



*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**

## **Education and Training Inspectorate**

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

**Gibson Primary School  
Omagh**

**Inspected: September 2009**

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## BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Gibson Primary Omagh** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 28/09/2009**  
 ii. **School Reference Number: 201-6089** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Year 1 Intake	50	37	37	37	44
<b>Enrolments</b>					
Primary	366	297	270	267	256
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Welcome Service	20	20	20	18	17
Special Unit	10	10	10	10	10
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): 95.4%

	Primary & Reception	Welcome Service	Special Unit	Irish Medium Unit
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- D. i. Number of Teachers  
 (including the principal and part-time teachers): 13 1 1 0  
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 19.69% NI PTR: 20.4
- iii. Average Class Size: 24.18
- iv. Class Size (Range): 18 to 32
- v. Ancillary Support:  
 Number of Hours **Per Week:**
- |   |  |       |  |
|---|--|-------|--|
| i. Clerical support:  |  | 34    |  |
| ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support:           |  | 80.83 |  |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: |  | 114.5 |  |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 3.12
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 16.8
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 20%

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. SCHOOL CONTEXT**

Gibson Primary School is situated in a residential area of Omagh, County Tyrone. The present school building was opened in 2003 and is a modern purpose-built facility with a Speech and Language Unit attached. The school also accommodates a WELCOME (Western Early Years Language, Communication and Education) Service for pre-school children with speech and language difficulties. The enrolment in the primary school has decreased over the past five years and currently stands at 256. The school has a wide catchment area of ten miles with most of the children coming to school by car or bus. At the time of the inspection 20% of the children were entitled to receive free school meals and approximately 17% of the children in the mainstream of the school are on the special educational needs (SEN) register.

### **1.2 FOCUS**

The inspection focused on the quality of the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy; the quality of provision for learning; and the quality of leadership and management. The inspection includes reference to the contribution of information and communication technology (ICT) in promoting and supporting learning. In addition the school's arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection, will be reported on.

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

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents, the teaching and the support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and groups of children from year 6 and year 7. One hundred and thirty-four questionnaires were issued to the parents of the primary school; 53% were returned to the Department of Education (DE) and 17 contained additional written comments. The responses from the questionnaires indicated that almost all of the parents appreciate the welcoming approach of the Principal, the professional and approachable staff and the progress made by the children. The few issues arising from the parental questionnaires, about information on the children's progress, procedures for dealing with bullying and the match of the children's work to their ability were shared with the Principal and the governors and are addressed in the body of the report.

The governors expressed their appreciation for the work of the Principal, the Vice-principal and the staff, and praised the children's high standards of academic attainment and effective staff team-work to meet the needs of the children.

Almost all the teaching staff responded to the online teacher questionnaire, including four that included written comment about the life and work of the school. The responses were almost all positive about all aspects of the school; and the few matters arising included suggestions about improving the special needs arrangements and the need for better opportunities for the children to contribute to the decision-making processes in the school. Additionally, 14 support staff responded to the support staff questionnaire and three provided written comments; almost all expressed high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. All of these responses and issues were shared with the Principal and the governors and are addressed in the body of the report.

The year 6 children spoke with confidence about what to do if they have worries about their safety and well-being and reported that they find the teaching and support staff approachable and caring if they have concerns. The year 7 children contributed to the discussion on healthy eating and physical activity.

#### 1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is outstanding; the inclusive atmosphere is welcoming to all and a strong community ethos permeates the school. All the staff are committed to the care and welfare of the children and work together to promote and maintain an orderly and supportive environment for learning.

The children respond well to the staff's expectations for good behaviour. A whole-school approach to promoting and rewarding positive behaviour encourages the children to work hard and develops their self-esteem. There are opportunities for the children to talk about their feelings and to explore their values. The bright and attractive displays in the classrooms and in the corridors celebrate the children's work and achievements.

The children benefit from very good opportunities to participate in a range of extra-curricular activities including music, drama and sports. The teaching staff is consulting with the children about greater involvement in the school and is actively encouraging senior children to assume positions of responsibility within the house system. The school has employed a National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) counsellor to support children experiencing emotional difficulties.

#### 1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school has very good comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by DE.

#### 1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives outstanding attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, healthy school meals and a successful breakfast club promotion, which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles. The school has received the gold standard in the Health Promoting Schools Award in recognition of the variety of ways the staff encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles. The school encourages participation in a wide range of sports and the children make effective use of the playground physical activity equipment on a regular basis.

#### 1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Effective links with the parents are maintained through regular school newsletters and information leaflets. Each class provides parental workshops about curricular matters and the parents of the younger children are invited to participate in induction days; the school reports very good attendance rates at these events. There is an active Parent Teacher Association (PTA) which provides additional support and resources; this organisation is an integral part of the school community and significantly extends the teaching and learning opportunities throughout the school. In addition, the children's learning experiences are enhanced through links with other local schools, participation in competitions and sporting events, involvement in the Schools' Community Relations Programme and visits to places of educational interest. The school contributes to selected charities and appropriate emphasis is placed on caring for others in both the local and the wider communities.

## **2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS**

### **2.1 LEARNING**

Almost all the children demonstrate high levels of motivation and positive attitudes to learning. They complete tasks co-operatively and demonstrate pride and enjoyment in their learning. The children interact confidently with their teachers and justify opinions and views through class and group discussions. Generally, the children are able to transfer skills in a variety of contexts and it is appropriate that the school is developing further their opportunities to apply their learning across the curriculum. The learning environment is stimulating and well organised. Communal areas adjacent to the classrooms and the outdoor areas are effectively used to provide extended learning activities to enable the children to engage in physical activity and collaborative learning within and across all areas of the curriculum.

An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 assessment data over the past four years shows that in English, the school's performance has improved and is consistently above the Northern Ireland (NI) average. When compared with schools in a similar free schools meals category, the levels of attainment in English are above the average. In Mathematics the school's performance over the previous four years has improved and shows standards to be consistently above the NI average. When compared with schools in a similar free schools meals category, the levels of attainment in Mathematics are above the average.

### **2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY**

The quality of provision in English and Literacy is very good. The school has identified Communication across the school as a priority for improvement within the School Development Plan (SDP); the progress made by the children in reading and writing is being improved upon effectively and the school is further developing the children's talking and listening skills across the curriculum.

Most of the children demonstrate very good spoken communication skills and speak confidently to peers, teachers and other adults in the school. Oral skills are developed through class activities such as paired maths games and activity-based learning. Involvement in annual school performances and external activities such as the local Speech and Drama Festival provide opportunities for all the children to experience communicating to a wider audience. The school is in the process of providing a forum to provide further opportunities for the children to address peers, teachers and management, and to discuss matters relevant to school life.

The children achieve very good standards in reading. Throughout the school the children learn to read through a planned and progressive programme using a range of reading material and methods to suit all abilities, interests and ages. From an early stage children enjoy age appropriate novels and the more able children are appropriately challenged to read classic novels and modern texts. Recently the quality and range of reading resources was enhanced by funding made available by the PTA. During the inspection, groups of children from years 3, 4 and 7 read with fluency, expression and understanding; they were able to discuss text preferences, favourite authors and characters, and demonstrated their enjoyment of both fiction and non-fiction texts. A Reading Partnership programme was established last year for children in years 3, 4 and 5 and results show improved standards in reading. The central school library further enriches the children's reading experiences and provides a well organised, inviting and stimulating environment where children can relax and enjoy reading independently or with the class teacher. The children also have an opportunity to visit the local library and meet real storytellers through regular visits to the school by poets and authors.

The standards achieved by the children in writing are very good. In the Foundation Stage (FS), children are well-supported to develop letter formation, to write words and to express their ideas in simple sentences. As children progress through the school they write with increasing accuracy and proficiency, developing competence in the use of grammar and punctuation to create clarity of meaning. The samples of work made available and created during the inspection demonstrated the very good levels of competence to write in a range of genre and presentational skills are generally very good. The school has identified the need to improve spelling due to underachievement in some classes and is appropriately prioritising this as an area for improvement. During the inspection there was evidence of some use of ICT to support literacy including the use of the internet to research an item of extended writing on the Victorians; it is appropriate to develop further the use of ICT to support learning and teaching.

## **2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY**

The quality of provision in mathematics is very good. The teachers have high expectations for the children's mathematical knowledge, understanding and skills, and the children work conscientiously to meet these expectations.

References are made to ICT in the teachers' planning and there is evidence that appropriate programs are used to demonstrate and consolidate the children's understanding and recall of number operations. Appropriately, the staff have identified the need to extend further their mathematical whole-school guidance to ensure progression of skills in the range of ICT software and websites used.

It is usual for lessons to start with sessions of mental mathematics. In the best practice observed, these sessions were connected to, and laid a foundation for, the work in the main part of the mathematics lesson.

At FS, the children have very good opportunities to develop mathematical language, to use practical equipment, to consolidate and extend their understanding of sorting, pattern making, the types of 2-D shapes, number and the operations of addition and subtraction. In the best practice, the high quality interaction of the staff with the children effectively promotes their attainment of the fundamental numeracy skills and concepts.

In KS1, the children's experiences in number, shape and space, measures and handling data are extended appropriately. During the inspection, the year 4 children demonstrated their understanding of place value and there was evidence of their effective learning through collating, recording and presenting data.

In KS2, the children enjoy their mathematics and continue to grow in mathematical competence and confidence. During the inspection, the older children demonstrated their secure knowledge of important mathematical concepts, including place value, factors and multiples, and 3-D shapes and their properties. They also demonstrated an agility and flexibility in their mathematical thinking. Overall, the standards achieved by the children in mathematics and numeracy are very good.

## **3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING**

### **3.1 PLANNING**

The teachers prepare their work diligently and are guided by a range of policies and schemes. The school has appropriately identified the need to review several of the core policy documents including literacy.

The teachers prepare long-, medium- and short-term planners to guide learning and several are adopting the use of topic webs to support connected learning across the curriculum. It is appropriate to share the best practice in the written planning which demonstrates clarity of progression and appropriately identifies the learning outcomes, teaching strategies, language and differentiation by task and outcome. Evaluations assess the quality of the children's learning, quality of resources and appropriateness of teaching strategies, and are used effectively to inform future planning.

### 3.2 TEACHING

During the inspection, the majority of the teaching was very good or better and a minority of the lessons observed were outstanding. The children are taught the fundamental skills of literacy, numeracy and oral communication, both through direct teaching and by effective staff interaction which supports learning matched to individual needs. In the best practice, the teachers shared the learning intentions and negotiated the success criteria with the children to focus effectively their attention and to consolidate the learning. The teachers' questioning was open-ended and challenging, and plenary sessions were used to summarise and consolidate learning.

### 3.3 ASSESSMENT

There are appropriate procedures and records for keeping the parents informed about their children's progress. These include written reports and formal parent-teacher consultations and an open-door policy for informal consultations. The annual written reports provide detailed information about progress in learning.

There is a whole-school approach to the assessment of and for learning. The teachers mark the children's written work regularly and during class activities provide prompt oral feedback to improve learning. In the best practice there is effective marking to promote improvement and the children are encouraged to engage in self-evaluation of their learning. The school uses a suitable range of standardised and non-standardised testing to assess the children's level of achievement in English and mathematics. Recently, the school developed a tracking system of the children's progress; an effective IT program is used to manage the information and to track cohorts of children appropriately as they progress through school, and identify and target underachievement in individual children. The staff are using the information effectively to plan for the continued raising of standards. Assessment for learning is appropriately identified for development in the current school development plan.

### 3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The quality of the provision for special educational needs is good. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) had recently retired from the school, but is continuing to hold the post in a voluntary capacity until the appointment of a new SENCO. She was on leave at the time of the inspection and the full, planned programme of support was due to commence.

There is a very inclusive and welcoming ethos for children with additional needs in the school, and the provision for special educational needs (SEN) is given a high priority. The school uses the teachers' knowledge and experience, as well as a wide range of standardised tests, to identify early those children requiring additional help. Appropriate intervention is planned to support them in both literacy and numeracy. This assistance is



provided for the children currently through support in class, but will also include withdrawal sessions by the part-time SEN teacher and by other teachers. It is a measure of the staff's commitment to providing effective support that several members of the support staff have trained in the Reading Partnership programme to work regularly with the children to give support in literacy.

The teachers take responsibility for the in-class implementation of individual education plans (IEPs). Generally, the IEPs are pertinent and feature concise targets; the school has appropriately recognised the need to continue to review the format and content of all the IEPs.

The school receives beneficial multi-disciplinary support for those children requiring specialised help through, for example, the services of the Western Education and Library Board (WELB) Curriculum Advisory and Support Service and other agencies to support learning and teaching.

## WELCOME SERVICE

The WELCOME Service is a pre-school speech and language centre for children from a wide geographical area within the WELB. Until November 2008, the Service worked under the auspices of I CAN, a national charity which works to support the development of speech, language and communication skills in all children. The WELCOME Service provides placements for a maximum of twenty pre-school children, aged between 3 and 4 years, with specific speech, language and communication difficulties. The Service usually reaches capacity in the first term. At the time of the inspection, ten children attended the morning session and seven attended in the afternoon. All the children attend the Service on four days, and attend their mainstream pre-school provision one day each week. Outreach visits to the mainstream pre-school centres are provided by the staff for the children who attend the WELCOME Service.

The quality of the provision in the WELCOME Service is outstanding. There is a warm, secure and caring ethos. The staff, which include a full-time teacher and classroom assistant as well as a part-time speech and language therapist, have a clear understanding of each other's roles. The high level of collaboration by the staff is a major strength of the Service and is an example of outstanding multi-disciplinary provision. The staff show strong commitment to, and demonstrate their expertise and enthusiasm in, meeting the needs of the children in their care.

The quality of the staff's assessment, recording and planning is thorough, informs teaching and records the progress made by the children. The targets set for the children in their education plans are realistic and achievable, and the staff engage the children well in a range of practical activities. There are appropriate and effective policies and procedures in place to guide the work of the Service, and the staff have very good opportunities for professional development. Excellent parental advice and guidance is provided by the staff for the parents through a range of workshops, formal and informal meetings. The WELCOME Steering Group is committed to the Service and is very supportive of the work of the staff.

## SPEECH AND LANGUAGE UNIT

The Speech and Language unit provides specialist help for children in the Omagh area whose major difficulty is specific language impairment. The unit offers up to a maximum of ten places from years 1 to 4. At the time of the inspection, there were ten children in years 1 to 3 attending the unit.

The quality of the provision in the Speech and Language unit is very good. It is staffed by a full-time teacher and classroom assistant and a part-time speech and language therapist. The staff work well together in creating a rich environment conducive to developing language and in providing interesting, enjoyable and challenging activities. Good use is made of opportunities across the curriculum to support language development and to improve the children's confidence and self-esteem. The children are enthusiastic about their work and are motivated by the practical activities. A major strength of the provision in the unit is the strong collaborative team-work by the staff and the outstanding quality of the multi-disciplinary approach. The staff plan effectively together and provide stimulating and appropriate experiences which meet well the needs of the children; for example, the staff provide the children with regular integration opportunities for sustained periods each week in the mainstream primary school classes.

#### **4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

##### **4.1 LEADERSHIP**

The dedicated and well-informed Principal has been in post for three years and provides high quality leadership and management of the school. She is ably-supported by the skilful and hard-working Vice-principal, diligent teachers and support staff. The Vice-principal is currently in a non-teaching position and is co-ordinating significant developments in the school. The Principal and Vice-principal are an effective and hard-working team who have a strategic vision and plan for the future development of the school. They are leading the staff through a period of transition and have engendered a sense of collegiately in the school at a time of significant change.

The school is currently piloting a major new management structure to facilitate the implementation of the curriculum; several of the co-ordinators have recently been appointed and there are further posts to be filled. The school has appropriately identified the need to review the roles and responsibilities of the co-ordinators within the new management structure and to provide professional development needs to maintain and improve the very good standards achieved in teaching and learning. It will be important that the pace of change is managed appropriately to ensure that school priorities are realistically implemented and embedded.

##### **4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT**

The improvement process is clearly linked to the target-setting process leading to a SDP based on clear evidence specifically about raising attainment in literacy and numeracy and extending the children's experiences. There are outstanding opportunities for consultation about the school development plan within the school community. Core policies are regularly reviewed, and effectively support a culture of school improvement. The school gives very good attention and meets fully the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005.

##### **4.3 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE**

The governors are fully involved in the strategic planning and policy development for the school and effectively support the Principal and the staff in the implementation of the SDP. The governors have effectively managed the financial resources of the school to sustain and secure the future needs of the school community.

#### 4.4 ACCOMMODATION

The school building is modern, spacious and well-organised. The standard of caretaking is outstanding and the children take pride in helping the teachers and the support staff to maintain their school. The bright and inviting classrooms and corridors are used to display children's work, and topical displays arouse children's natural curiosity and imagination. The ICT suite and central library enhance the learning environment; the large outdoor play area is well resourced and used to develop children's skills and interests. The school is currently involved in a major redevelopment of the external environment.

**The strengths of the school include:**

- the outstanding quality of the pastoral care for the children;
- the outstanding quality of the multi-disciplinary work in the WELCOME Service and the Speech and Language unit;
- the committed and well-informed Principal, ably-supported by the skilful and hard-working Vice-principal and diligent teachers and support staff;
- the very good standards achieved by the children in literacy and numeracy;
- the quality of the teaching observed, most of which ranged from good to outstanding; and
- the involvement and support of the governors in the process of school development planning and their contribution to the very effective self-evaluation strategies leading to improvement.

In the areas inspected, the quality of the education provided by this school is very good. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the learners; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

**HEALTH AND SAFETY**

- There is a need to ensure that the perimeter of the school is fully secured and that access to the school grounds and all the school entry points is securely controlled at all times.
- The main road outside the school, which is used regularly by the staff and children to access the adjacent community leisure facilities, does not have traffic calming measures in place and is a potential hazard.

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

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