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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
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Providing Inspection Services for
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Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Focused Inspection

Ballymoney Model Primary School

Inspected: March 2007

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Ballymoney Model Primary School is situated on the North Road, Ballymoney. The majority of children who attend the school come from the town and surrounding rural area. The enrolment has remained steady over the last five years.

1.2 Approximately 20% of the children are entitled to free school meals. Ten per cent of the children have been identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning. A Speech and Language Unit comprising of two classes is located within the school. The children in the Unit come from a wide catchment area.

1.3 The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection, as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and groups of children from year 6 and year 7. One hundred and seven questionnaires were issued to parents in the school; 37% were returned to the Department of Education (DE) of which 15 contained additional written comments. In addition, fifteen questionnaires were issued to parents of children in the Speech and Language Unit; some 62% were returned to DE of which 8 had written comments. The responses from the questionnaires indicated that the parents are supportive of the work of the school. The governors expressed their appreciation of the dedicated and hard-working staff in the school, commenting particularly on the good educational provision, the supportive parent/teacher relationships, the welcoming and caring ethos, and the high esteem in which the school is held within the local community. The children talked confidently about the wide range of creative and sporting activities and the pastoral support given by the Principal, teachers and support staff. The children are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety and well-being. The Education and Training Inspectorate has provided the Principal and representatives of the governors with feedback from the questionnaires and the discussions. The inspection findings confirm that the confidence expressed in these aspects of the school's work is well-placed.

1.4 The inspection focused on the work in English and information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum and the effectiveness of the school's special educational needs (SEN) provision. The inspection also evaluated the school's procedures for pastoral care, including child protection.

2. THE QUALITY OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK

2.1 There is a caring, welcoming and friendly atmosphere throughout the school. The staff promote strongly a climate of pastoral care and concern for the children and the working relationships at all levels are very good.

2.2 The teachers have worked hard to create a stimulating learning environment for the children. In many of the classrooms and corridors, informative and attractive displays of the children's work and other teaching resources are used effectively to foster interest and encourage learning. The school is well-maintained.

2.3 The school has a good range of extra-curricular activities. These provide the children with enriching opportunities to develop further their interests, particularly in music, drama and physical education. Almost all of the children are well-behaved; they show respect for

their teachers and co-operate well with one another, for example, when given the opportunity to work in groups and to undertake independent and collaborative tasks. They are interested in their work and are motivated to learn.

2.4 The school gives consistently good attention to promoting health and well-being and has appropriate policies and programmes in place which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles, such as the “Brighter Bites” initiative. It is timely that the school is reviewing the school development plan (SDP); this enables further incorporation of health and well-being programmes as part of the statutory requirements. There is evidence of commitment on the part of the staff to promoting healthy eating and to improving the children’s eating habits, for example, the School Council’s monitoring of healthy breaks eaten by the children. There are opportunities for all of the children to participate in a wide range of physical activities and they demonstrate a good understanding of the importance of making healthy life-choices.

2.5 There are strengths in many aspects of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection. The school has procedures in place which implement the guidance outlined in the relevant DE Circulars and has identified, appropriately, a few important areas for further development, including the need to update the child protection training for the designated teacher and deputy designated teacher. The teacher who co-ordinates pastoral care and child protection demonstrates effective leadership.

2.6 The teachers prepare conscientiously for their teaching. They plan together within each year group to ensure consistency in the programme provided for the children and to make effective use of shared resources. The planning focuses appropriately on the intended learning outcomes for the children. In the best practice observed, the teachers share the learning outcomes with the children at the outset of the lessons and reflect upon them with the children at the conclusion of the lessons to gauge the extent to which they have been met. The teachers evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching at the end of the six-weekly planning; in developing further this process consistently across the school, they need to focus more specifically on the effectiveness of the learning that has taken place.

2.7 In most of the lessons observed, the teaching was good or better; in a minority of lessons, it was excellent. In the best practice, the lessons had clear focus and purpose, an appropriate range of teaching approaches was used, including the application of ICT, opportunities were provided for the children to discuss their learning, and the teachers used skilful questioning to extend the children’s understanding. On the very few occasions when the teaching was less effective, the children’s behavioural difficulties were not addressed rigorously, the work was over-directed by the teacher and there were insufficient opportunities for the children to talk about their learning.

2.8 The children in years 1-3 benefit from well-organised learning through play sessions. They participate in a variety of purposeful activities that contribute to the development of their investigative and problem-solving skills. The teachers and support staff ask suitable questions that develop the children’s thinking skills and encourage their ability to express their ideas and views. The school is appropriately reviewing its practice in play in order to provide the children with greater opportunities to select independently their play activities and to extend the teachers’ methods of assessing the children’s learning and development. There is a need to develop an outdoor physical play area for the children from key stage (KS) 1.

2.9 The school places an important focus on developing the children's talking and listening skills. In the best practice, group work was well structured with the children reporting on their learning. In KS1, the teachers set a positive tone that encourages the children to develop their active listening and oral skills through their contribution to whole-class, group and plenary discussions. In KS2, most of the children display confidence and enthusiasm in their oral work and provide extended answers in response to the teachers' questioning. The children's talking and listening skills are well-developed and often link effectively to reading and writing activities.

2.10 The children are encouraged to develop an interest in, and enjoyment of, books; reading is celebrated throughout the school. The majority of the teachers use a good variety of teaching strategies and resources to address the wide range of reading ability in the classes. The children's reading skills are developed using a range of commercial reading schemes and phonics programmes. The school monitors the children's standards of reading through the regular administration of standardised tests that demonstrate that the majority of the children reach a good standard of reading competence comparable to children of a similar age. The school has identified appropriately the need to extend the reading resources for KS1.

2.11 The children benefit from writing in a variety of forms for a good range of purposes and audiences. As they progress through the school, the children have increased opportunities to develop their writing skills in meaningful contexts, such as writing for the local community through the school's newsletter. Increasingly, the well-planned writing activities promote independent, paired and group work settings in which the children develop their own ideas. Each child's range of writing is monitored effectively through the compilation of a portfolio which records the quality of the child's work. The school creates a positive and stimulating environment for English and the staff make good use of the well-resourced classrooms and the central school library. By the end of KS2, the overall attainment of the children is good.

2.12 The school has made good progress in the development of ICT as a resource for learning and teaching in English. The co-ordinator provides the staff with valuable support in using available hardware and software to enhance the children's communication skills. The children enjoy their ICT experiences and display considerable enthusiasm in classrooms and the computer suite. Many examples of the good use of ICT were observed during the inspection; for example, the younger children used software to support their writing and the older children used packages, to produce attractive posters to supplement their persuasive writing and they designed their own website page. The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment Accreditation scheme is used to broaden the children's experiences and improve standards. The children's ICT skills are good; by year 7, they use effectively a range of ICT applications.

2.13 There are 16 children enrolled in the KS1 and KS2 Speech and Language Unit. All the children have statements of special educational needs. The classrooms are well-resourced and there are attractive displays of the children's work. There is a suitably individualised and effective system of regular integration for the children into classes with their peers. The teaching in the two classes is excellent; the conscientious teachers have developed considerable expertise and use an effective and wide variety of appropriate strategies to encourage and sustain each child's interest in learning. The teachers use ICT effectively

throughout the curriculum to enhance and extend the children's learning. The children are enthusiastic, highly motivated and they work diligently to achieve standards in keeping with their ability. There is strong evidence of individual learning objectives and targets being met.

2.14 The school has procedures in place for monitoring, recording and reporting the attainment of each child. The teachers collect data such as standardised tests' scores, informal test results and end of key stage outcomes on the individual progress of the children. While considerable data has been compiled on the attainments of the children, it needs to be used more effectively for planning subsequent learning and teaching and for setting more specific targets within the year group, key stage and school. The teachers mark the children's work regularly and consistently.

2.15 Approximately 10% of the children have been identified by the school as requiring additional learning support in English and mathematics. The class teachers work effectively alongside the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and the SEN withdrawal teacher to draw up programmes of support designed to promote improvement in the children's attainments. Detailed records and information on individual attainment are compiled and reviewed on a regular basis. In the SEN withdrawal sessions, the children learn in a caring and purposeful environment and they respond well to the excellent teaching that is provided. There is clear evidence that the children make good progress in reading.

2.16 The Principal, supported by the Vice-principal, manages the school efficiently. He is hard-working, conscientious and committed to the welfare of the children and staff. The SDP sets out a wide range of areas for development. The plan needs to be adjusted to prioritise particular areas for development, and include success criteria, realistic timescales for completion and strategies for monitoring and evaluating progress. There is evidence of the co-ordinators with whole-school roles having opportunities to promote improvement in learning and teaching through working with their colleagues. This practice which has been carried out to date forms a sound basis on which to improve further the leadership roles of the staff and to focus more specifically on monitoring and evaluating the learning experiences and attainments of the children.

3. **CONCLUSION**

3.1 The school has many strengths which include:

- the very good working relationships at all levels;
- the well-behaved children;
- the high quality of the pastoral care;
- the many opportunities provided for the children to participate in music, drama and sport;
- the well-established links with the parents and the community;
- the good standard of most of the teaching;

- the high quality provision for, and commitment to, the special educational needs of the children;
- the excellent standard of teaching in the Speech and Language Unit including the use of a wide range of effective strategies which enthuse and motivate the children;
- the effective work on forms of writing throughout the school;
- the Principal's efficient leadership of the school and the effective support given to the pastoral care of the children;
- the valuable contribution made by the support staff to the life and work of the school; and
- the strong support of the members of the Board of Governors and the parents.

3.2 The area for improvement includes the need:

- to develop further the leadership and management role of the co-ordinators to enable the effective monitoring and evaluation of the children's learning experiences and attainments to promote ongoing school improvement.

3.3 In the areas inspected, the school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified minor areas for improvement which the school has the capacity to address.

The school's progress on the area for improvement will be monitored by the District Inspector.

APPENDIX

ACCOMMODATION

1. The mobile accommodation falls far short of current standards; there is no toilet provision for the children. In addition, access to the toilet facilities inside the main school building is inappropriate.
2. There is a need to ensure that all areas where children are taught have clear visibility panels in the doors.
3. A lack of appropriate outdoor physical play facilities for KS1 children.
4. There is a shortage of appropriate storage space.

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