



*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*



Providing Inspection Services for
**Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Focused Inspection

**Gortin Primary School
Omagh**

Inspected: March 2007

CONTENTS

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

BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School:** Gortin Primary School
 Plumbridge, Omagh
- ii. **School Reference Number:** 2016395
- iii. **Date of Inspection:** W/B 12.03.07
- iv. **Nature of Inspection:**
 Focused/English, SEN & ICT

B.

School Year	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Year 1 Intake	11	9	7	9	4
Enrolments					
Primary	72	74	67	63	59
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Class/Classes	0	0	0	0	0
Special Unit	0	0	0	0	0

The enrolment for the current year is the figure on the day of notification of inspection.
 For previous years it is the figure in the annual return to the Department of Education.

The calculations at C and D should be based on the total of the primary and reception enrolments only.

- C. Average Attendance for the Previous School Year
 (expressed as a percentage):

98%

Reception	Primary & Unit	Nursery Unit	Special
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- | | | | |
|---|----------|--------------|---|
| D. i. Number of Teachers
(including the principal and part-time teachers):
(Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours) | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): | 19.67 | NI PTR: 20.5 | |
| iii. Average Class Size: | 20 | | |
| iv. Class Size (Range): | 11 to 25 | | |
| v. Ancillary Support:
Number of Hours Per Week : | | | |
| i. Clerical support: | 15 hr | | |
| ii. Official Making A Good
Start Support: | 10 hr | | |
| iii. Additional hours of other
classroom assistant support: | 35 hr | | |
| vi. Number of children with statements of special educational needs: | 3 | | |
| vii. Number of children who are not of statutory school age: | 0 | | |
| viii. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: | 0.16% | | |

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Gortin Primary School is situated in the village of Gortin in County Tyrone. A minority of the children live in the village. The rest live in the rural community within a distance of approximately 10 miles; in the main, these children travel to and from school by bus. The enrolment has decreased in recent years from a figure of 72 in 2002 to the current figure of 59. Very few of the children are entitled to receive free school meals.

1.2 The inspection focused on the work in English, including information and communication technology (ICT) and the provision for special educational needs. The inspection also evaluated the school's procedures for pastoral care, including the arrangements for child protection.

1.3 The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the completion of a confidential questionnaire given to all the parents, as well as meetings with the governors and with the year 6 children. Sixty-four per cent of the parents responded to the questionnaire; a significant minority of those responding took the opportunity to write additional comments. A majority of the parents who responded indicated that generally they are happy with many aspects of the school. In a number of important areas, a minority of parents indicated that they had concerns; for example, they were unaware of the school's complaints procedure and the procedures relating to child protection matters. The details of the parental responses, both through the questionnaires and the written comments, have been shared with the governors and the Principal.

1.4 The governors expressed their appreciation of the support the school has from the parents and local community and their satisfaction with the management of the school. There is clear evidence that the governors are fully informed of relevant school matters, including policies and the School Development Plan (SDP), and that they make a strong contribution to the work of the school.

1.5 The year 6 children spoke positively of educational trips and other events in the life of the school. They were aware of how they should behave and the reward scheme in operation, and they knew where to seek help if they had a concern.

2. THE QUALITY OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK

2.1 In most classes, the behaviour of the children is good; they show enthusiasm for their work, co-operate willingly and respectfully with their teachers and are welcoming and courteous to visitors. The children are caring of one another, both in and outside of class.

2.2 During the inspection, major refurbishments were being completed at the school. Despite this disruption, the classrooms, corridors and circulation areas were bright and attractive with displays of the children's work, including drawings, models and personal writing.

2.3 The parents make a significant contribution to the life and work of the school. An active Parent Teacher Association organises fund-raising and community events, which in recent years have benefited the educational provision for the children through, for example, the updating of the key stage (KS) 2 reading materials. The staff also organise trips and talks by visitors in order to broaden the educational outlook of the children.

2.4 The support staff, including the secretary, classroom assistants and cleaning staff, make a valuable contribution to the children's learning experiences and to the life and work of the school.

2.5 The school gives consistently good attention to promoting health and well-being and has appropriate programmes in place which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles. There is evidence of commitment on the part of the staff to promoting healthy eating and improving the children's eating habits. There are opportunities for all children to participate in a wide range of physical activities. The children demonstrate a good understanding of the importance of making healthy life choices.

2.6 There are many strengths in the quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection. The school has procedures in place which implement the guidance outlined in the relevant Department of Education Circulars and has identified appropriately a few minor areas for improvement, which it is currently implementing. Among the strengths are the appropriate policies, the detailed records and the commitment of the designated teacher. The few areas for improvement include the need to:

- ensure that the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection are made known directly to all parents at least once every two years; and
- consult further with children and parents when revising policies.

2.7 The teachers complete detailed whole-school, medium-term and short-term planning, which provide valuable guidance for teaching. The planning outlines the intended learning and an appropriate variety of activities and resources. In the best practice, it included effective evaluative comments that informed future teaching and learning.

2.8 The quality of teaching observed during the inspection ranged from unsatisfactory, in the case of one teacher, to good; in a majority of lessons the teaching was sound or had many good features. In the best practice, the activities were challenging, often in relevant contexts and matched to the children's abilities, the resources were stimulating and the children were engaged fully and productively. The teachers used effective strategies to reinforce learning and to take forward the children's understanding. In a few lessons, however, there was insufficient focus on the intended learning, the teaching lacked structure and direction and the children were often not engaged in purposeful work. In these lessons, the children's responses were poor and many lost concentration, becoming restless and inattentive.

2.9 Whilst the planning for play-based learning outlines the intended learning and range of activities that the children can choose, this appropriate planning is not always implemented effectively. The children play with enthusiasm, using their imagination and developing their social skills; however, there is insufficient quality or progression in the children's learning. There is a need for the adult intervention to be more focused on the purpose of the activity as described in the planning; for example, during the inspection, opportunities were missed in which the children's vocabulary, their understanding of counting and money, their manipulative skills and their spatial awareness could have been extended through more effective interaction with the teacher. Incidental records are kept of each child's engagement with the play activities. It will be important that each child's progress and learning are recorded and used to inform the future planning for the play-based learning activities.

2.10 The school shows a strong commitment to promoting all aspects of literacy and has appropriately followed the previous year's focus on writing by a focus on reading in the current SDP. The action plan for the development of reading is detailed and outlines appropriate targets, success criteria, approaches, and monitoring and evaluation strategies. The whole-school policy and scheme of work forms a comprehensive and helpful guide from which the teachers plan their literacy lessons. The staff have worked closely together under the effective leadership of the literacy co-ordinator to agree these approaches. The school has also promoted literacy through various special activities, which include a visit from a local author, a celebration of World Book Day, certificates celebrating 'Writer of the Month' and workshops organised with the help of the Verbal Arts Centre.

2.11 In the majority of lessons, the teachers seek to provide good opportunities to encourage the children to listen and respond orally. In the best practice, these opportunities stimulate the children's thinking and develop their ability to organise and express their ideas and views competently. On occasions, the teachers build on these sessions by allowing the children to record their views in writing before moving on to develop their thoughts further to produce more extended pieces of writing. At other times, the questioning is less effective in developing the children's full responses and sometimes the discussions are over-directed by the teacher. Generally, there is a need to provide more challenge for each child to develop his/her oral communication skills.

2.12 Reading is taught appropriately with the support of the core reading scheme, Big Books and class novels. The children's enjoyment of reading is developed further by use of the class library, which provides a good variety of fiction and non-fiction. The teachers make good use of the Big Books as a stimulus for shared and guided reading and, appropriately, they exploit the opportunities to explain the conventions of grammar and punctuation in context. As the children progress through the school, they develop their interests and personal preferences in reading and can articulate these to visitors. By the end of year 7, most of the children read with confidence and fluency. The school monitors regularly the standards of reading and has set as a target the reduction in the number of children who are underachieving in reading. It is appropriate that the parents are being advised how they can help their child with reading.

2.13 The development of the children's writing is well integrated with the other aspects of the English and wider curriculum, and they are provided with an appropriate range of opportunities and contexts for writing. There are many examples of good writing on display in the classrooms and corridors. In the early years, the teacher uses appropriately the children's own experiences as a starting point for writing, and illustrated stories help the children learn to sequence their thinking and their writing. As they progress, the children are given opportunities to complete good quality personal writing, including poetry, letter writing, book reviews, stories and projects requiring research. By the end of KS2, the children write well for different purposes and audiences. For example, during the inspection, children prepared arguments for and against a local environmental issue that they developed effectively to produce summary texts of a high standard.

2.14 In year 7, the standards achieved by the children in the end of key stage English assessments are generally satisfactory or better; in particular, the more able children achieve high standards.

2.15 The school's ICT facilities are used to support learning in literacy, and the children acquire the basic skills of word-processing and using the Internet. By the end of year 7, the children are given opportunities to finish some of their personal writing on the computer and to design and write presentations using 'PowerPoint'. The children would benefit, however, from having more opportunities to compose and edit on-screen and use a wider range of software packages to consolidate their development in literacy.

2.16 The whole-school guidance for ICT is appropriate and provides good support for the learning and teaching across the curriculum. For example, spreadsheets and simple databases are used effectively to illustrate the children's personal data, and 'Logo' is used to extend and consolidate the children's understanding of 'turning' and angles. By the end of KS2, the children complete successfully the ICT accreditation scheme of the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment. It is appropriate that the continued implementation of ICT into classroom practice in all curriculum areas is a target in the SDP.

2.17 There is good provision for children who need additional support for their learning. There are appropriate procedures to identify children in need at an early stage and detailed records and documentation are maintained to outline and track their progress. Reasonable education plans are drawn up for the relevant children that set out suitable targets and learning experiences. Resources are used well to develop the children's interest and understanding. There is appropriate consultation with parents and others. The majority of support is provided through in-class support, often through the helpful contribution of classroom assistants. The children receive help for English and mathematics and there is evidence that they make good progress with their learning.

2.18 The teachers mark the children's work regularly and annotate it with supportive and helpful comments. In the best practice, the teachers indicate, through comment and example, how the children may improve the quality of their work.

2.19 The Principal has been in post for 15 years and she has overseen and led important initiatives with enthusiasm and dedication. She is strongly committed to the welfare of the children and the role of the school in the community. She is ably supported by the Vice-principal, who takes responsibility in leading developments in a number of important curricular and pastoral areas. The staff have participated in a thorough school development planning process. The SDP has an appropriate structure and focuses on relevant important areas for development. The teachers monitor and evaluate the standards achieved by the children. A good start has been made to monitoring the quality of teaching; this process needs to be taken forward with more rigour and effectiveness in light of the inspection findings.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the bright and stimulating environment for learning;
- the good behaviour of the children in most of the classes;
- the commitment and support of the governors and parents;

- the contribution by the classroom assistants and other support staff to the children's learning and to the life and work of the school;
- the arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection;
- the effective commitment to the children's health and well-being;
- the detailed and generally effective planning;
- the quality of teaching in a majority of lessons which was sound or had many good features;
- the literacy standards achieved by the children;
- the breadth and quality of the children's writing;
- the provision for children who require additional support with their learning; and
- the commitment and leadership of the Principal, who is ably supported by the Vice-principal.

3.2 The areas for improvement include the need to:

- improve the children's experiences and their learning in play-based activities; and
- disseminate the good practice in teaching across the school and, in particular, to improve the teaching that was found to be unsatisfactory.

3.3 In the areas inspected, the school has many strengths in its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified a few important areas that need to be addressed promptly to meet effectively the needs of all learners.

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

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