



*The Education and Training Inspectorate -  
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*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**

#### **Brooklands Primary School and Nursery Unit Dundonald**

**Inspected: February 2008**

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## BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Brooklands Primary Dundonald** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 25.02.08**  
 ii. **School Reference Number: 401-6503** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Year 1 Intake	65	74	72	71	55
<b>Enrolments</b>					
Primary	542	525	537	521	493
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Class/Classes	78	77	76	77	78
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):

93%

<b>Primary &amp; Reception</b>	<b>Nursery Unit</b>	<b>Special Unit</b>
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- D. i. Number of Teachers  
 (including the principal and part-time teachers):  
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)

24	3.6	0
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- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 20.5 NI PTR: 20.8

- iii. Average Class Size: 23.5

- iv. Class Size (Range): 18 to 33

- v. Ancillary Support:

Number of Hours **Per Week**:

- |   |    |
|---|----|
| i. Clerical support:  | 36 |
| ii. Official Making A Good Start Support:                   | 45 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 45 |

- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 5.6%

- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 14.5%

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

- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 23.3%

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Brooklands Primary School is situated in the Ballybeen area of Dundonald. Most of the children attending the school come from public and private housing estates in the surrounding area. The enrolment has remained steady over the past five years with a slight decrease in the current year; it presently stands at 493. Approximately 24% of the children are entitled to receive free school meals. The school has a three-teacher Nursery Unit attached to it which caters both for parents with children already at the school and those from the wider community. The enrolment has remained steady over the past five years and is currently 78. A recently established Toy and Book Library funded through the Extended Schools initiative provides a valuable service for 54 pre-school-aged children from the local community.

1.2 The inspection focused on the work in numeracy and the effectiveness of the school's special educational needs (SEN) provision. In addition, the inspection evaluated the work in information and communication technology (ICT) in promoting and supporting learning and teaching in mathematics. The inspection also evaluated the school's procedures for pastoral care, including child protection.

1.3 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 children from years 6 and 7. One hundred and fifty questionnaires were issued to parents; 42% were returned to the Department of Education (DE) of which 21 contained additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaires were very positive in their support of the school and, in particular, of the commitment of the Principal and the staff to the well-being and education of the children. The parents and nursery staff were also given opportunities to express their views about the nursery through the inspection questionnaires. The responses indicated a very high level of satisfaction with the provision; a significant number of the parents included written comments praising the work of the staff; a few were less satisfied with information received. The governors expressed their confidence in the school and they referred particularly to the dedication and commitment of the Principal and the school's high standing in the local community. The findings of the inspection endorse all of these views. The very few concerns raised by the parents have been discussed with the Principal and the governors. The children indicated that they feel happy and safe in the school.

## **2. THE QUALITY OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK**

2.1 The school provides a friendly and caring learning environment for the children; their work and achievements are celebrated in displays throughout the school. The children are polite and friendly with visitors, and are willing to talk about their learning. In many of the classes observed, they were responsive and eager to contribute to class discussions; they were engaged and motivated and generally worked well together in group and paired activities. The teaching and support staff work closely as a team and the non-teaching staff make a valuable contribution to the life and work of the school. Working relationships and behaviour are good, there are orderly routines and most of the children settle readily to their work.

2.2 The children's personal and social development is enhanced through their participation in a range of extra-curricular activities and after school clubs including netball, football, kwik cricket, cookery and French. There are also regular school trips. The school has very strong links with the community and with neighbouring schools.

2.3 The school has shown commitment to communicating to parents with curriculum and pastoral information; there are regular opportunities for the parents to consult with the teachers both formally and informally. There is an active Parent Staff Association: its fundraising, for example, helped subsidise swimming and purchase additional ICT and play resources for the school.

2.4 The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection has important strengths. The school has procedures in place which implement the guidance outlined in the relevant DE circulars and has identified appropriately a few areas for improvement which it is currently implementing. Among the strengths are:

- the inclusive child-centred ethos;
- the arrangements in place for the pastoral care of the children;
- the work and support provided by key pastoral staff throughout the school;
- the courteous, well-behaved, responsive children; and
- the contribution made by the support staff to the children's well-being and their learning experiences.

2.5 The few areas for improvement identified include the need to:

- develop the system for the recording and monitoring of pastoral issues within the school; and
- review the current arrangements for the designated staff for child protection.

2.6 The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection in the nursery has important strengths. The nursery has policies and procedures for child protection that address most aspects of DE circulars and guidance. Some minor additions are needed to ensure they are comprehensive. These include the need to add an anti-bullying statement and clearer procedures to policies to guide staff when dealing with challenging behaviour.

2.7 The school's programme for the promotion of health and well-being has important strengths. Attention is paid to the development and implementation of healthy eating and physical activity policies and programmes, for example, incentive schemes and the promotion of healthy breaks and water, which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles. The few areas for improvement identified include the need to:

- include an assessment of the nature and quality of the arrangements for health and well-being practices in the School Development Plan to comply fully with statutory regulations; and

- monitor and evaluate health education (including feedback from governors, parents and children) and follow-up with appropriate action to improve the quality of healthy eating provision.

2.8 Nearly all the teaching observed was sound or better; a significant minority of the teaching was excellent. In the best practice observed, teachers built effectively on previous learning and the intentions for learning were shared with the children; the children's responses were developed appropriately through adept open questioning. The teachers reflect on the quality of the children's learning and use their evaluations to inform future planning. In the less successful practice, there was a tendency to over-direct the lessons, the learning intentions were unclear and there was a lack of opportunity for the children to talk about their learning. The teachers are hard-working and conscientious; they support one another and work effectively as a team. In addition, the well-guided support staff make a significant and much valued contribution to the school and to the welfare and learning of the children.

2.9 The children's mathematical experiences are developed systematically. In the early years a variety of play activities are chosen appropriately to engage the children in active learning. The children at key stage (KS) 1 have the opportunity to develop further early mathematical concepts through a combination of play-based activities and practical mathematics lessons; the learning in mathematics was connected to other areas of the curriculum. There was an appropriate balance between practical and written activities, and the children were encouraged to talk about their learning.

2.10 By the end of KS2 most of the children achieve an average or better standard in mathematics; they can work flexibly with numbers and have a broad mathematical understanding, including place value, presenting and interpreting data, and a knowledge of the properties of a variety of two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes.

2.11 While a majority of the numeracy lessons observed commenced with mental mathematics sessions, or included an element of mental mathematics within the lesson, there is a need to promote greater consistency in the development of mental mathematics strategies throughout the school.

2.12 The school's programme for mathematics is suitably broad and provides the children with a wide range of experiences over the seven years. Appropriate long-term planning provides a framework for progression and development of mathematical knowledge and skills. The numeracy co-ordinator leads the work of the mathematics panel who review regularly progress within the teaching programme throughout the school.

2.13 The medium-term planning focuses on mathematical content. There is a need to promote greater consistency in numeracy teaching throughout the school, for example, by monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the medium-term planning. In particular, there is a need to implement consistently more effective teaching and learning strategies that promote mathematical thinking, active learning and higher levels of engagement.

2.14 During the inspection there was evidence of the use of mathematics being incorporated effectively across the curriculum, particularly within science, the world around us and personal development lessons. Practical equipment and suitable resources were used in a majority of the numeracy lessons observed. For example, real fruit segments were classified using Carroll diagrams, resources such as the abacus and Cuisenaire rods were used

appropriately to support the children's systematic acquisition of number facts and place value. There were also examples of active learning strategies, such as movement, singing about number, and mathematical games such as 'number scrabble', 'follow me' and 'splash', being used very effectively to engage the children in the learning process, and raise levels of motivation and enjoyment.

2.15 In the best practice observed, the children: displayed high levels of motivation; were thinking mathematically; had opportunities to discuss and explain their mathematics; and, worked collaboratively. In the less effective practice observed, there were limited opportunities for independent thinking, problem-solving, investigative work, and lack of appropriate differentiation.

2.16 There are whole-school numeracy action plans addressing three main areas for development; two of which were identified from a whole school audit. For example, the audit identified the need to develop the use of ICT within the teaching and learning of numeracy; consequently the numeracy co-ordinator led staff development in the use of mathematical software.

2.17 The children in year 6 and year 7 achieve good results in tasks in the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) ICT accreditation scheme. For example, children learn how to use a spreadsheet to handle and calculate data, their Internet research skills are being developed and there is increasingly good practice in children using an interactive whiteboard for scientific simulation; in early years classes an appropriate selection of software supports mathematical learning. However, outside the CCEA scheme, such occasions to use ICT to support numeracy are limited. Further opportunities are needed for the ICT co-ordinator to build on recent staff development and to observe and share good practice across the school.

2.18 The school has identified the need to benchmark the children's performance in numeracy against similar schools and make more effective use of standardised test outcomes in order to set targets, monitor and track individual pupil progress. The school has also identified the need to develop further the self-evaluation process through lesson observation in order to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in numeracy and share good practice.

2.19 The children's written work is marked regularly and is generally of a supportive nature. While, in a small number of instances, there are examples of marking for improvement, this good practice needs to be disseminated more widely and consistently across the school in order to advise children on how best to improve the standard of their work.

2.20 The school has identified approximately 83 (14.5%) children with a range of special educational needs, 32 (5.6%) of whom have statements of special educational needs. The current provision for the children is through normal class teaching, withdrawal sessions and specific peripatetic support. Greater differentiation is needed to match the children's abilities and needs. There is a need to develop planning strategies to identify, monitor and evaluate differentiation within classroom practice.

2.21 The withdrawal sessions are provided for the children in need of additional help with aspects of their learning in English and mathematics, and significant resources have been made available for this work. In the best practice the withdrawal sessions are supportive and productive; the children respond well to the teacher and are gaining confidence, self-esteem and are making steady progress; work set during the withdrawal sessions is integrated effectively into the work in the classrooms. The school makes effective use of external support provided by outside agencies.

2.22 The school uses a range of screening and diagnostic tests, together with the teachers' observations, to identify, from an early stage, those children who require additional learning support. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) liaises with class teachers to prepare individual education plans (IEPs). The IEPs are reviewed on a regular basis and the progress is reported to the parents. The short-term targets in the IEPs need to be more sharply focused and measurable to assist the teachers in the monitoring and evaluation of the children's progress.

2.23 The Principal, who has been in post for four years is caring and approachable. He is knowledgeable, committed and passionate about the school and the future of the community. His leadership is both supportive and inclusive and is highly regarded by the wider school community. He is very ably supported by a dedicated and hard-working Vice-principal who, in addition to her care and her commitment to the educational and pastoral life of the school, is a highly effective practitioner who leads by example.

2.24 The school's development planning has some strengths. It draws on a recent whole school audit of development needs undertaken by the teachers and is linked to a range of action plans. While the plan meets the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005, the Principal has already identified appropriately that strategic aspects of both the School Development Plan and the related planning processes need to be developed further in order to promote and support ongoing improvement. These aspects include ensuring that action-planning builds on earlier developments, includes target-setting and the use of standardised testing which is appropriately bench-marked to schools of a similar type, and draws upon self-evaluation processes and procedures to monitor and evaluate all aspects of the schools provision. There is also scope to develop consultation about the School Development Plan with the whole school community.

2.25 The school has recently formed a core curriculum team and plans to develop the roles of its members. The findings of the inspection confirm that it would now be appropriate to clarify, redefine where necessary, and develop the roles and the responsibilities not only of the core team, but also of all teachers with senior management responsibilities. Curriculum leaders and senior management need to work collaboratively to monitor and evaluate the children's attainments and experiences more systematically.

2.26 Currently, the school has a budget under-spend; the governors and senior management team (SMT) need to consider how best to address this matter in the best interests of the children.

2.27 The standard of caretaking is good and the building is well maintained despite some deficiencies in the accommodation relating mainly to the age of the school.



### 3. **CONCLUSION**

#### 3.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the caring, friendly and welcoming atmosphere and the courteous behaviour of the children;
- the strong support of the parents and the governors and the school's high standing in the community;
- the hard-working and committed staff;
- the quality of pastoral care;
- the range of extra-curricular activities;
- the good standards being achieved by the children in key stage tests by the end of year 7; and
- the care and commitment shown by the Principal and Vice-principal and their dedication and commitment to the life and work of the school and the community which it serves.

#### 3.2 The areas for improvement include the need to:

- review the roles and the responsibilities of curriculum leaders and senior management to work collaboratively on policies and practices of school improvement for the purpose of further raising standards; and
- develop further the self-evaluation process through lesson observation in order to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in numeracy and share good practice.

#### 3.3 The school should consider adjusting its School Development Plan to prioritise the areas for improvement set out in this report.

#### 3.4 In the areas inspected the school has strengths in many aspects of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified a few areas for improvement in important areas which need to be addressed to meet effectively the needs of all the learners.

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

#### 4. THE NURSERY UNIT

4.1 The main strengths within the nursery's educational and pastoral provision are as follows:

- there is a caring and supportive atmosphere based on the very good working relationships between the staff and the children;
- the staff take time to prepare an attractive and stimulating learning environment within the playrooms; they provide a wide range of interesting activities which the children clearly enjoy;
- there are good or very good opportunities to learn in almost all areas of the pre-school curriculum. Particular strengths of the programme include the emphasis given to promoting the children's language, creativity, imagination, confidence and independence;
- the majority of the hard-working staff demonstrate high levels of skill in promoting a wide range of language and learning as they interact with the children. In the best practice observed, the staff listened carefully to the children and built effectively on their ideas, they promoted observation and investigation and extended the children's language and thinking;
- most of the children demonstrate high levels of concentrated and purposeful play; and
- the nursery has developed the outdoor area in recent years to provide a richer and more stimulating learning environment.

4.2 The inspection identified areas for improvement. The following are the most important areas that need attention.

- The nursery co-ordinator needs to work more closely with the school Principal to ensure a greater degree of consistency in the quality of the practice throughout the nursery, with particular attention on the quality of some of the staff interaction, the planning and assessment methods and the implementation of policies.
- There is a need for a greater emphasis on the promotion of a wider range of early mathematical language and concepts.
- The planning for outdoor play should include more detail on the learning to be promoted.

4.3 In the areas inspected, the nursery has strengths in many aspects of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified a few areas for improvement in important areas which need to be addressed to meet effectively the needs of all the learners.

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

## STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON BROOKLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL NURSERY UNIT

### 1. Details of Children

<b>Number of children:</b>	<b>Class 1</b>	<b>Class 2</b>
Attending full-time	26	0
Attending part-time	26	26
Under 3 years of age*	0	0
With statement of SEN**	3	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4***	3	0
At CoP stages 1 or 2***	3	0
With English as an additional language	7	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.	11
Average attendance for the previous year.	94%

### 2. Duration of Sessions

<b>Full-time</b>	<b>Part-time: am</b>	<b>Part-time: pm</b>
4½ hours	2½ hours	2½ hours

### 3. Details of Staff

<b>Number of:</b>	<b>Full-Time</b>	<b>Part-Time</b>
Teachers	1	2
Nursery Assistants	0	0
Qualified Nursery Assistants	2	2

<b>Number of: ****</b>	
Students	0
Trainees	0

\*\*\*\* Total placements since September of current year

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

Number issued	78
Percentage returned	39.7%
Number of written comments	13

### **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

- A risk assessment of an external oil tank needs to be carried out to ensure that the rain water that collects in the concrete setting does not present a hazard to young children.

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