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## **Education and Training Inspectorate**

### **Report of a Focused Inspection**

**Garryduff Primary School**  
**Ballymoney**

**Inspected: March 2007**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Garryduff Primary School is situated in the townland of Garryduff, County Antrim. The children who attend the school live in the town of Ballymoney and the surrounding rural area. The enrolment has remained steady over the last five years and currently stands at 63. Approximately 1% of the children are entitled to free school meals. Eight of the children have been identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning.

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 year 6. Forty questionnaires were issued to parents; approximately 60% were returned to the Department of Education (DE) of which 14 contained additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaires highlighted the caring ethos and the welcoming atmosphere created by the teachers. At the meeting with the Board of Governors, the well informed governors expressed their appreciation of the dedication and hard work of all the staff, and commented particularly on the quality of the learning and teaching as well as the very positive ethos that exists in the school. The inspection team endorses these views. Concerns regarding accommodation or areas for clarification raised by the parents have been discussed with the Principal and the governors.

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

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

2.1 This is a welcoming, friendly school; the atmosphere is orderly with working relationships at all levels very good. The children are open and courteous; their behaviour in class and around the school is excellent. Despite the limitations posed by the size of the classrooms, effective efforts are made to ensure that the learning environment supports the children's development. The school buildings are well maintained.

2.2 There are good links with the parents and the local community; the parents support the school well. An active Parent/Teacher Association organises a variety of social events that are supported well by the local community; through fund-raising activities, the parents have provided additional resources and out of school educational experiences that support the children's learning.

2.3 The school ensures that the children's learning is enriched through a rich programme of educational visits and a range of extra-curricular activities including drama, music, and sport. The children respond with enthusiasm and interest to this broad range of enjoyable learning experiences and activities; they settle quickly to

their work and show good levels of perseverance with the tasks that are set. These activities help the children develop their social skills, self-esteem and sense of inter-dependence.

2.4 The quality of pastoral care is very good; the Principal and the staff are committed to the children and their care. Concern for the children's safety and well-being, their learning and their personal and social development pervades the life and work of the school. The staff have prepared a wide range of policies to guide the pastoral provision in the school and the Principal ensures that the parents are informed about the school policies and expectations. The staff have identified, already, the need to update their training for pastoral care and child protection and to review aspects of the policy in order to make certain all the relevant DE Circulars in relation to child protection are implemented fully.

2.5 The school gives consistently good attention to promoting health and well-being. It has appropriate policies and programmes in place which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles. The school has introduced a health and fitness programme that includes a fitness test for the children and the opportunity to build up an activity profile. There is evidence of commitment on the part of the staff to promoting healthy eating by means of a merit award scheme to encourage the children to choose fruit and vegetables as part of their school dinner or packed lunch.

2.6 The quality of teaching is consistently very good. The work is differentiated appropriately to take into account the ability levels within the composite classes. A variety of teaching approaches such as group work, role play, and discussion sessions are used. Throughout the school, an important focus is placed on developing the children's thinking skills.

2.7 The teachers prepare thoroughly for their lessons; detailed schemes of work set out an appropriate range of knowledge, skills and understanding drawn from topics and themes that are of interest to the children. Much of the planning is thematic and linked effectively to a range of areas of study. As a team, the teachers evaluate regularly the quality of the children's learning and use the information to inform future planning. All of the teachers have composite classes; this places considerable demands on their time, planning, monitoring and evaluation of the children's learning.

2.8 The teachers have worked hard to create a positive atmosphere in the classrooms to encourage the children to engage in a range of talking and listening activities. Throughout the school a strong emphasis is placed on open-ended questioning and many of the children respond with well-informed and sustained answers. The children's talking and listening skills are developing well and the teachers continue to use effective strategies to link these skills to the reading and writing activities. Well-planned educational visits are used effectively to motivate the children, engage them in active learning, and extend further their oral responses.

2.9 Aspects from a range of phonics programmes are used effectively to develop the children's reading skills. The younger children benefit from a good range of reading activities including those presented during play, through story-telling sessions and through shared reading with the teacher. The children make good progress through the set reading scheme and enjoy the novels that are introduced at an

appropriate stage. As their reading skills develop further, the children enjoy a wide range of fiction and non-fiction material that is of interest to them. The children are keen to contribute to class discussions on the books they are currently reading. Many of the children provide perceptive insights into the story and descriptions of the main characters. The class library areas contain a good range of reading material and the school makes effective use of the mobile library service to keep its stock updated with books that are of interest to the children.

2.10 The children have good opportunities for writing in different forms and for a range of purposes and audiences; they respond with interest and motivation to the opportunities that are presented and the work completed is of good quality. The writing activities are linked effectively to the children's talking and listening and reading skills. From an early age the children are encouraged to write independently; they write with increasing confidence about their experiences and on issues that are of interest to them. This good work is supported effectively by a wide range of resources such as 'wordspell' devices, word banks, dictionaries, and thesauri. The range and quality of the children's writing across the school is good. The standards of English at the end of both key stages are good.

2.11 The further integration of ICT to support learning and teaching is identified appropriately in the school development plan (SDP). This development has the potential to build upon the good work already begun in integrating the children's experiences in ICT across a range of topics and themes. For example the 'Dissolving Boundaries Project' has been used effectively to develop the children's ICT skills in English, geography and history. Much of this good work has helped promote independence in the children's learning. Importantly the school has begun to monitor and evaluate the progress of individual children against the agreed framework for progression of ICT skills.

2.12 The children in years 1-3 have lengthy, twice-weekly sessions of structured play. Themes and topics are planned to provide a range of interesting activities that complement the work in other curriculum areas and enable the children to explore and consolidate aspects of learning, through a range of practical activities. In the lesson observed, the children were confident in their work and showed a good level of independence and enjoyment. Currently, the year 4 children are part of a key stage (KS) 2 composite class. Although opportunities are provided for these children to engage in activity-based sessions in this class, consideration should be given to providing opportunities, where appropriate, for them to engage in some practical activities within their own KS1 group. Aspects of planning for structured play should be reviewed and developed further in order to reflect more effectively the needs of the children across the whole of KS1.

2.13 Special educational needs is given a high priority within the school and significant resources have been made available for this work. The school is currently involved in a Literacy Teaching and Support Service pilot, organised by the North-Eastern Education and Library Board, which includes individual in-class and withdrawal support sessions. The school has identified eight children who require additional support with aspects of their learning. The children's learning needs are identified at an early stage through a combination of observations and the use of standardised and diagnostic tests. The special educational needs co-ordinator and the

class teachers collaborate to compile appropriate education plans which identify strategies and targets to promote improvement. The teachers and classroom assistant support the children very well; work is differentiated and well-matched to the children's ability levels. The staff monitor the children's progress closely; the children are discontinued from additional support at an appropriate stage. Effective links are maintained with the parents and with external support agencies.

2.14 The teachers have a good knowledge of the children and assess their work regularly in class and use standardised tests to record their progress in English and mathematics. Records of the children's progress are kept from year to year in a personal folder which includes copies of reports to parents and representative samples of the children's work. Continuous assessment reports are issued to parents four times per year and in addition an annual report is provided in the summer term. The children's books are marked regularly and in the best practice, the teachers add comments that highlight the strengths of the children's work and provide guidance on how they can improve further.

2.15 The Principal has been in post for 19 years; she combines effectively the dual role of teaching a composite class and her responsibility for managing the school. Through her leadership, the school adopts a team approach to curriculum development work and to raising further the standards that the children achieve. She continues to build a self-evaluative culture within the school and is ably supported by the teachers in this good work. Accurate evidence is presented to the governors and to parents on the school's performance from year to year. The Principal assists the teachers in developing further their skills in support of the children's learning.

2.16 The teachers are committed to the children and they work very well together as a team. They make effective use of the collective planning and review sessions to identify learning outcomes across the key stages and to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching. They have benefited from staff development sessions which are related to the SDP. School-based in-service training sessions are focused appropriately on supporting current educational developments.

2.17 There are deficiencies in the accommodation; these are outlined in the appendix.

### 3. CONCLUSION

3.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the effective leadership of the Principal;
- the quality of the teaching which is consistently very good;
- the effective continuous assessment arrangements that provide a good focus for developing teaching strategies to raise further the standards the children achieve;
- the good quality of the pastoral care arrangements;

- the effective use made of educational visits and links to the wider community to develop further the children's learning;
- the valuable contribution of the governors, parents and wider community to the ethos and life of the school;
- the high quality of the support provided for those children who have additional educational needs;
- the excellent behaviour of the children;
- the good understanding the children have of the benefits of healthy eating and exercise;
- the hard-working and conscientious staff who work well together as a team; and
- the good standards achieved by the majority of the children in English.

3.2 The area for improvement includes the need to:

- update and review the training for staff on the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection.

3.3 In the areas inspected, the school has major strengths in its educational provision. The educational needs of the learners are being well met. The parents and local community can have confidence in the school's capacity for sustained self-improvement.

No follow-up inspection is required.



## **APPENDIX**

### **ACCOMMODATION**

- The limited size of the classrooms, storage and administrative accommodation.
- The lack of indoor facilities for play and physical education.
- There is currently no staff room.

### **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

- The lack of appropriate car parking facilities at the school leads to dangerous traffic congestion in the morning and afternoon.
- Security/access arrangements to the 'lunch' mobile need to be reviewed.

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