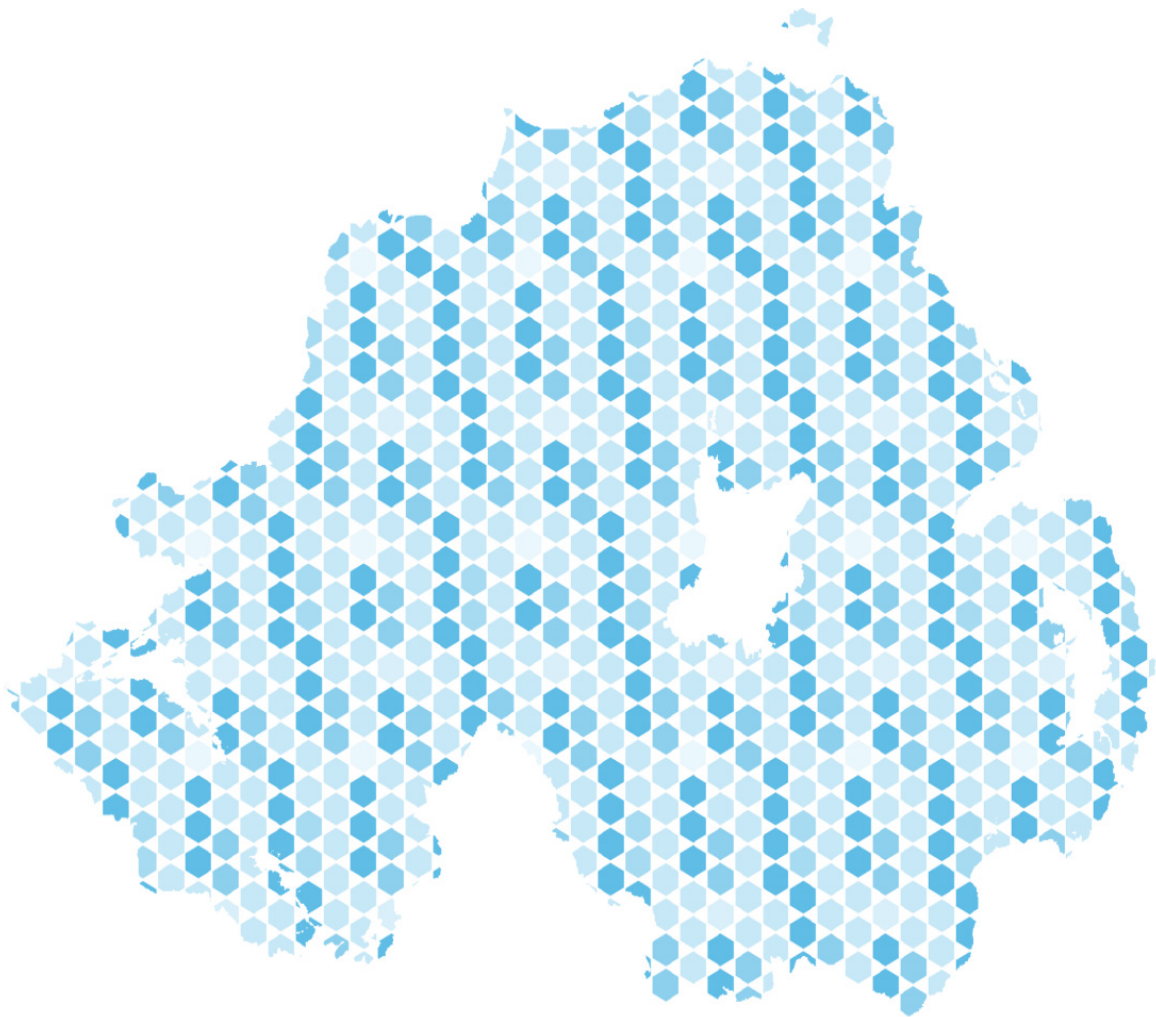


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Bessbrook Primary School and
Nursery Unit, Newry

Report of an Inspection
in November 2011



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

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Bessbrook Primary School and Nursery Unit is situated in the centre of the village of Bessbrook, near Newry. Almost all of the children come from the immediate surrounding area. The enrolment has remained steady in recent years and stands currently at 65. Around 32% of the children are entitled to free school meals and about 29% have been identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning, including 15% who have a statement of special educational needs.

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 including the school's processes for self-evaluation leading to improvement.

OVERALL FINDING OF THE INSPECTION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is **good**. The school has important strengths in most of its educational provision and has very good pastoral provision.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

Achievements and Standards

The quality of the children's achievements and standards is satisfactory.

- The majority of the children make **satisfactory** progress in English and mathematics as they progress through the school and attain standards by the end of key stage (KS) 2 that are in line with their ability. The children's oracy skills are well-developed. The older children achieve good standards in reading and have produced pieces of writing of high quality on a range of topics. The children identified with **special educational needs** make **steady progress** in reaching their identified targets.
- The children in the **nursery unit** attain very good standards in language development and early mathematical skills.

Provision for Learning

The provision for learning is **good**.

The **children** are very welcoming and their behaviour is exemplary. The recently established Student Council provides a valuable opportunity for the opinions of the children to be considered.

The quality of the **teaching** observed during the inspection ranged from satisfactory to very good, with the majority of the lessons being good or better. In the best practice, the teachers prepared well and organised activities matched to the varying levels of abilities within their composite classes. The children engaged meaningfully in lessons and collaborated in pairs and groups when required. They spoke with confidence about their learning. There were good interactions among the children and between the children and their teachers, who asked probing questions to encourage the children's thinking and to develop their understanding.

Where the teaching was less successful, in a minority of lessons, the teachers missed opportunities to build upon the children's responses in order to reinforce learning. In addition, the lessons were dominated unduly by the teachers and the planned activities did not take sufficient account of the learning outcomes to be achieved by the children.

The teachers **plan** conscientiously for the different year groups. Their evaluations take very good account of the children's response to the learning and inform future activities.

The teachers **mark** the children's work regularly and provide supportive comments. In the best practice, the children receive useful guidance on how to improve the quality of their work.

The school's provision for the children with **special educational needs (SEN) is good.**

The main focus of the special needs programme is to raise the children's levels of basic literacy across the key stages. Most of the children, who have been identified as having SEN, experience mild or moderate learning difficulties. The **classroom assistants** make a valuable contribution to the children's progress. They are involved in a series of successful intervention programmes to support the children in their reading, writing and basic mathematics.

The **individual education plans** are effective. They set out suitable targets and practical approaches designed to help the children access the curriculum in a thoughtful manner.

A majority of the children make steady gains in their learning. For the remaining children progress has been slower and sustained support is required.

The quality of the arrangements for **pastoral care** in the school is very good. There is a caring, inclusive ethos characterised by mutual respect. All staff are very committed to the care and well-being of the children.

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

The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy **eating and physical activity**. This is encouraged through the introduction of healthy food choices for break and lunch. Throughout the school, the children have frequent opportunities for energetic outdoor play and sports. The KS2 swimming programme also helps to encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

The provision in the **nursery unit** is very good. The broad and balanced programme provides very good opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum. There is a very good balance between free play and adult-directed activities.

Leadership and Management

The quality of leadership and management is good.

The **Principal** has been in post for 20 years. He has raised the profile and importance of learning in the school and the wider community. He has delegated curricular responsibilities effectively to the hard-working co-ordinators. A firm start has been made to monitoring the children's progress and this process is enhanced by the school's increasing use of pupil performance data.

The **School Development Plan (SDP)** has identified a range of relevant priorities and is supported by clearly focused action plans. Parents, pupils, staff and governors alike are given opportunities to contribute to the improvement process and they have all been involved in a whole-school audit of provision. The outcomes of the responses have formed the basis of the SDP.

There is a growing culture of **self-evaluation** leading to continuous improvement among the staff and they all take responsibility for developing various aspects of school life.

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.

CONCLUSION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is good, and in the nursery unit, it is very good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational provision and very good pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address. These include the need to:

- improve the **standards** of attainment in the children's use of **information and communication technology and in literacy and numeracy**; and
- in the nursery unit, refine the observation and record keeping procedures in order to facilitate the tracking of individual children's progress across each area of the pre-school curriculum.

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

BESSBROOK PRIMARY SCHOOL NURSERY UNIT

Key Findings of the Inspection

- The calm, purposeful atmosphere and the range of stimulating learning activities develop the children's concentration, perseverance and sustained play.
- The children are well-settled; they demonstrate enthusiasm and enjoyment in their learning and a growing sense of responsibility for their environment; they are independent in their personal care, in their choice of resources and in the snack and lunch routines.
- The broad and balanced programme provides very good opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum. There is a very good balance between free play and adult-directed activities.
- The adult interactions with the children are of a consistently high quality. The adults engage purposefully in the play activities; they use the routines effectively to support learning and make good use of praise to develop the children's confidence and good behaviour.
- The staff complete detailed evaluations of the children's responses to the learning activities and use these effectively to identify and provide for their individual needs.
- The nursery teacher is a very good role model in her work with the children. She has a clear vision for the continued development of the nursery and leads the staff effectively in the process of self-evaluation to promote improvement. She is very well-supported by the hard-working nursery assistant.

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

BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Bessbrook Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 14/11/11**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 501-1179** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Short**

B.

School Year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Year 1 Intake	9	8	8	9	10
Enrolments					
Primary	75	72	66	63	65
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Unit	26	26	26	26	26
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): 94.8% **NI Avg Att: 94.7%**
- Average Attendance for those children on the Special Educational Needs Register: 91.49%
- | | 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) | 3.4 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): | 19.11 | NI PTR: 20.2 | | |
| iii. Average Class Size: | 21.66 | | | |
| iv. Class Size (Range): | 19 to 23 | | | |
| v. Ancillary Support: Number of Hours Per Week : | i. Clerical support: | | 15 | |
| | ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support: | | 20 | |
| | iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | | 76 | |
| vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: | | | | 12.3% |
| vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: | | | | 29.23% |
| viii. Number of children who are not of statutory school age: | | | | 0 |
| ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: | | | | 32.3% |
| x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2010/11 who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics, and Irish (in Irish-medium schools): | English
72.73% | Mathematics
81.82% | Irish
N/A | |

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON BESSBROOK PRIMARY SCHOOL NURSERY UNIT

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending full-time	26	0
Attending part-time	0	0
Under 3 years of age*	0	0
With statement of special educational needs	0	0
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	1	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	0	0
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	0	0
With English as an additional language	1	0

* On 1 July.

*** 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.	15.4%
Average attendance for the previous year.	96.5%

2. *Duration of Sessions*

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
5½ hours	-	-

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-Time	Part-Time
Teachers	1	0
Nursery Assistants	1	1
Qualified Nursery Assistants	0	0

Number of: ****	
Students	0
Trainees	0

**** Total placements since September of current year

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

Number issued	
Percentage returned	%
Number of written comments	

THE VIEWS OF THE PARENTS, TEACHERS, GOVERNORS, (SUPPORT STAFF) AND CHILDREN

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents, the teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Of the 63 questionnaires issued to parents, eleven were returned to Inspection Services Branch. Most of the parental responses indicated a high level of satisfaction with the education and pastoral care provided by the school. The small number of issues raised have been shared with the Principal.

The teaching and support staff returns were very positive; they highlighted the good working relationships, the strong sense of teamwork and the progress and developments made by the school.

The inspectors also met with a group of year 6-7 children; they talked about their role in the School Council, their enjoyment of a wide range of school subjects and their appreciation for their teachers. They reported that they are happy in school and they feel safe. They are aware of whom to talk to if they have any concerns.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2012

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

