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Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure**



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Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Focused Inspection

**Florencecourt Primary School and
Little Bridges Community Nursery
Enniskillen**

Inspected: October 2007

CONTENTS

Section		Page
	STATISTICAL INFORMATION	
1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	THE QUALITY OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK	1
3.	CONCLUSION	5
4.	LITTLE BRIDGES COMMUNITY NURSERY	6
	STATISTICAL INFORMATION (LITTLE BRIDGES COMMUNITY NURSERY)	

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Florencecourt Primary School is situated in a rural area, about seven miles from Enniskillen in south-west Fermanagh. Most of the children who attend the school come from the surrounding area; a few of them travel from the outskirts of Enniskillen. The enrolment has ranged from 114 to 120 over the last five years and is currently 115. Approximately seven percent 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 completion of questionnaires by the parents, as well as meetings with the Board of Governors (governors) and with a group of the year 6 children. Prior to the inspection, all of the parents were asked to complete a confidential questionnaire on the work of the school. Fifty-four percent of the parents responded to the questionnaire; 15 of those responding took the opportunity to write additional comments. The parents indicated that generally they have a high regard for many aspects of the school. They praised the work of the approachable staff and highlighted the friendly atmosphere in school. All parents felt that their children were well settled in school and encouraged to develop personal and social qualities. A minority of parents were unsure about child protection procedures and about how to raise a concern. All concerns and areas for clarification raised by the parents have been discussed with the Principal and the governors. The governors expressed their appreciation of the work of the new Principal and the contribution of the staff; they expressed their commitment to the ongoing development of the school. The teaching staff reported through the on-line questionnaire and met the inspection team to state their appreciation of the Principal in establishing a team-working environment. The group of year 6 children who met with the inspection team spoke very positively about the school; they reported that they enjoy school and that they value the help provided by the teachers. They feel safe, know how to seek help if a problem arises and are aware of the positive behaviour and discipline expected of them.

1.3 The inspection focused on the work in English, including information and communication technology (ICT) and the provision for special educational needs (SEN). The inspection also evaluated the school's procedures for pastoral care, including the arrangements for child protection. In addition, the inspection also included an evaluation of the quality of the provision in the school's nursery unit.

2. THE QUALITY OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK

2.1 The school provides a caring, orderly and supportive learning environment. There is a strong family ethos throughout the school and the teachers know the children well. The children are welcoming and friendly to visitors and work and play co-operatively with one another. The older children adopt a caring role towards the younger children. The behaviour of the children is exemplary. The school places an appropriate emphasis on the promotion of the children's sense of responsibility and has developed a rewards system to encourage personal initiative. The learning support staff make a valuable contribution to the children's development and learning.

2.2 The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection in the school is very good. The school has procedures in place which implement fully the guidance outlined in the relevant Department of Education (DE) Circulars. The governors, staff, parents and children are fully aware of the school's procedures and have had the opportunity to contribute to a range of effective policies which guide the effective work of the school. Among the

strengths are the quality of the relationships throughout the school, the very caring and supportive ethos, the high quality of pastoral care provided for the children, participation in a wide range of extra-curricular provision; the high priority given to the health and well-being of the staff and the effective communication and working alongside other agencies.

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 programmes and policies in place, for example the Health Education, Nutrition and Healthy Snacks policies, the attractive presentation and availability of salad choices and breads, and fruit tasting sessions to encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

2.4 Within the last year, the teachers have diligently amended and compiled medium-term planning covering many aspects of the curriculum, including the whole-school programme for English. Additionally, the teachers have begun to adapt their planning to take account of the recent changes to the curriculum. In the best practice, the planning identified clearly the intended learning and took account of the different ability levels in the class. It is important that all of the teachers have a clear understanding of what they want the children to learn and experience, and that the activities planned are appropriate, evaluated and systematically built upon. At its most effective, this process included the regular sharing of the intended learning with the children and provided time for them to discuss and reflect upon their work. There is a need to develop further the short-term planning to meet, more effectively, the wide range of individual needs in the classes.

2.5 The teachers are hard-working and developing well as a whole school team. The quality of the teaching observed on the inspection was always satisfactory, and on a significant minority of occasions it was very good. In the best practice observed, the teachers used a variety of teaching approaches and the children had a clear understanding of the intended learning. The work was differentiated within composite classes and opportunities were provided for the children to discuss and build upon their learning. Where the teaching was less effective, some of the learning opportunities were not always taken to develop the children to become independent learners. The effective teaching strategies observed should be disseminated across the school.

2.6 At foundation stage (FS) the children experience a range of interesting play and musical activities that help to develop their thinking skills and personal capabilities. All the year 1 children are well-settled into primary school and are, after only one month in school, clearly familiar with routines; they are benefiting from the supportive interactions with the teacher and classroom assistant. Throughout key stage (KS) 1 and KS2 the children are responsive to teacher expectations and generally settle readily to their work. Most children are capable of focused and sustained effort; they are keen and eager to learn and when presented with opportunities they co-operate well with one another in small groups and pairs. Some of the children find it difficult to cope with the written tasks set and need more specific learning activities matched to their stage of development.

2.7 An outline policy and medium-term planning guides the school's programme for English. Many of the teachers, through the display of the children's work and by providing library corners and collections of topic-related books, have created a stimulating literacy environment within their rooms. The school's central library is well-stocked. The access to computers in the library enhances the opportunities for the children to develop as independent

learners. Most of the children avail of library books from the Western Education and Library Board (WELB) mobile library service.

2.8 The children have good opportunities, both formal and informal across all classes to develop their talking and listening skills through a broad programme of activities and learning experiences. In the best practice observed, the children displayed confidence and enthusiasm when communicating with others. They participated in role-play, interviews, sang at assembly and where they had opportunities, they expressed their opinions, feelings and ideas.

2.9 The teaching of reading is appropriately under review. Recently the FS staff availed of speech and language training from the WELB. There is effective implementation of recent WELB literacy curriculum training in FS and the year 1 teacher makes skilful use of a range of early reading strategies designed to encourage the development of the children's early phonological awareness. Importantly, the children have good opportunities to talk and listen, to sing nursery rhymes and to develop a sense of rhythm. Stories are told to the children and there are good opportunities to enjoy and read books with an appropriate progression from picture to simple text. As children progress through FS and KS1, most are effectively developing reading skills. The provision of an interactive whiteboard and the school reading scheme augmented by a good selection of books, stimulate an interest in reading. Parental support programmes, including, a Paired Reading programme are provided to encourage an interest in reading. For those children experiencing difficulties with reading, their progress through the school highlights the need to ensure that there is sufficient emphasis on the planning for and teaching of reading skills matched to individual needs. All the children in KS2 need frequent planned opportunities to read interesting novels and to integrate talking and listening, reading, drama and writing activities to specifically raise standards in KS2 reading and more generally their overall standards in literacy.

2.10 The children's writing skills are planned and balanced between structured activities and more stimulating activities that involve meaningful contexts in which to write. In FS the children engage appropriately with print and have good opportunities for mark-making, and, through multi-sensory and play experiences, begin to form letters accurately. As their skills develop, the children, with the support of teacher-modelled, shared and guided writing, begin to record their own ideas in simple words and sentences and then write personalised stories. By the end of KS1, most children are able to write independently in their own words. As they progress through KS2, the children's writing skills are developed further and applied to a broader range of purposes; for example, they write letters, descriptions and reports. All of the children, and particularly the more able, would benefit from more challenging activities such as extended creative writing and note-making through Internet and book research activities. The standards of handwriting and general presentation are variable and a majority of the children need to improve the quality of their written work.

2.11 A majority of the children make satisfactory progress in their reading and achieve standards in writing of which they are capable. Nevertheless, overall, the standards in English need to be improved. The recent emphasis on addressing this issue has already begun and a more consistent whole-school planning for improvement is needed. English needs to be included in the School Development Plan (SDP) as a main priority for development and expectations for reading need to be raised throughout the school.

2.12 The school has identified 28 children with a range of special educational needs. The current provision for the children is mainly through normal class teaching, withdrawal sessions and specific peripatetic support. The school uses appropriate 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) for each child. The IEPs are reviewed on a regular basis and the progress is reported to the parents. Overall, 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.

2.13 The SENCO has identified the need to revise the purposefulness and organisation of the children's progress records to enable the teachers to plan for the children's needs and evaluate progress and attainment more rigorously. It is timely, for the staff, to review the SEN policy and procedures to take account of the recent changes in the roles and responsibilities of teachers and the legislation for the Special Educational Needs and Disability Order (SENDO). The inspection endorses the priority given to the development of these key areas for improvement.

2.14 Data on the children's school performance and attainment is collected and is used increasingly to track the progress of individual children and to help to identify learning difficulties. The school maintains a folder for each child in which copies of annual progress reports and summative assessment records are retained. Opportunities, during the school year, are provided for the parents to meet with the teachers to discuss the progress made by their children. The teachers mark the children's work regularly and generally annotate the work with positive comments. There is a need to continue to develop a consistent marking for improvement strategy, to link it to the assessment for learning process and to develop formative assessment arrangements.

2.15 The Principal has been in post since the beginning of the last academic year. She has a clear vision for the development of a self-evaluating school, for the review, update and implementation of the curriculum, raising standards and for the promotion of the school within the immediate and wider communities. The Principal has the support of the staff; and the governors; and, she has also established good links with the parents and local business community. She has demonstrated her leadership skills, and given, very significantly, of her time, to address significant school issues and important curricular and pastoral roles. The Principal needs to ensure that the major areas of school responsibility are distributed effectively in order to support and sustain ongoing improvement. More needs to be done to enhance the leadership and management roles of the co-ordinators in order to develop effective strategies to monitor the learning and teaching across the school.

2.16 The school's process for improvement is linked to the SDP which has been developed in consultation with the staff. There is a developing commitment to action-planning, monitoring and evaluation of the children's attainments and experiences. There are some effective policies in place, for example pastoral care, which encourage and support a positive learning environment. Following the inspection there is a need to amend, agree and implement the areas identified by the inspection in order to guide further the development of the curriculum and to comply fully with The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005.

2.17 The new school is bright and spacious and offers the staff and the children an excellent learning environment. A significant feature of the school is the effective disability access provided throughout and the provision of a purpose-built nursery unit. The school makes effective use of resources and equipment is well organised to enhance children's learning experience. There is a need to ensure that adequate resources are provided to support fully, progression in the children's early learning, particularly in relation to the outdoor learning provision.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the caring, orderly and supportive learning environment and the exemplary behaviour of the children;
- the contribution by the teachers, classroom assistants and other ancillary staff to the children's development;
- the commitment and support of the parents, governors and local community;
- the appropriate start made to reviewing, updating and implementing an appropriate curriculum;
- the confidence and good oral skills of many of the children; and
- the leadership of the new Principal in addressing a number of important issues within the school in collegiality with the supportive and hard-working staff.

3.2 The areas for improvement include the need:

- for the review and development of the SEN provision;
- to continue to raise the standards in English; and
- to continue to develop the leadership and management roles of the co-ordinators in order to develop effective strategies to improve the learning and teaching across the school.

3.3 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.

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

4. **LITTLE BRIDGES COMMUNITY NURSERY**

4.1 The nursery is situated in a purpose-built unit in the grounds of Florencecourt Primary School. The children come from the surrounding rural area.

4.2 The parents, staff and management group were given opportunities to express their views about the nursery through the inspection questionnaires. The responses have been taken into account as part of the inspection and any issues raised have been shared with the staff.

4.3 The nursery has appropriate policies and procedures for child protection. The inspection evidence indicates that the policies and procedures are implemented consistently by the staff. The staff need to ensure that the policies are shared with the parents.

4.4 The nursery's programme for the promotion of health and well-being has important strengths, with attention paid to the development and implementation of healthy eating and physical activity programmes to encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

4.5 The main strengths within the nursery's educational and pastoral provision are as follows.

- The staff work hard to prepare a bright and attractive learning environment for the children.
- There are satisfactory opportunities for learning in all areas of the curriculum. Particular strengths of the programme include the opportunities for the promotion of the children's physical development and the investigation of the world around them.
- Most of the children display good levels of independence and many engage in co-operative play.
- The teacher and classroom assistant both contribute to the planning and review of the weekly programme; they support one another during the daily sessions. During the inspection, there were a few examples of effective interactions with some of the children when the adults gave appropriate support. The group story and enjoyable music session were well managed.
- The daily timetable is structured to give a good balance between free play both indoors and outdoors and enjoyable story and music sessions.
- The quality of the accommodation and outdoor play area is very good.
- There is a satisfactory range of resources available to implement an appropriate programme. These are enhanced by the addition of natural items into areas for play.

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

- The level of staff interaction and support needs to be more effectively matched to the children's differing stages of development.
- The planning needs to identify more specifically how the assessment information is being used to meet the children's differing needs.
- More attention needs to be given to promoting and developing the children's own exploration of materials and building on their own creative ideas.

4.7 The teacher has worked hard to organise and resource the nursery to date and has identified some appropriate areas for further development within the School Development Plan. This should now be amended in line with the inspection findings. The staff make some useful evaluation of their weekly programme. The nursery is in the early stages of developing a systematic approach to self-evaluation.

4.8 The nursery has strengths in many aspects of its educational 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 children.

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

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON LITTLE BRIDGES COMMUNITY NURSERY

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending full-time	-	-
Attending part-time	19	-
Under 3 years of age*	3	-
With statement of SEN**	-	-
At CoP stages 3 or 4***	-	-
At CoP stages 1 or 2***	-	-
With English as an additional language	-	-

* 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.	68%
Average attendance for the previous year.	89.1%

2. Duration of Sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
-	3 hours	-

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-Time	Part-Time
Teachers		1
Nursery Assistants		
Qualified Nursery Assistants		1

Number of: ****	
Students	-
Trainees	1

**** Total placements since September of current year

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

Number issued	18
Percentage returned	33%
Number of written comments	3

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