



*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*



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

Ballykeel Primary School and Nursery Unit Ballymena

Inspected: May 2008

CONTENTS

Section	Page
STATISTICAL INFORMATION	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. THE QUALITY OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK	1
3. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	4
4. CONCLUSION	5
5. THE NURSERY UNIT	6
STATISTICAL INFORMATION (NURSERY UNIT)	8
APPENDIX	

BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Ballykeel Primary Ballymena** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 19.05.08**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 301-3315** iv. **Nature of Inspection: FI/Ma/ICT**

B.

School Year	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Year 1 Intake	32	44	41	38	28
Enrolments					
Primary	255	257	266	270	267
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Class/Classes	52	52	52	52	52
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): 94.5%

Primary & Reception	Nursery Unit	Special Unit
------------------------------------	-------------------------	-------------------------

- D. i. Number of Teachers
 (including the principal and part-time teachers): 14.8 2 0
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 18.04 NI PTR: 20.8
- iii. Average Class Size: 22.25
- iv. Class Size (Range): 20 to 26
- v. Ancillary Support:
 Number of Hours **Per Week**:
- | | |
|---|------|
| i. Clerical support: | 30 |
| ii. Official Making A Good Start Support: | 42.5 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 25 |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 2%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 19.7%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 36%

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Ballykeel Primary School is situated off the Larne Link Road on the outskirts of Ballymena. Most of the children come from the surrounding area. The enrolment has remained steady over the past five years and currently stands at 267. At the time of the inspection 36% of the children were entitled to free school meals. The school has identified approximately 20% of the children to be in need of additional support with aspects of their learning.

1.2 The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents and teachers 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. One hundred and thirty-five families were issued with questionnaires; approximately 36% were returned to the Department of Education (DE) of which 14 contained additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaires were highly affirmative, indicating strong support for the work of the school. Sixteen teachers completed the on-line questionnaire and four provided additional written comments; their responses were wholly positive. The governors commented favourably on the effective leadership of the Principal, the excellent behaviour of the children and the associated efforts of the staff in promoting this, the school's reputation within the local community, and the high quality of pastoral care. The children in year 6 spoke with great appreciation and enthusiasm about the hard-working staff, the supportive atmosphere, and reported that they felt safe, and knew what to do in the event of a concern. The Education and Training Inspectorate reported to the Principal and representatives of the governors the few matters emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions.

1.3 The inspection focused on the quality of the work in mathematics, including the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in supporting numeracy, and the effectiveness of the school's special educational needs (SEN) provision. The inspection also evaluated the school's procedures in relation to pastoral care, including child protection.

2. THE QUALITY OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK

2.1 An excellent ethos permeates the life of Ballykeel Primary school. The staff have worked hard to create a caring, friendly learning environment. There is a strong sense of community within the school and positive working relationships exist at all levels. The children benefit greatly from the outside learning environment which has been enhanced by the construction of the 'secret garden' and includes a woodland trail and pond. Many of the children engage effectively in ecological (eco) work; the school has recently attained permanent 'Eco-Schools' status. Educational displays are of a high standard; there are many examples of the children's work and the positive reward system on display.

2.2 The children are well mannered, and welcoming of visitors; their behaviour is exemplary. There is a clear sense of order and routine to which they respond positively. The school places a strong emphasis on promoting the children's self-esteem and confidence; opportunities are sought regularly to acknowledge the children's curricular and extra-curricular achievements through, for example, 'Pupil of the Week' awards, and the celebration of success at school assembly.

2.3 The children's experiences are enriched well through the Extended Schools programme, and through a wide variety of extra-curricular activities, including jewellery making, photography, music, sport and the learning of Spanish.

2.4 The school gives excellent attention to promoting health and well-being, and has appropriate policies and programmes in place to encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles, for example, a healthy eating policy, breakfast club, and healthy break. There is evidence of commitment on the part of the teaching and non-teaching staff to promoting healthy eating, and by peer encouragement, and an incentive scheme congratulating the children on "trying something new" or completing their dinner. There are opportunities for the children to participate in a wide range of physical activities, and the children demonstrate a very good understanding of the importance of making healthy life choices.

2.5 The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection in the school is very good. The school has procedures in place which implement fully the guidance outlined in the relevant DE Circulars. The governors, staff, parents and children are fully aware of the school's procedures and have had the opportunity to contribute to a range of effective policies which guide the work of the school. Among the strengths are:

- the high quality of the pastoral care provision;
- the children's engagement in a wide range of extra-curricular activities;
- the contribution made by the staff to the children's engagement in school, their well-being and their learning experiences;
- the excellent leadership of the Principal for all aspects of the pastoral care provision; and
- the effective communication with external agencies to support the children.

2.6 The school has developed very good links with parents. Parents are encouraged to play an active role in the education of their children and in the life of the school through, for example, the paired reading programme, participation in a variety of parental clubs, joint parent and child events, consultation events, and regular newsletters. The school has also established effective links with the local and wider community.

2.7 There is a wide range of documentation to guide the work of the school including policies in all main areas. Teachers prepare well for lessons and, overall, planning is sound. Long-term planning for continuity and progression is provided through a detailed scheme of work for mathematics. Medium-term planning is provided through six-weekly planners. The planners identify appropriate breadth in the curriculum, are evaluated by teachers, and are monitored by the co-ordinators and the Principal. In the best practice, the planning sets out clearly the differentiation expected for groups of children with varying abilities.

2.8 The teachers are hard-working, create a good sense of order within their classrooms, and there is a strong sense of team-work. During the inspection, most of the teaching seen was good or better; a significant minority of the lessons observed were very good and a minority were excellent. In the best practice observed, the children had a clear understanding of the intended learning, and the teachers used a variety of teaching approaches to develop

the children's independence and thinking skills, including effective paired and group work. During these lessons the children were actively engaged in their learning, worked collaboratively, and displayed high levels of motivation and enjoyment. On occasion, within the mainstream classes, the activities provided insufficient challenge and did not meet the needs of the widely varying abilities of the children.

2.9 The provision for mathematics has many good features. The children's mathematical learning is developed systematically across the school. In the early years, the teachers place a strong emphasis on active, play-based learning. The staff create a stimulating learning environment which takes account of the children's needs, interests and stages of development. Good use is made of all the available space, both indoors and outdoors. The teachers have made a valuable start to the development and evaluation of the children's play.

2.10 Mathematics is often connected effectively to class topics and environmental and cultural themes. The children are encouraged to take time to think, to ask questions, and to talk about their learning. The teachers encourage the children to observe, explore, investigate and use their mathematical knowledge and skills in practical and meaningful contexts.

2.11 As the children progress through key stage (KS) 2, a range of activities including problem-solving tasks and the use of real-life contexts are used to promote mathematical thinking. By the end of KS2, most of the children have a suitably broad mathematical understanding including place value, estimating and measuring, calculating, handling data and shape. Learning in mathematics is often linked effectively to other curricular areas such as the World Around Us. The importance of cross-curricular mathematics is also recognised and promoted through, for example, the 'Maths across the Curriculum' week.

2.12 Across the key stages, effective questioning and opportunities for discussion deepen the children's understanding of key concepts and develops their oral skills. Practical equipment and suitable resources were used effectively in most of the numeracy lessons observed. For example, mathematical games, Cuisinaire rods and multi-cubes were used appropriately to support the children's understanding of number facts and place value, and mirrors were used to develop their appreciation of symmetry.

2.13 The children have many opportunities to access information and communication technology (ICT) in support of their learning in mathematics. Information and communication technology was used in most of the numeracy lessons observed; in almost all of these lessons, the quality of teaching and learning was enhanced as a result. The school is well-equipped with interactive whiteboards and these are used effectively to engage the children and stimulate their thinking. Programmable devices such as Beebot and Pixie are used well to help the children gain an understanding of number, direction and angles, and a range of software programs are used to complement the teaching of handling data and other core concepts and skills. The school has given priority to the development of ICT, and has created an appropriate range of tasks to support learning and progression. The children show confidence in their use of ICT, and participate successfully across all strands in the ICT Accreditation Scheme at KS2 organised by the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA).

2.14 The current provision for the children needing additional support with aspects of their learning is predominantly through withdrawal sessions. The school's planning for SEN highlights appropriately the importance of an early identification of those children experiencing difficulties with aspects of their learning, and is linked closely to the pastoral care policy. Withdrawal sessions for numeracy are provided in a supportive and enthusiastic atmosphere. The SEN teachers provide effective work for groups of children; the approaches and tasks are appropriately varied, interesting, and well matched to the children's learning needs and interests. The SEN teachers liaise with the class teachers and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) to write individual education plans (IEPs) which identify specific targets and support strategies for each child. The children respond well to this support, gain in confidence and self-esteem, and make steady or good progress. The IEPs are reviewed on a regular basis and progress is reported to the parents. The SENCO is highly effective in her role. She leads the development of SEN provision within the school, and oversees the drafting of well focused action plans. She analyses systematically the assessment data to identify and monitor the children's progress, provides training opportunities for staff, and monitors the provision. Good progress has been made in addressing the requirements of the special educational needs disability order (SEND0) within the school.

3. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

3.1 The Principal provides excellent leadership and has a clear vision for the school. She conveys high expectations and fosters a good team spirit and collegial approach. She works proactively with, and is ably supported by, a highly dedicated and very hard-working staff. She has demonstrated a high level of commitment to the welfare and well-being of the children and the staff. The school has identified appropriately the need to re-define and clarify some of the roles and responsibilities of various post holders and other members of staff, including their role in the monitoring and evaluation of provision and action to promote improvement. The inspection findings endorse these as appropriate priorities.

3.2 Under the Principal's direction the school has worked through many educational initiatives over the past eight years. The school's process for improvement has many strengths; it is linked clearly to the school development plan (SDP) and associated action plans that are based appropriately upon self-evaluation and consultation. The school has given good attention to, and is working effectively towards, meeting fully the School Development Plan Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005. There is now a need to order the priorities for development. To develop further the well embedded culture of self-evaluation, there is a need to make more extensive use of performance data, including data available on the children's performance in various standardised tests and DE benchmarking information, to review and inform further improvements in learning. The school has made a good start in this area.

3.3 The school's staff development programme includes school-based and external in-service training. The staff have benefited from the support made available, particularly for addressing areas identified within the SDP and associated action plans.

3.4 The quality of the accommodation and the standard of caretaking are excellent. The classroom assistants, supervisors, canteen staff, and school secretary make a valuable contribution to the work of the school.

4. **CONCLUSION**

4.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the positive ethos and exemplary behaviour of the children;
- the school's awareness and respect for the environment and its excellent eco work;
- the quality of the teaching observed, most of which was good or better, a significant minority of which was very good, and a minority of which was excellent;
- the effective use of ICT to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics;
- the improvement in the standards achieved by the children who receive additional support with aspects of their learning; and
- the excellent leadership provided by the Principal, and the effective contribution of all the staff to the education and welfare of the children.

4.2 In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided in this school is very good. The educational and pastoral needs of the learners are being well met. The parents and local community can have confidence in the school's capacity for sustained self-improvement.

No follow-up inspection is required.

5. THE NURSERY UNIT

5.1 The nursery is located in purpose-built accommodation adjoining the primary school. The majority of the children come from the surrounding area.

5.2 The parents and staff were given opportunities to express their views about the nursery through the inspection questionnaires. Thirty-one parental questionnaires were returned to the Department of Education (DE); 19 parents added written comments expressing a high level of satisfaction with all aspects of the nursery's provision. The responses from the members of staff also indicated a high level of satisfaction.

5.3 The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection in the nursery is excellent. The nursery has comprehensive policies and procedures for child protection which are implemented effectively and consistently to safeguard the children.

5.4 The nursery gives excellent attention to promoting health and well-being, including opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity, and has effective policies and programmes in place which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

5.5 The main strengths within the nursery's educational and pastoral provision are as follows.

- The positive ethos helps to promote the children's confidence, self-esteem and good behaviour. The children make full use of, and clearly enjoy, the attractive and rich learning environment created for them by the staff; they display a positive attitude to their learning, and often engage in play that is both purposeful and productive. The working relationships at all levels are excellent.
- The quality of the interaction between the staff and the children is always very good and, at times, is excellent. The staff are sensitive and caring in the approach to their work, and provide effective support for those children who require additional help. The close involvement of the staff in the activities helps to ensure that the opportunities to promote the children's language and learning are exploited fully.
- The daily timetable is well-organised and provides suitable periods of uninterrupted play during which the children have adequate time to make choices and to explore fully the wide range of activities.
- There are excellent learning opportunities in all aspects of the pre-school curriculum which promote effectively the children's all-round development. The staff share their knowledge and expertise with the parents in a variety of ways and encourage them to play an active role in the education of their children and the life of the nursery.
- The detailed and systematic methods of planning and assessment provide effective guidance for the staff in their day-to day work with the children.

- The teacher-in-charge of the nursery brings a high level of skill and enthusiasm to her work. She is an excellent role model and promotes a strong sense of team-work among the hard-working staff who contribute to the overall effectiveness of the nursery.

5.6 The nursery has a comprehensive development plan with appropriate targets identified for improvement. The staff have developed effective methods of self-evaluation, and there is evidence that the process has led to improvements in the quality of the provision and the learning experiences for the children.

5.7 The quality of education provided in this nursery is excellent. The educational and pastoral needs of the children are being very well met. The parents can have confidence in the nursery's capacity for sustained self-improvement.

No follow-up inspection is required.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON THE NURSERY UNIT IN BALLYKEEL PRIMARY SCHOOL

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending full-time	25	26
Attending part-time	1	0
Under 3 years of age*	0	0
With statement of SEN**	0	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4***	1	0
At CoP stages 1 or 2***	4	4
With English as an additional language	0	0

* 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.	21%
Average attendance for the previous year.	93.2%

2. Duration of Sessions

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

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-Time	Part-Time
Teachers	2	0
Nursery Assistants	1	1
Qualified Nursery Assistants	2	0

Number of: ****	
Students	2
Trainees	1

**** Total placements since September of current year

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued	52
Percentage returned	59.6%
Number of written comments	19

APPENDIX

ACCOMMODATION AND HEALTH AND SAFETY (PRIMARY)

- Literacy Support Room 1 and Literacy Support Room 2 do not have view panels in the classroom doors.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2008

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 DE website: www.deni.gov.uk or may be obtained from the Inspection Services Branch, Department of Education, Rathgael House, 43 Balloo Road, Bangor, Co Down BT19 7PR.