



*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

**Castlewellan Controlled Primary School
Co Down**

Inspected: March 2009

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BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Castlewellan Controlled Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 30.03.09**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 401-1599** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Year 1 Intake	10	11	10	12	8
Enrolments					
Primary	76	72	73	71	78
Reception	2	2	2	2	5
Nursery Class/Classes	0	0	0	0	0
Special Unit	13	10	10	11	11

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):

94.1%

Primary & Reception	Nursery Unit	Special Unit
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- D. i. Number of Teachers

(including the principal and part-time teachers):
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)

6	0	1
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- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 19.5% NI PTR: 20.8

- iii. Average Class Size: 15.6

- iv. Class Size (Range): 11 to 21

- v. Ancillary Support:

Number of Hours **Per Week**:

- | | |
|---|--------|
| i. Clerical support: | 28.75% |
| ii. Official Making A Good Start Support: | 15 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 5 |

- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 11.5%

- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register:
 (inclusive of MLD unit) 26.9%

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

- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 12.8%

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Castlewellan Controlled Primary School is situated on an attractive elevated site near to the centre of Castlewellan, County Down. Since 1933 the school has served the town and a largely agricultural catchment; most of the pupils travel to school by car or bus from within a radius of approximately 20 kilometres. The current enrolment is 78 and has remained steady in recent years. At the time of the inspection approximately 13% of the children are entitled to receive free school meals and just over 13% of the children in the mainstream of the school are on the special educational needs (SEN) register; in addition, the school has a unit for key stage (KS) 1 and KS2 children with moderate learning difficulties

1.2 FOCUS

The inspection focused on the quality of the work in English/literacy and mathematics/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

The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection 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 the children from year 6. Fifty-two questionnaires were issued to parents; 24 of these were returned to the Department of Education (DE) and 14 contained written comments. Seven members of the teaching staff responded to the online questionnaire. The responses from the parental and staff questionnaires were very positive about the strong sense of community and the family atmosphere which permeates the school.

The governors spoke very positively about the happy, family atmosphere within the school, the very good working relationships which exist at all levels and the commitment of the 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 (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

A major strength of the school is its caring, welcoming and friendly atmosphere. There are excellent working relationships between the children and their teachers and amongst the children themselves. The children are well-behaved, polite and friendly to visitors and are willing and enthusiastic to talk about their work. The school is well-maintained and cared for; the school staff gives a great deal of attention to creating a bright and attractive learning environment; for example, colourful displays indicate the children's achievements which are celebrated throughout the school and there are many examples of children's art, written and

topic work and evidence of their use of ICT. The children and staff benefit from very generous financial support from the parents and the local community which assists greatly with resourcing. The helpful secretary, classroom assistants and members of the ancillary staff contribute to the friendly and welcoming atmosphere of the school.

The quality of provision for pastoral care is very good. The teachers make good use of praise, encouragement and rewards systems to motivate the children. The children, through the school council, participate in decision-making, for example, in planning for the use of play areas around the school. The staff gives generously of their time after school and the children benefit from the opportunity to participate in a range of extra-curricular activities which include cookery and a computer club.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The members of staff have created a safe and secure learning environment for the children in which they can feel at ease. The school has good arrangements in place for safeguarding children and reflects the guidance issued by DE.

1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. The members of staff encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles through the promotion and provision of healthy breaks and links with external agencies. The school provides fruit in the tuck shop and participates in the 'Save our Smile' initiative with the school's dental hygienist.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

The children work well in class, demonstrating a high level of interest, motivation and perseverance in their work. Throughout the school they work well independently, in pairs and collaboratively when in larger groups. Most of the children make good or better progress in their learning. Those who require additional help are identified at an early stage and receive appropriate support within the school, attaining satisfactory standards in their work.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The provision for English and literacy is good. The teachers have comprehensive schemes of work and plans which guide their work. By the end of KS2, the standards achieved in English are higher than those in schools of similar size and uptake of free school meals.

Across the curriculum the children have very good opportunities to take part in talking and listening sessions in a variety of contexts. For example, the younger children report back to their peers at the end of structured play and the older children ask of, and answer, their teachers' questions and discuss their work while working in a range of collaborative situations. In addition, they make presentations to the other children using ICT to highlight the key points. It is appropriate that the teachers are developing their questioning techniques to assist the children further with their oral communication.

Reading has a significantly high focus in the school and a strong emphasis is given to encouraging boys to engage with a range of reading, including ICT media. The teachers use a wide range of techniques and approaches to improve the children's reading. The younger children respond with enthusiasm to the stories they hear, particularly from 'Big Books', and during structured activities they enjoy browsing the books available in the attractive book corners in each classroom. The school has built up a comprehensive and varied stock of fiction and non-fiction books; these have raised the profile of reading among the children and they speak with enthusiasm and interest about the novels they are reading. Intensive class and group novel approaches are used effectively with the older children. Most of the children attain good or better standards in their reading.

The children have many opportunities to produce personal and independent pieces of extended written work; these include work based on researching topics, poems and other forms and types of instructional and persuasive writing. Science is used well for the promotion of writing and similar approaches are used in other subjects, in particular, history and geography.

Often lessons have a clear focus and a common theme which facilitates the integration of the three skills of talking and listening, reading and writing. Most of the children produce written work of a good standard.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The teachers have gained significantly in terms of professional development through their involvement in the Numeracy Strategy and they are using the new skills and teaching approaches they have learnt very well in their lessons. The staff have welcomed and appreciated the support provided by the South-Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) Curriculum Advisory and Support Service.

In KS1, the teaching approaches used ensure that there is a suitable balance between whole-class teaching, practical activities and talking about mathematics. The very good range of resources available to the children, including computer programs are used well to stimulate the children's interest and learning in mathematics. The teachers work hard to support the learning needs of all the children who are making steady progress in mathematics. By the end of KS1 most of the children have a firm grasp on basic mathematical concepts and the end of key stage results confirm this progress.

In KS2, the teachers use similar teaching approaches to those used in KS1. There is a wide range of mathematical resources available and good use is made of these resources to engage the children in their work. The teachers know the children well, are clear about their individual learning needs and address these appropriately. Whole-class teaching is carefully planned to ensure that all of the children understand the main concepts being taught. The follow-on work provided is well matched to the abilities of the children who are able to experience success at a personal level. By the end of KS2 most of the children have a secure knowledge of mathematical concepts. The children requiring additional support are given help by a part-time teacher and make good progress.

It is evident that the children enjoy their mathematics work. In each class the children focus very well on their teachers' exposition of new concepts and they are keen and willing to work on the many and varied practical and written tasks that they are given. The children are enthusiastic and work hard to be successful. The well-planned integration of mental mathematics into all of the lessons provides an additional source of enjoyment and allows the children many opportunities to consolidate the concepts that are being taught. It is the view of the Inspectorate that an increased emphasis should be placed on mental mathematics in developing the children's thinking and in making them more flexible in solving problems. Overall, the standards in mathematics are good.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The teachers' schemes of work provide a detailed overview for learning and teaching across the curriculum. The teachers' medium- and short-term planning, which is linked to the schemes, is very effective and all of the teachers are well-prepared for their lessons.

3.2 TEACHING

During the inspection, the quality of the teaching was consistently very good, a minority of lessons observed were deemed to be outstanding. In the best practice the teachers have high expectations, the lessons were well-planned with a good range of activities and resources; there is skilful questioning and appropriate pace and challenge. In class, the work is differentiated well for the range of ability. In the foundation stage and in KS1, play is effectively used to enrich and extend the children's skills and understanding of literacy and numeracy.

In the last four years, the school has invested greatly in training and resourcing in ICT to support learning and teaching. The teachers are identifying opportunities for the use of ICT within their planning which is linked appropriately to supporting work in literacy and numeracy and across the curriculum. Information and communication technology is having a notable impact on classroom practice and, at the time of the inspection, very effective practice was observed in many of the classes. The children and the teaching staff enjoy their work using ICT; many of the children demonstrate high levels of competence and confidence in word-processing and in other purposeful ICT activities. The children share their expertise to assist others and there is much evidence of outstanding work produced by the children using ICT.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

The school has appropriate arrangements in place for monitoring, recording and reporting the progress of each child. Assessment processes have a high profile in the teachers' class work and are used to inform the teachers' planning for whole-class and individual work. The children's work is marked regularly, often with helpful comments which help them to understand better what they need to do to improve further. 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 appropriately and to ensure that all the children are achieving to the standards of which they are capable and in setting targets for themselves and the children.

3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Approximately 13% of the children are on the SEN register and are educated with their peers in mainstream classes. The arrangements for SEN are organised well by the Principal, special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and the class teachers. A learning support teacher works with small groups of children in literacy and numeracy to consolidate their learning through in class support and withdrawal sessions. The children enjoy their sessions which are helpful for their progress and achievements. Further teaching and learning strategies are differentiated appropriately by class teachers for these children.

3.5 MODERATE LEARNING DIFFICULTY UNIT

The school has a unit for KS1 and two children with statements of moderate learning difficulties who are placed at the school by the SEELB. The children benefit from the skilful teaching and sensitive support provided by the unit members of staff led by the hard-working and dedicated SENCO. The children engage thoroughly with their learning and achieve a very good standard of work, particularly in literacy and in ICT, commensurate with their ability. Individual education plans (IEPs) are succinct, well targeted, shared with parents and reviewed regularly. The SENCO's record keeping is meticulous and clearly shows evidence of the progress made by the children throughout their time in the unit.

The classroom is bright, attractive and well resourced. The children benefit from bi-weekly speech and language sessions with a therapist and from the very good collaborative practice between the school staff and the therapist. The classroom assistants support the children very well and contribute significantly to the warm and caring ethos within the unit. The school is very committed to inclusive practice and the children share mainstream class lessons with their peers in the afternoons.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The Principal has been in post for over four years and is leading the school well; he is developing an effective team-spirit amongst the staff, utilising their expertise and interests to good effect. He has a clear vision for the future direction of the school which is reflected in the school development plan; this meets fully the requirements of the Department of Education School Development Planning Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005/19. He has placed a strong focus on ICT in promoting the children's learning and in linking the school nationally and internationally. The Principal and staff are dedicated and committed to the life and work of the school and to the well-being of the children; they know the children and their families well. The teachers, who, in addition to their teaching duties, have other responsibilities, are fully committed to carrying out their additional roles. The school runs efficiently and routines are well established.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the strong family ethos and effective links with the local community;

- the very good quality of the pastoral care provision and the excellent working relationships at all levels;
- the high quality of the teaching observed;
- the standards achieved by the children in literacy, numeracy and ICT;
- the very good provision for the children in the unit for moderate learning difficulties; and
- the effective leadership of the Principal and his dedicated and skilful staff team.

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.

APPENDIX

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- The entrance to the school poses a potential hazard to cars entering and exiting the school site.
- Parking facilities for parents, staff and buses around the school are insufficient.
- The hard-surfaced playing areas are very restricted and unable to cope with the population of the school. Further, the grassed areas to the rear of the school are unable to be used for much of year due to poor drainage.

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