



*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**

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Focused Inspection

Braidside Integrated Primary School Ballymena

Inspected: October 2009

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BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Braidside Integrated Primary Ballymena** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 12/10/09**
ii. **School Reference Number: 306-6551** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Year 1 Intake	52	43	53	54	39
Enrolments					
Primary	326	317	330	345	336
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Unit	26	26	27	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%

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) | 15.3 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
|----|----|---|------|---|---|---|

- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 21.96 NI PTR: 20.4

- iii. Average Class Size: 25.8

- iv. Class Size (Range): 18 to 31

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|------|--|
| v. | Ancillary Support: | | |
| | Number of Hours Per Week : | i. | Clerical support: 50.5 |
| | | ii. | Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support: 76.5 |
| | | iii. | Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: 127.5 |

- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 2.3%

- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 18.4%

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

- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 20.5%

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Braidside Integrated Primary School is situated on Fry's Road in the north of Ballymena. The school has a single class nursery unit attached to it. Most of the children who attend the school and nursery come from within a five mile radius. The enrolment has remained steady over the past five years and currently stands at 336; in addition, 26 children attend the nursery. Just over 20% of the children are entitled to free school meals. The school has identified approximately 18% of the children as needing additional support with their learning. A report on the provision in the nursery is also included.

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 AND CHILDREN

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 groups of children from years 6 and 7.

One hundred and fifteen questionnaires were issued to parents; approximately 53% were returned to the Department of Education (DE) and 28 contained additional written comments. The responses from the questionnaires were highly affirmative, indicating very strong support for the work and life of the school. The parents commented positively on the overall quality of education, the leadership of the Principal, the pastoral care and support provided for the children, the friendly ethos and the inclusion of children from minority ethnic and religious groups.

Eleven of the teachers completed a confidential questionnaire, with six teachers providing additional written comments. Most of these responses were wholly positive commenting on the helpful communication with parents, the effective management of the school and the collegial working relationships between the staff.

The governors expressed very strong support for the work of the school and the leadership of the Principal. They commented favourably on the strong ethos of inclusivity within the school, the standards that the children achieve, the very good levels of communication between home and school, and reported that they are kept well-informed about all aspects of the school development planning process. Concern was expressed by the parents, the teachers and the governors about the quality of the accommodation. This issue is addressed in the body of the report and the Appendix.

The children in year 6 spoke enthusiastically and warmly about their school. In particular, they value the helpful, caring and approachable Principal and teachers, the 'Golden Time' rewards, and the varied curriculum including mental mathematics. They reported that they feel safe at school and were very clear about whom to turn to in the event of a concern.

In the nursery, approximately 69% of the parents responded to the questionnaires and eight made additional written comments. The responses indicate that the parents regard the nursery highly and appreciate the very good communication between home and the nursery, the quality of the arrangements to help the children settle into the nursery routine, and the friendly, approachable and professional staff.

The Education and Training Inspectorate has reported to the Principal and representatives of the governors the very few other concerns emerging from the parents' and teachers' questionnaires.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of pastoral care in the school and the nursery is outstanding. In the school, the staff work hard to provide a caring, orderly and inclusive learning environment where children are valued and respected; positive working relationships at all levels promote a strong sense of school community. The school's personal development programme develops the children's emotional well-being and the children are encouraged to explore their values and talk about their feelings. The children's involvement in the decision-making process is encouraged and used to inform future developments. The senior children are trained in peer mediation and assist their peers and the younger children in the playground. The staff have a high regard for the welfare of the children and provide encouragement for positive behaviour and standards of work through an effective whole-school reward system. A range of very good quality policies, which are reviewed in full consultation with the school community, guide and support the pastoral care provision within the school. In the nursery, there is a caring, inclusive and supportive ethos within the playroom, excellent working relationships at all levels, and a strong value placed on the children's ideas which promote their self-esteem. The children are settled, happy and confident.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school and nursery have very good arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by DE.

1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school and nursery give very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. In the school, for example, there is a successfully embedded healthy break policy and a food tasting event, which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles. In the nursery, the children are provided with healthy breaks and have good opportunities for energetic play.

1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

There are very effective links with parents; parental involvement is encouraged and appreciated through membership of the Parent Council and the governors. Communication with parents is maintained through a regular dual-language newsletter that is produced in English and Polish, curriculum information sessions at the beginning of each school year, and area of learning workshops through the year. The children's learning experiences are enhanced through active links with the local community including, in particular, the local special school and post-primary specialist school, participation in community events, sporting activities, and educational visits. The school supports regularly local and worldwide charities and has recently been involved in assisting the development of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Safe Places programme. In the nursery, there are well-established links with the parents, local schools and appropriate agencies.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

Overall, the children, including those with special educational needs, achieve high standards. Almost all the children demonstrate high levels of motivation, enjoyment and engage actively in their learning. They have a sense of responsibility for their own learning and can work independently and collaboratively in groups and pairs, valuing the opinions of others and demonstrating mutual respect. The children demonstrate the ability to make connections in their learning and apply effectively their thinking skills. They interact confidently with their teachers, ask questions and justify opinions in an articulate manner.

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 has fluctuated between below and well above the Northern Ireland average. Compared with schools in the same free school meals category, the levels of attainment have also fluctuated between below and well above average.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The quality of the provision in English is very good.

The children have very good talking and listening skills. The teachers encourage the children to give extended responses through group, paired and whole-class activities. The children develop their skills through a good range of activities, including drama and class presentations, and are developing a breadth of language to support their learning across the curriculum. The school makes increasingly good use of ICT to enhance the experiences of the children through, for example, the recording of 'podcasts'.

The children achieve very good standards in reading. They demonstrate an enjoyment of reading and are able to discuss their favourite books, authors and characters. The school has created a literacy rich environment to support the children's learning, and is promoting actively the enjoyment of reading, especially with the boys. The children learn to read through a planned and progressive programme using a range of reading material and methods to suit all abilities, interests and ages. The teachers make very good use of a variety of strategies which are used consistently across the school including the development of phonological awareness which is integrated well throughout the curriculum. The children read with fluency, expression and understanding.

The standards achieved by the children in writing are very good. The children write in a wide range of forms for a variety of purposes and audiences across the curriculum, including extensive creative writing, which provides opportunities to develop their individual writing styles. The children make good use of ICT to present their work to a high standard; the teachers encourage them to edit and re-draft their work to improve the quality of their writing.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The overall quality of the provision for mathematics in the school is very good.

In the foundation stage, numeracy is promoted through a range of activities including appropriate play-based learning activities. The children have an understanding of mathematical concepts appropriate to their age and ability; for example, they can sort, order, make patterns and handle data through a combination of suitable oral and practical work which is matched well to their interests and needs. They articulate their thinking processes well and have the opportunity to apply their mathematical knowledge to meaningful contexts across the curriculum.

At KS1, the children use practical resources effectively to establish mathematical concepts and are able to demonstrate an appropriate understanding of number, measures, shape, and handling data. The children can choose appropriate methods and explain their working. In discussions with the year 4 children, the most able demonstrated a good understanding of basic number and shape and space.

At KS2, the children enjoy their mathematics and apply their mathematical skills across the areas of learning. In discussions with the year 7 children, the most able have a good understanding of place value, number facts, estimation, measures, and shape and space. In order to raise further the standards at KS1 and KS2, there is a need to ensure that the learning activities are differentiated more appropriately to meet the needs of all the children in order to provide greater challenge and extension to the mathematical experiences of the more able children.

Across all key stages the children use mathematical language accurately and standards of numeracy presentation are excellent.

Mental mathematics strategies are promoted effectively and linked, when appropriate, to the main lesson activity. The children are flexible in their mathematical thinking and are able to use an appropriate range of strategies.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The teachers are hard-working, reflective and prepare very well for lessons. The school has a range of useful curriculum policies and schemes to guide the teacher's planning and there is an ongoing review of core curriculum programmes to ensure progression and continuity. In the best practice, key learning outcomes, language and differentiation by outcome and task are identified. Connected learning is being developed through the use of topic webs. Evaluations are used to assess the quality of the children's learning, the quality of resources and the appropriateness of teaching strategies and are used effectively to inform future planning and learning. Throughout the school the teachers involve the children in the planning and integrate their ideas and interests in topic work.

3.2 TEACHING

The quality of almost all of the teaching observed was good or better; just under half was very good and a further third was outstanding. The teachers' expectations are appropriately high. In the best practice observed:

- there was a clear review of previous learning;
- the work was differentiated appropriately to meet the learning needs of all of the children;
- the focus on learning was clear and explicit;
- the teaching and learning approaches were highly creative;
- there was an appropriate range of learning activities, including the effective use of practical and active learning resources; and
- the teacher's effective questioning promoted the children's thinking.

During these lessons, the children were highly motivated, interested and engaged very well in their learning.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

There are appropriate procedures in place for keeping parents well informed about their children's learning including formal parent/teacher consultations and written reports. The school operates an 'open door' policy for further informal consultations.

The teachers mark the children's work diligently and regularly. Verbal and written comments provide the children with suggestions as to how their learning might be improved. Children set individual targets for self-improvement and there is regular peer and self-assessment of achievement and learning.

The teachers monitor the children's progress regularly and systematically, and collate the information centrally. The school uses a suitable range of standardised and non-standardised testing to assess the children's levels of achievement in English and mathematics. The available performance data is used effectively to analyse trends at whole-school level, and to track cohorts of children as they progress through the school. The school has begun appropriately to monitor and track the progress of individual children to improve further the standards and achievements.

3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The provision for children with special educational needs is outstanding. The special educational needs co-ordinator, literacy support teacher, part-time numeracy support teacher and Reading Recovery support classroom assistants work to provide high quality support for the children who require additional help in numeracy and literacy. These children are identified appropriately at an early stage, through the use of classroom observation and the analysis of assessment data.

The current provision is through withdrawal sessions and some peripatetic support. In the best practice, the withdrawal support is linked closely to the work in class, and the individual education plan targets are specific, reviewed regularly, and inform classroom practice. The children respond well to this support, are gaining in confidence, self-esteem and are making steady or good progress. There is evidence to show that actions taken have resulted in improvements in learning and teaching.

Good progress has been made in addressing the requirements of the Special Educational Needs Disability Order within the school.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The quality of the leadership provided by the Principal is outstanding. He has a holistic overview of the children's educational and pastoral experiences. He is supported ably by a highly effective Vice-principal and team of co-ordinators. The management structure promotes improvement in the school. The co-ordinators lead effectively the development work in key curriculum areas. There is very good internal communication at all levels and a strong sense of collegiality within the school.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The school's process for improvement has many strengths; it is linked clearly to a school development plan (SDP) that complies with the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005. There are very good opportunities for consultation about the SDP within the school community, and effective target-setting and benchmarking at whole-school level. The available data is used effectively to inform priorities within the SDP. Appropriate actions plans are in place to develop, for example, literacy and numeracy, which support effectively a well-established culture of self-evaluation.

4.3 STAFF DEVELOPMENT

There is an effective staff development programme that is linked appropriately to the SDP priorities and meets well the needs of the school and the individual teaching and non-teaching staff.

4.4 ACCOMMODATION

There are deficiencies in the fabric of the school buildings which consist of pre-fabricated accommodation; however, effective use is made of the available accommodation to support teaching and learning and the standard of caretaking in the school is excellent. Health and safety issues relating to the school's accommodation are detailed in the Appendix.

4.5 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The governors are supportive of the Principal and staff and take an active role in the work and life of the school. The governors are fully involved in the strategic planning and policy development for the school and support effectively the Principal and the staff in the implementation of the SDP. The school is well resourced.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the high standards of the children's learning, including their ability to work independently and collaboratively, and the very good levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy;
- the quality of the teaching observed, of which just under half was very good and a further third was outstanding;
- the outstanding pastoral care provided for the children, and in particular the effective links established with parents and the inclusive, caring learning environment;
- the outstanding quality of the provision for children with special educational needs;
- the outstanding leadership provided by the Principal supported ably by a highly effective Vice-principal and team of co-ordinators; and
- the well-embedded culture of self-evaluation with appropriate action to promote school improvement.

5.2 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.

6. THE NURSERY UNIT

6.1 The main strengths within the educational and pastoral provision of the nursery are as follows:

- the excellent ethos built on the mutual respect between the children and the staff. The children's work is thoughtfully displayed, which demonstrated the children's progress and development and creates a highly attractive learning environment;
- the excellent opportunities for the children to learn in all areas of the pre-school curriculum. Particular strengths in the curriculum include the children's high levels of motivation and concentration in their activities, their oral language development, the many good examples of creative and imaginative play, and the use made of natural, real materials in the imaginative play areas both indoors and outdoors;
- the high quality of the staff's interaction with the children. The adults engage purposefully with the children, listening to them and building effectively on their ideas and interests;
- excellent provision is made for the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning;
- the staff have developed effective methods of planning the programme and assessing the children's development and achievement. This information is shared regularly with the parents and valuable links have been established with the primary school, external agencies and the SureStart project within the local community; and
- the teacher-in-charge of the nursery provides very effective leadership. She is supported ably by her assistant. The staff focus on extending the children's ideas and interests and exploit effectively the learning potential within the resources and experiences.

6.2 The teacher-in-charge is reflective in her practice and evaluates the programme regularly. The nursery has comprehensive action plans which identify relevant areas for improvement and which are incorporated well into the whole-school development plan. The staff have developed some effective methods of self-evaluation and there is clear evidence that the process has led to improvements in the children's learning.

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this nursery is outstanding; the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. The nursery has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON BRAIDSIDE INTEGRATED PRIMARY SCHOOL NURSERY UNIT, BALLYMENA

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending full-time	0	0
Attending part-time	26	0
Under 3 years of age*	0	0
With statement of special educational needs	0	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	0	0
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	0	0
With English as an additional language	0	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.	2%
Average attendance for the previous year.	89.9%

2. Duration of Sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
-	2½ 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	0
Trainees	0

*** Total placements since September of current year

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued	26
Percentage returned	69.2%
Number of written comments	8

ACCOMMODATION AND HEALTH AND SAFETY

- The classroom doors do not have view panels.
- Many of the exterior door thresholds in the pre-fabricated classroom accommodation blocks are deteriorating.
- Many of the flat roofs in the pre-fabricated classroom accommodation blocks and the administration block are deteriorating.

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

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