



*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

**Dromara Primary School
Co Down**

Inspected: February 2008

CONTENTS

Section		Page
	STATISTICAL INFORMATION	
1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	THE QUALITY OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK	1
3.	CONCLUSION	4
	APPENDIX	

BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Dromara Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 04.02.08**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 401-1619** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Year 1 Intake	17	28	25	25	28
Enrolments					
Primary	120	128	135	150	163
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Class/Classes	0	0	0	0	0
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): 96.1%

Primary & Reception	Nursery Unit	Special Unit
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- D. i. Number of Teachers
 (including the principal and part-time teachers): 6.66 0 0
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 24.5 NI PTR: 20.8
- iii. Average Class Size: 27.02
- iv. Class Size (Range): 24 to 29
- v. Ancillary Support:
 Number of Hours **Per Week**:
- | | |
|---|----|
| i. Clerical support: | 20 |
| ii. Official Making A Good Start Support: | 15 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 10 |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 3.07%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 12.9%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 4.9%

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Dromara Primary School is situated in the village of Dromara, seven miles from Hillsborough in County Down. The enrolment has been growing steadily over the past five years and currently stands at 163. Approximately 5% of the children are entitled to receive free school meals.

1.2 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 a group of children from years 6 and 7. One hundred and fifty questionnaires were issued to parents; approximately 51% were returned to the Department of Education (DE) of which 35 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 governors expressed their confidence in the school and they referred particularly to the dedication and commitment of the Principal and the hard work of all the staff. The inspection team endorses all of these views. The 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.

1.3 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.

2. THE QUALITY OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK

2.1 The school provides a bright, friendly and caring learning environment for the children; their work and achievements are celebrated in displays throughout the school. The children are courteous, welcoming and enthusiastic to talk about their learning. In most of the classes observed, they were responsive and eager to contribute to class discussions; they were engaged and motivated and worked well together in group and paired activities. The school encourages positive behaviour through a variety of classroom rewards; however, in each of the classes observed, there were a few children who found it difficult to settle to task or to engage in learning for a sustained period of time. 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. The year 6 and 7 children take part in a buddy system to ensure that younger children are involved in the play activities during school breaks.

2.2 The children's personal and social development is enhanced through their participation in a range of extra-curricular activities including netball, football, gymnastics and other Youth Sport activities. The school has very strong links with the community and with neighbouring schools. They have also participated in a Comenius programme with three European schools.

2.3 The school gives very good attention to promoting health and well-being, including opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity. There are effective policies and programmes in place, for example a healthy 'rainbow' tuck shop and communication with parents which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

2.4 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 areas for improvement which it is currently addressing. Among the strengths are the development of positive working relationships throughout the school and the focus given to the personal and social development of the children in all aspects of school life; the areas for improvement identified include the need for greater consultation with parents, governors and children when revising the positive behaviour policy.

2.5 The school has shown commitment to communicating with parents on curriculum and pastoral matters; parents receive a monthly newsletter and are encouraged to visit the school's comprehensive website. There are regular opportunities for the parents to consult with the teachers both formally and informally. There is an active Parent Teacher Association: its fundraising, for example, helped purchase interactive whiteboards for the school.

2.6 During the inspection, the quality of the teaching was always satisfactory; and in 40% of the lessons observed it was good or better. In the best practice, the learning intentions and success criteria were shared with the children at the beginning of the lesson and were revisited during the plenary discussion; adept open questioning styles were used to promote the children's oracy and thinking skills, and the learning tasks met the needs of the children. In the less successful lessons, work was not always matched to the ability of the children, with tasks lacking challenge for the more able or not meeting the needs of the less able.

2.7 The school gives a high priority to the development of mathematics. The teachers have focused on the development of problem-solving and investigative skills, the use of ICT to support learning and teaching in numeracy, and the implementation of an effective support programme for children experiencing difficulties in mathematics. The staff are currently focusing on the integration of ICT into learning and teaching in data-handling. The plan for the next three years highlights the integration of ICT into the development of shape and space and the review of the mathematics policy and scheme of work. The teachers have appreciated the support and guidance provided by the South-Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) Curriculum Advisory and Support Service in helping them plan for and implement these initiatives.

2.8 The current scheme of work provides the long-term plan for each area of the mathematics curriculum. It outlines the aims and content for each year group with emphasis being placed on the development of numeracy skills. The Management Team have identified appropriately the need to review the scheme and to develop a programme which will ensure a broader and more balanced coverage of the mathematics curriculum. It will be important for this programme to provide more detail and guidance than currently exists in order to adequately inform teachers' planning and to ensure consistent and progressive development in all areas of the mathematics curriculum.

2.9 The teachers plan their work effectively in the medium-and-short term. This planning focuses on the intended learning outcomes, the activities and related resources and the evaluation of the children's learning. In the best practice, the teachers' short-term planning identifies clearly how they intend to meet the range of needs within their class. This good practice needs to be disseminated more widely among all the teachers. In the mathematics lessons observed during the inspection, the majority of children displayed enthusiasm and enjoyment; they engaged co-operatively in group and paired work and talked confidently about their learning. In the best practice observed, the lessons were well-paced; they included an appropriate mental agility activity; the focus activities were matched to the age range and ability within the class; there was a good balance between practical and written work and links were made to learning in other areas of the curriculum. In a few, less effective lessons the activities proved too difficult for the children and resulted in their lack of engagement.

2.10 Throughout the school the children have the opportunity to take part in mathematical problem-solving and investigations. In the most effective practice, the teachers and support staff use skilful questioning to support this work and to evaluate children's learning.

2.11 At key stage (KS) 1, the teachers plan for a broad range of topics which are revisited regularly. The children have the opportunity to develop early mathematical concepts, skills and language through a combination of well-planned, play-based activities and practical mathematics lessons; their mathematical learning is connected to other areas of the curriculum and, in the best practice, is related to real life situations.

2.12 As the children progress through KS2 they continue to consolidate and extend their mathematical learning; they have opportunities to engage in problem-solving and investigative mathematics and are encouraged to verbalise their thinking processes. However, there is an over-emphasis on number work and the completion of pencil and paper exercises which limits the opportunity for practical activities and creates an imbalance in the range of children's experiences. By the end of year 7 most of the children achieve adequate or better standard in number and data-handling. This is supported by the school's analysis of the internal and external performance data on the children's attainments.

2.13 The school is well-equipped to support learning and teaching through the use of ICT. The teachers plan for the effective integration of ICT into their numeracy and data-handling. In the best practice observed, the teachers used the interactive software to illustrate key learning points, to facilitate the recording and representation of data and to enable the children to actively engage in their learning. During the lessons observed the teachers were confident, competent and enthusiastic in their use of ICT to support learning.

2.14 The children's written work is marked regularly and is generally of a supportive nature. While, in a small number of cases, there are examples of marking for improvement, this good practice needs to be disseminated more widely and consistently in order to advise children on how best to improve the standard of their work. Pupil profiles currently contain evidence of test results; this content needs to be expanded to include evidence of the children's personal and social achievements.

2.15 The school uses a range of standardised and non-standardised testing to identify children's needs and to assess their level of achievement in mathematics. There are clear structures in place for reporting to parents on their children's progress. Examination of internal and external data indicates that most children achieve a standard which is consistent with that of children of a similar age. The school has begun to develop its use of standardised test scores to identify trends and to evaluate the learning programmes. It will be important to continue with this development in order to track the progress of individual children; to set appropriate targets for individuals; and to measure the impact of recent initiatives on children's levels of achievement.

2.16 The quality of the work of the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) is a strong feature of the work of the school. Approximately 12% of the children are identified by the school as requiring additional support for learning. The SENCO makes good use of the expertise of the class teachers and employs a wide range of standardised and diagnostic tests to identify the children's learning needs. The class teachers liaise with the SENCO to develop detailed individual education plans which set out realistic targets to address each child's needs. These targets are reviewed regularly and shared with the parents. Additional help is provided through the effective use of targeted teaching, individual and group support from the classroom assistants, and withdrawal groups and outreach support staff. Strong links have been established with a range of external agencies in order to meet the needs of the children. The school has benefited from extra funding from the SEELB for numeracy support. This has resulted in a "special time group" for a small number of children in years 3-7. In the work observed, the children were supported effectively by the teacher who used a variety of effective strategies to develop and support the children's mathematical learning. The children's needs are met in a caring, supportive environment.

2.17 The Principal has been in post for approximately 30 years. He is dedicated, hard-working and has a good knowledge and understanding of individual children; he also provides many opportunities for the professional development of the staff. He has overseen many initiatives designed to enhance and support the learning experiences of the children and is currently promoting the expansion and development of the school's building to provide the school with an additional classroom and multi-purpose hall. He is ably assisted by his Vice-principal and Head of Foundation Stage and is supported by the whole staff who demonstrate a high level of professionalism. There is a growing culture of self-evaluation among the staff; however, there now needs to be a much sharper focus on monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of learning and teaching and ongoing improvement in the standards attained by the children.

2.18 The internal and external environments of the school are pleasant and well-maintained; the standard of caretaking is excellent.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the strong sense of community which includes the excellent working relationships at all levels;
- the quality of the teaching which was always satisfactory and in a significant minority good or better;

- the hard work and commitment of the teaching and non-teaching staff;
- the school's high standing in the community;
- the special needs provision in numeracy;
- the leadership and vision of the Principal, ably assisted by the Vice-principal.

3.2 Area for improvement is:

- to ensure the consistent and progressive development of children's skills across all areas of the mathematics curriculum.

3.3 In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided in this school is very good. The educational and pastoral needs of the learners are being well met. The parents can have confidence in the school's capacity for sustained self-improvement.

No follow-up inspection is required.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- It would be appropriate for a risk assessment to be conducted to monitor the traffic circulation in the adjacent car park belonging to the Community Centre.

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