

eti

*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

**Ballynahinch Primary School, Nursery Unit
and I-CAN Early Years Centre
Co Down**

Inspected: May 2009

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	6
5.	CONCLUSION	6
6.	THE NURSERY UNIT	8
	STATISTICAL INFORMATION (NURSERY UNIT)	
	APPENDIX	

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Ballynahinch Primary School is situated on an elevated site near to the centre of Ballynahinch, County Down. The enrolment has decreased over the past five years and currently stands at 285; in addition there are 26 children in the nursery unit. Most of the children come from the town and walk to the school, or travel by car or bus. At the time of the inspection approximately 11% of the children were entitled to receive free school meals and just under 32% of the children in the mainstream of the school are on the special educational needs (SEN) register. The school has an 'I-CAN Early Years Centre' for pre-school children with speech and language difficulties.

1.2 FOCUS

The inspection focused on the quality of the work in literacy and numeracy, including the contribution of information and communication technology (ICT) in promoting and supporting the learning and teaching. The school's arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection, were also evaluated.

1.3 THE VIEWS OF THE PARENTS, TEACHERS, GOVERNORS AND CHILDREN (INCLUDING NURSERY UNIT)

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents and the teaching staff to complete confidential questionnaires prior to the inspection, as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and a group of children from year 6. One hundred and forty-six questionnaires were issued to parents; 69 of these were returned to the Department of Education (DE) and 28 contained written comments. In addition, 12 members of the teaching staff responded to the online questionnaire. The responses from the parental and staff questionnaires were generally positive and the parents noted in particular the helpfulness of the teaching staff and the happy atmosphere which permeates the school.

The governors spoke very positively about the commitment of the members of the teaching staff and the support staff who work hard in the best interests of the children. The children in year 6 spoke about their enjoyment of school life, reported that they feel safe, and know whom to turn to in the event of a concern. The Education and Training Inspectorate has reported to the Principal and representatives of the governors the main messages emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is good. This is exemplified through the celebration of the children's achievements, through the many attractive displays of the children's work and through the good working relationships between the staff and the children. The teachers know the children well and the majority of the children behave very well.

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the nursery is very good. The nursery has a very positive ethos and the working relationships at all levels are very good. The children respond well to the staff and their behaviour is very good.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school's arrangements for safeguarding children are unsatisfactory and do not adequately reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department. In particular the school needs to ensure, as a matter of urgency, that all members of the teaching and non-teaching staff receive appropriate training in child protection and that the arrangements for child protection are made known to all parents. In relation to the nursery unit, the school management team also need to ensure that incidents in relation to the personal care of the children are documented and shared with the parents and that risk assessments for all planned trips or visits are documented.

1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, through the promotion of drinking water and participation in sporting opportunities, which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

The children demonstrate a good level of interest and motivation in their work. Throughout the school most children work well independently, in pairs and collaboratively when in larger groups. Most of the children make good progress in their learning. Those who require additional help are identified through a range of assessments which are interpreted by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO); additional support is arranged within the school, or through the South-Eastern Education and Library Board learning support services.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The overall provision for English and literacy is good. The literacy co-ordinator has identified the need to update the literacy policy. She has carried out an audit of literacy planning and progression throughout the school to monitor standards and learning and teaching throughout the school. The results of the audit need to have an action plan and link into the school development plan (SDP).

In all key stages, the children are keen and eager to talk about their work. Throughout the foundation stage (FS) and key stage (KS)1, activities incorporating songs and rhymes and whole-class discussion promote the children's talking and listening skills and help them grow in confidence. As they progress through KS2, the children are able, through group and paired work, role-play and drama to think for themselves, speak confidently and to question and challenge each other's responses. By the end of KS2 most of the children are articulate and confident in expressing their views and listening to others.

Throughout the FS and KS1, the children enjoy listening to stories and show an interest in fiction and non-fiction books. They are acquiring basic reading skills through home reads, modelled and shared reading sessions and the development of a phonological awareness. The shared reading sessions are used to promote the children's early skills of comprehension and interpretation of the text through word exploration, sequencing, recall and prediction. Book areas and the new school library are used well to encourage the browsing and handling of books. The school, through its own processes of self-evaluation, has identified the need to update the reading resources and implement a phonological programme to assist children with their reading. The work in phonics needs to be co-ordinated across the curriculum and the relevant teachers in both key stages need to receive sufficient training and time to develop this important aspect. In KS2, the children progress their reading skills through shared and guided reading, class novels and library books. The teachers monitor the children's standards in reading through standardised tests, and the use of oral and written questions to assess understanding. The test results indicate that in each year group there is a significant minority of children who require more consistent levels of support in order to help them engage more confidently with text and to achieve higher standards in their reading.

The children's writing is celebrated through stimulating and informative displays around the school. In the FS the children develop their letter formation and word-building skills through shared writing activities. In KS1 the children are starting to express their ideas independently and shared reading tasks are well matched to writing tasks. There is a need to develop further the children's skills and strategies to enable them to become more confident and independent writers. By KS2 most of the children are writing independently in a variety of styles and for a range of audiences with a significant minority writing to a very high standard.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The quality of the school's provision for mathematics and numeracy has a number of important strengths; it is satisfactory at the FS and KS1 and mostly good at KS2. There are, however, some key areas for improvement, which include the co-ordination of numeracy across the school.

There is a clear commitment by the teachers to the development of the children's mathematical and numeracy skills through detailed planning and provision of appropriate timetabled class time.

In almost all of the classes, the children benefit from the regularity and effectiveness of the short mental maths sessions; the children are keen to participate, they show good mental flexibility and the questioning by the teachers is effective in developing further their mathematical ideas and understanding. The teachers integrate well a range of opportunities for the children to apply their numeracy skills in topic and project work, making appropriate use of relevant contexts. Good attention is given to active teaching approaches with opportunities provided for the children to undertake investigative and problem-solving activities, often in groups. At the FS, the play-based learning needs to be more effective in establishing and developing further the children's early understanding and application of number, and there should be less of an emphasis on the completion of worksheets by the children.

By the end of KS1, most of the children have a sound understanding of number and simple number operations, time, two dimensional(2-D) and 3-D shapes, measurements within a variety of units and how to sequence events; they use programmable devices competently and are able to create and interpret simple graphs. By the end of KS2, most of the children have a broad mathematical knowledge; they understand clearly place value, can calculate accurately, complete competently a range of mathematical investigations, know the properties of a good range of shapes, estimate and predict with accuracy and are able to collect, present, extract and interpret data in various forms. A significant number of the children achieve highly in mathematics and numeracy at this stage.

It is inappropriate that the co-ordination and development of mathematics and numeracy is not a whole-school priority in the SDP process. The teachers and classroom assistants would benefit from better leadership, support, encouragement and external advice and guidance in mathematics and numeracy. In addition, the school needs to review the range of resources for promoting practical mathematics with a view to providing a better range and quality of equipment and resources. A few instances of the good use of ICT to consolidate and extend the children's learning in mathematics were observed; this needs to become more embedded into the classroom practice across the school.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The teachers' schemes of work provide a sound overview for learning and teaching across the curriculum. The teachers' medium and short-term planning, which is linked to the schemes, identifies clearly the learning intentions and all of the teachers are well-prepared for their lessons. The literacy co-ordinator has identified the need for a more consistent approach to planning across the school and the year 7 teachers are currently piloting a new model for planning.

3.2 TEACHING

During the inspection, the quality of the teaching was good or very good in the majority of lessons observed. In the best practice the teachers have high expectations of the children; the lessons are well-planned with a good range of resources and differentiated activities. They use skilful questioning and appropriate pace and challenge and are supported well by the classroom assistants.

In the less effective practice observed, there were limited opportunities for the children to think independently, to problem-solve, to be involved in investigative work, and there was a lack of appropriate differentiation. In the FS, play needs to be used more effectively to enrich and extend the children's skills and understanding of literacy and numeracy. Information and communication technology is increasingly used to support learning and teaching and some teachers are planning for the integration of ICT to support learning and teaching across the curriculum. The inspection findings endorse this as an important area to be developed further.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

There is a clear emphasis on the collection of assessment data and this is used well to identify those children who need additional help with their learning. It is less well used to identify and focus on achievement trends and ensure progression across year groups and key stages or to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the learning in literacy and numeracy from a strategic viewpoint. It will be important for the staff, as a whole, to analyse and discuss the internal and external data they hold on the children's performance in order to plan more appropriately including the setting of targets to ensure that all the children are achieving to the standards of which they are capable.

The teachers mark the children's work regularly and in some classes the children have self-assessment books where they record the lessons that they have enjoyed most. In the best practice there is effective marking for improvement with supportive comments to motivate the children and help them improve their work. This good practice needs to be implemented more consistently across the school.

The school has appropriate arrangements in place for monitoring, recording and reporting the progress of each child. Information on the children's progress in literacy and numeracy is discussed with the parents through regular parent-teacher interviews and communicated through an annual written report.

3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The skilful special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) knows the children well and works hard to liaise with colleagues, visiting professionals and parents. She provides valuable withdrawal learning support for literacy, limited to one day a week, with additional sessions provided by an experienced and effective classroom assistant. The time allowed for withdrawal support is inadequate given the high number of children on the SEN register and it is important that management should review and evaluate the impact of these arrangements in order to plan for the future.

In the majority of classes Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) identify appropriate targets which are reviewed regularly; learning activities are suitably differentiated and the children make progress. The classroom assistants work in collaboration with teachers and support the children well across a wide range of activities.

3.5 I-CAN EARLY YEARS CENTRE

The I-CAN Early Years Centre is a pre-school speech and language centre for children and has a highly skilled and committed staff of a teacher, a speech and language therapist and a classroom assistant; it is in partnership with the I-CAN national charity who provide effective staff development and accreditation. The quality of work in this centre is outstanding and enables the majority of the children to transfer satisfactorily into mainstream education. The centre provides valuable outreach to schools and beneficial advice and workshops for parents.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The Principal has been in post for over four years and a new Vice-principal has recently been appointed. There are appropriate procedures in place to ensure the efficient working of the school. The strategic leadership and management of the school are inadequate and need to improve. The school has identified appropriately the need to review school management structures, and the roles and responsibilities of all teachers and co-ordinators; it is important that this is addressed so that they are able to contribute more effectively to strategic planning and development for improvement and to raise standards further. The SDP is inadequate and there are important areas for improvement which need to be addressed promptly in order to comply with the School Development Plan Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005. These areas include the process of SDP, and the inclusion of the strategies for learning and teaching and for SEN.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the good or better quality of the teaching in the majority of the lessons observed;
- the celebration of the children's work across the curriculum through extensive displays throughout the school;
- the good behaviour of the children;
- the very good attention given to promoting healthy eating and physical activity; and
- the outstanding quality of the multi-disciplinary work in the I-CAN Early Years Centre.

5.2 The areas for improvement include the need for the leadership of the school:

- to review the SDP and its associated processes to ensure that it is based on a rigorous self evaluation process with an essential focus on literacy and numeracy;
- to improve the monitoring and evaluation of learning and teaching, and the standards of, literacy and numeracy; and
- to review the roles and responsibilities of the staff within the school to ensure that all teachers and co-ordinators are enabled to fulfil effectively the school action plans.

5.3 In most of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in standards and in leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of the children are to be met more effectively. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

6. THE NURSERY UNIT

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

- The friendly, caring ethos promotes the children's confidence, self-esteem and very good behaviour.
- The wide range of interesting and imaginative activities stimulate the children's curiosity and promote good learning opportunities in most areas of the pre-school curriculum. The particular strengths of the programme are the promotion of the children's language skills and their personal, social and emotional development; the children are making good progress.
- The majority of the interactions between the staff and the children are skilful; the staff provide children with sustained support during play.
- The planning and assessment methods are effective. The information from the observation of the children at play is used well to plan activities to meet the children's individual interests and needs.
- A culture of reflection and review is evolving within the new staff team and they recognise the need to apply a more rigorous and systematic approach to self-evaluation through the development of outdoor play.

The inspection identified areas for improvement. The following is the most important area that needs attention:

- the development and organisation of the outdoor play provision.

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the nursery is good. The nursery has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the nursery has demonstrated the capacity to address.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the organisation's progress on the areas for improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON THE NURSERY UNIT IN BALLYNAHINCH PRIMARY SCHOOL

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1
Attending full-time	26
Attending part-time	0
Under 3 years of age*	0
With a statement of SEN	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4	0
At CoP stages 1 or 2	0
With English as an additional language	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.	%
Average attendance for the previous year.	%

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	1	0
Nursery Assistants	0	0
Qualified Nursery Assistants	0	1

Number of: ****	
Students	1
Trainees	1

**** Total placements since September of current year

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued	26
Percentage returned	57.69%
Number of written comments	9

APPENDIX

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- There is a need to review the accessibility to the nursery unit toilet area from the playroom.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2009

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.