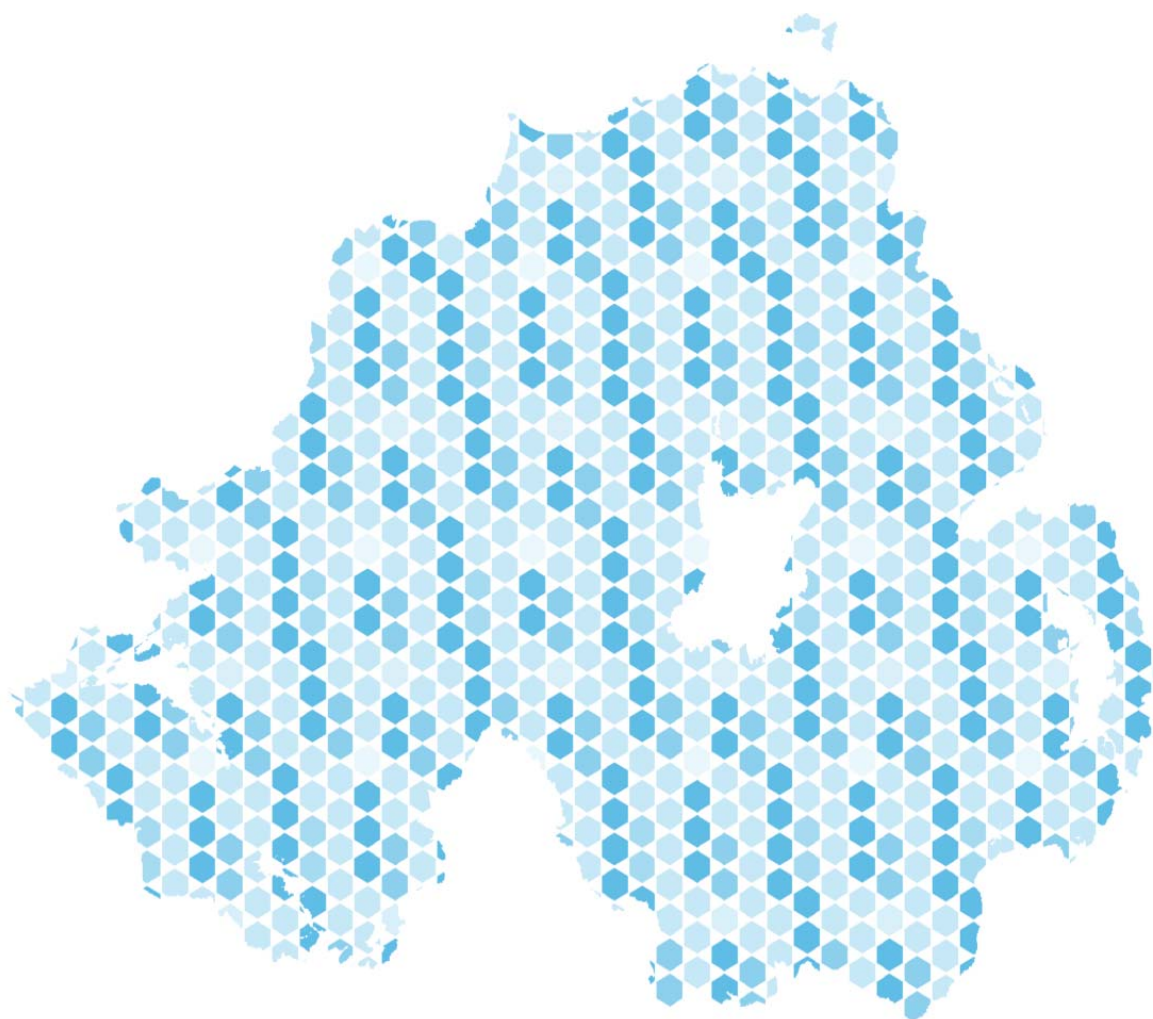


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Drumachose Primary School,
Limavady

Report of an Inspection
in February 2010

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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

BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Drumachose Primary Limavady** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 22/02/10**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 201-6029** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Year 1 Intake	24	30	28	26	34
Enrolments					
Primary	283	265	244	230	223
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Unit	0	0	0	0	0
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): 94.15% **NI Avg Att: 94.9%**
- | | Primary &
Reception | Nursery
Unit | Special
Unit | Irish Medium
Unit |
|--|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
|--|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
- D. i. Number of Teachers
 (including the principal and part-time teachers): 10.6 0 0 0
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 21.04% NI PTR: 20.4
- iii. Average Class Size: 24.78
- iv. Class Size (Range): 17 to 30
- v. Ancillary Support:
 Number of Hours **Per Week:**
- | | |
|---|----|
| i. Clerical support: | 36 |
| ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support: | 45 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 0 |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 1.79%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 20.63%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 31.39%
- x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2008/09
 who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics:
- | | |
|----------------|--------------------|
| English | Mathematics |
| 65.86% | 78.05% |

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Drumachose Primary School is a controlled school situated in the centre of Limavady. The enrolment has decreased over the last five years and currently stands at 223. Most of the children come from the immediate area. At the time of the inspection 31% of the children were entitled to free school meals. In addition, 21% of the children were identified as requiring help with aspects of their learning.

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, the school's arrangements for pastoral care including child protection and the implementation of the healthy food in schools initiative were evaluated.

1.3 THE VIEWS OF THE PARENTS, TEACHERS, GOVERNORS, SUPPORT STAFF AND CHILDREN

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents, teachers and support staff 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 the children from year 6.

Of the 96 questionnaires issued to the parents; 23% were returned to Inspection Services Branch in the Department of Education (DE), including 12 which contained additional written comments. Almost all of the responses indicated a high level of satisfaction with the provision in the school. In particular, the parents highlighted the happy, well-settled children and they expressed appreciation for the work of the Principal and staff in providing a safe and caring learning environment. The very few concerns that were raised by the parents have been discussed with the governors and the Principal.

Eight teachers completed the questionnaire with two providing an additional written comment and six support staff completed the questionnaire also with two additional written comments. The responses from all the staff were wholly supportive of the work of the school.

The governors expressed strong appreciation for the work of the school; in particular they praised the welcoming and caring ethos, the vision and leadership of the Principal, and the hard work of the staff in meeting the needs of all the children.

In discussions held with the year 6 children, they talked enthusiastically about the range of extra-curricular activities and educational visits, the work of the Eco-school committee, and the welcome and support given to new children to the school. They also indicated that they feel happy in school and know what to do if they have any worries about their safety.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is very good. The strengths of the pastoral care provision include:

- the inclusive and very supportive ethos promoted within the school;
- the high levels of mutual respect between the children and the staff and the children's very good behaviour;
- the very good working relationships evident among the whole school community;
- the commitment of the teaching staff in providing interesting and relevant learning experiences for the children;
- the effective implementation of Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) in the curriculum to foster the children's care for others and sense of well-being;
- the very good opportunities for the children to participate in a range of extra-curricular activities and trips;
- the very good links being developed with the parents to involve them in their children's learning; and
- the close links established with other services and agencies to support the children's welfare.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school has very good comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. The arrangements reflect 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, for example, through the well established 'Smart Snacks' healthy break initiative and promotion of healthy lunch boxes through the Munch Box Challenge, which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The school has developed a range of very good initiatives to encourage the parents to become more fully involved in their children's learning. There are suitable programmes provided to enable the parents to support their children with literacy and numeracy as well as opportunities for regular dialogue with the class teachers. There are also very good opportunities for communication through homework books, curriculum meetings, regular class newsheets and the school website. The inspection team endorses the school's continued commitment to developing methods to involve all parents in school life and their children's learning. The school has good links with a range of other local primary, post-primary and pre-schools and it has established international links through the Comenius project.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

The children are well motivated and show a positive attitude to their learning. They work well both collaboratively and independently in a range of contexts. They show perseverance in their work and are willing to contribute in class and try out their ideas.

At foundation stage (FS), the children have many good opportunities to explore, be creative and develop their thinking through relevant well planned play based activities. There is a need to ensure that this good quality is consistent in all classes. The activities planned in the attractive outdoor area enable the children to develop and consolidate their learning. The children work well in groups and are able to share and take turns. The teachers need to be more consistent in providing opportunities for the children to develop their self-management skills during play and task times.

At key stage (KS) 1 and KS2 the children respond well to practical activities and when given the opportunities they are able to apply their skills in ICT, communication and mathematics. They are provided with a very good range of relevant and motivating contexts for learning such as the medieval theme in KS1 and digital media projects relating to environmental issues in KS2.

An analysis of the KS2 assessment data over the past four years shows that in English and mathematics the school's performance remains below the Northern Ireland (NI) average. There has been a gradual improvement in the outcomes for English and although still below the average for schools of a similar free school meals category, there is evidence that the gap has narrowed over the past four years. In mathematics the school's performance has been improving more steadily and had risen last year to above the average for schools in a similar free school meals category.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The quality of the provision in English and literacy is good.

Literacy has a prominent focus on the School Development Plan (SDP) with clear and appropriate targets outlined on the associated action plan. Under the effective leadership of the literacy co-ordinator, the literacy policy has been updated, there is purposeful staff development in, for example teaching phonics and the recently revised teaching plans outline the development of literacy skills across all areas of the curriculum.

Talking and listening is planned for across all year groups and is promoted effectively in most classes through open-ended questioning, paired and small group work, as well as role play and drama. When given the opportunity, the children are confident and keen to answer questions and talk about their ideas.

Reading skills and an enjoyment of books and stories are developed appropriately in FS and KS1. The range of suitable approaches includes a systematic method of teaching phonics and shared, guided and modelled reading experiences. The school uses a commercial reading scheme to provide a systematic approach to developing reading skills and provides additional books for browsing and research in the classrooms and school libraries. An interest in books could be developed further in the FS by incorporating them more consistently into indoor and outdoor play activities. Teachers make good use of Story Sacks and the reading partnerships to involve parents more fully in supporting their children's learning. The school has invested in modern and appealing fiction texts to engage the children in KS2 more fully in their reading. While this is appropriate, the children would also

benefit from reading strategies, activities and levels of support from the teachers which are more consistently matched to the needs of individuals and groups of children across all the ability range. The school has identified the need to raise standards further in reading. A good start is already being made, where outcomes of standardised tests show that all the children who have participated in the school's Reading Partnership programme have improved their reading. The effective use of data to target under-performance, as well as low performance, is a clear strength in the provision, given the very wide range of abilities of the children and the low language baseline that some of the children start with on entering year 1.

The school has adopted a well-organised and coherent approach to the development of writing. Individual whiteboards and play-based learning activities are used effectively to support early writing. By the end of KS1, most of the children can express their ideas coherently and they can develop their thoughts and ideas with fluency. As they progress through KS2, the children are able to use recount, procedural, descriptive, and biographical forms. They are given sufficient time and support to plan and draft their writing. Some of this good work is as a result of the school's participation in the Raising Achievement Programme which focused on improving the quality of writing in recent years. The best quality written work related to the World Around Us topics, where imaginative writing tasks enabled the children to produce extended responses that were well presented and engaging.

The standards achieved by the majority of children in literacy by the end of KS2 are satisfactory. Over the last three years there is an improvement in the end of key stage outcomes, but there is room for further improvement. Through their self-evaluation processes including the use of performance data, the school is currently targeting under-performance at all ability levels with a view to raising standards further.

Nearly all of the teachers make very good use of ICT to help the children present their work in a wide range of formats, such as the innovative use of digital technology that allows the children to create television advertisements and present weather forecasts.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The overall quality of provision in mathematics and numeracy is good.

The numeracy co-ordinator is providing good leadership of mathematics across the school. The policy and programme guide the teachers effectively in their planning and practice and ensure progression in mathematics. These are being updated to reflect the ethos and language of the Northern Ireland Curriculum and the further development of this work is a current priority.

The co-ordinator has identified appropriate areas for improvement in the whole-school provision for mathematics including a more systematic coverage of each of the strands of mathematics and the promotion of more open-ended investigative activities to promote the children's ability to think creatively and flexibly. In addition, there is a need to include opportunities to develop and reinforce the children's mathematical language within the teachers' planning and teaching.

In the FS the children learn from using Bee Bots to count and explore direction. They can sort a range of commercial and natural materials, recognise and order numbers. Teachers use games and practical resources to consolidate the children's learning. The teachers need to provide consistent support and challenge for the children, in line with their abilities and provide further opportunities to use a broader range of mathematics through their play activities.

There are regular opportunities for all of the children to develop their mental mathematics skills. In the most effective lessons these activities were practical, well paced and challenging. In addition, the children are able to explain their thinking and compare a range of mathematical strategies; the children in year 5 are able to explain and justify their reasons using appropriate mathematical language during a practical session on estimation and measure. The children use practical equipment and resources well to consolidate their mathematical understanding.

There are good examples of the children using mathematics across the curriculum. The children in year 3 use a Carroll diagram to sort and display their work based on medieval castles and the children in years 6 and 7 use instruments to investigate the micro-climate around the school grounds. They are also able to present, analyse and compare climate graphs from different countries, using ICT where appropriate. These opportunities need to be further developed throughout the school to stimulate the children's, and in particular the boy's interest in mathematics.

By the end of KS2 the achievements and standards in mathematics are satisfactory. Through the effective analysis of data, the school has identified the need to improve the outcomes further for a significant minority of children. Appropriate intervention strategies have been successfully introduced to target those children who have been identified as underachieving. These strategies include a numeracy support programme and the Parental Involvement in Numeracy initiative. There is clear evidence from the monitoring and evaluation of these that most of these children are beginning to make suitable progress.

Information and communication technology is used effectively in a majority of lessons to support learning in mathematics. Interactive whiteboards are well used to motivate the children and consolidate their understanding. The year 7 children have successfully participated in the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment Accreditation Scheme.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The teachers plan their work conscientiously. The short-term plans for literacy and numeracy identify clearly the intended learning outcomes for the children, and the learning activities, resources and assessment strategies to be used. In the best practice, the teachers complete effective evaluations of the quality and extent of the children's learning; these evaluations are appropriately used to inform future planning.

3.2 TEACHING

The quality of teaching and learning in three-quarters of the lessons observed was good or better, and in a few of these lessons it was outstanding. In the remainder of the lessons observed there were areas for improvement.

In the most effective practice observed: ICT was used creatively to stimulate the children's engagement; the children were involved in setting targets for success in their learning; purposeful plenary sessions enabled them to demonstrate and consolidate their learning; and a good range of strategies were used to meet the needs of the different ability groups in the class. This good practice should be disseminated and further developed throughout the school.

The less effective practice was characterised by insufficient opportunities for the children to manage their own learning, over-reliance on a narrow range of teaching strategies, ineffective questioning which limited the opportunities to involve and engage the range of abilities within the class and a lack of pace and challenge for the more able children within the lesson.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

The school gathers a good range of assessment information, including standardised tests, on the children from year 3 in order to monitor their progress. This data is used to help identify pupils who require additional help with their learning. This information needs to be more extensively used by the class teachers to inform and develop strategies for individual children within the classroom in order to improve outcomes. The teachers in the FS need to track children's progress more clearly to inform their planning and practice.

The teachers correct the children's written work regularly and supportively. In a small number of classes the children are given very good opportunities to contribute effectively to their own assessment by contributing to success criteria and meaningful personal targets. The use of marking for improvement should be more widely and effectively used. The senior management team (SMT) have correctly prioritised within the SDP, the need to embed assessment for learning strategies more consistently into the teaching.

The parents are kept well informed of their children's progress through regular interviews, an annual written report and less formal methods; all of which help to promote good links between the school and the home.

3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The provision for children with special educational needs across the whole school is good. The Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) provides very effective leadership in providing for children who require additional support with aspects of their learning.

A comprehensive range of tests are used to help identify children who need additional support in both literacy and numeracy. The SENCO works closely with the class teachers, classroom assistants and the children to draw up well focused individual education plans. The SENCO provides outstanding support for individuals and groups of children through both the withdrawal sessions and in-class support. She creates a safe and nurturing ethos during lessons and uses a wide range of creative and practical strategies to engage the children and meets their needs. The Learning Support Assistants provide a high level of pastoral support to meet the needs of individual children within the classes and make a significant contribution to the delivery of literacy and numeracy programmes.

There are effective procedures for monitoring and evaluating the progress made by the children who receive additional support. There is evidence that individual children are making progress from this additional support; the teachers highlight improvements in the children's self-confidence and levels of independence as well as increasing competence in their reading and writing.

The school has developed effective links with a range of external agencies to ensure the most appropriate support is given to those children who require it.

The teachers need to share best practice to ensure that strategies for effective differentiation are used more consistently, including a wider range of activities and equipment to provide support, challenge or extension for the children when required. The teachers also need to evaluate the children's learning more thoroughly to identify explicitly how to plan and meet the different needs of all the children, including the more able.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The Principal provides very effective leadership and management of the school. He leads by example by fostering a very positive and caring tone in his working relationships with the staff, children and parents. He has a clear vision for the continued development of the school and has worked closely with the staff team to implement a range of effective initiatives. He promotes collaborative decision-making and encourages the engagement of the whole staff team, parents and children. The SMT and co-ordinators work closely together to plan, monitor and evaluate the children's progress, achievements and standards. The co-ordinators have provided good curriculum leadership and in-service training (INSET) within their areas of responsibility. They are all fully committed to the children and the continued development of the school.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The Principal and staff demonstrate a commitment to self-evaluation leading to continuous improvement in the interest of all of the children. There is evidence of continuous improvement and innovation through for example, the work developed with the parents, the initiatives to improve the children's confidence in and enjoyment of reading and the Eco-school award. The SDP is compliant with the Department of Education School Development Planning Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005/19. It identifies appropriate priorities and the actions required to implement them. An important feature of the next SDP needs to be the effective dissemination of the very good and outstanding practice observed during the inspection to raise standards further.

The teaching and support staff have good opportunities for ongoing professional development including INSET, and that provided by external agencies. There is evidence that this continued professional development is impacting positively on the quality of provision for the children.

4.3 ACCOMMODATION

The quality of the accommodation is good. The buildings and grounds are well maintained and the staff work hard to create an attractive and stimulating learning environment in all of the available space.

4.4 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The resources to support the children's learning are good and effectively support the children's learning both indoors and outdoors. In addition to commercial resources teachers have worked hard to design games and develop additional equipment such as the story and study sacks which contribute to the children's learning. The school is currently in the process of broadening the range of reading materials.

The Governors support and endorse the work of the Principal and the staff.

5. **CONCLUSION**

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the very positive, inclusive and caring ethos;
- the good range of initiatives to involve the parents in their children's learning;
- the quality of the teaching observed which was good or better in three-quarters of the lessons and in a few lessons outstanding;
- the very good use of ICT across the curriculum to support teaching and learning;
- the very creative opportunities being provided for children to make connections in their learning; and
- the very effective leadership provided by the Principal and the commitment of the whole staff team.

5.2 The areas for improvement include the need to:

- share and disseminate the best practice in order to raise standards further in literacy and numeracy.

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified an area for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the school's progress in the area for improvement.

HEALTH AND SAFETY APPENDIX

- The entrance and exit point at the side of the playground which is used by the younger children needs to be more secure.
- The school hall is a key point of access to the whole school. The doors into the hall do not open fully and are a potential hazard during an emergency.

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