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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Focused Inspection

**Harryville Primary School and Nursery Unit
Ballymena**

Inspected: October 2007

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BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Harryville Primary Ballymena** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 08.10.07**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 301-0781** iv. **Nature of Inspection: FI/En/ICT**

B.

School Year	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Year 1 Intake	15	12	23	19	9
Enrolments					
Primary	112	107	114	122	103
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Class/Classes	25	26	26	26	26
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): 93.2%

Primary & Reception	Nursery Unit	Special Unit
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- D. i. Number of Teachers (including the principal and part-time teachers): 6 1 0
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 17.2 NI PTR: 20.8
- iii. Average Class Size: 21
- iv. Class Size (Range): 14 to 25
- v. Ancillary Support:
 Number of Hours **Per Week**: i. Clerical support: 20
 ii. Official Making A Good Start Support: 10
 iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: 75
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 5%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 33%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 49%

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Harryville Primary School is situated in the town of Ballymena, County Antrim. The children who attend the school live in the area surrounding the school. Over the last five years the enrolment has decreased from 112, and currently stands at 103; forty-nine per cent of the children are entitled to free school meals. Thirty-six per cent of the children have been identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning, five of whom have statements of special educational needs (SEN). At the time of inspection there were four substitute teachers working in the school.

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 groups of children from year 6. Seventy-five questionnaires were issued to parents; approximately 28% were returned to the Department of Education (DE) of which 13 contained additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaires highlighted the family atmosphere of the school and the approachability of the Principal. The governors expressed their appreciation of the work of the school and the reputation the school has in the community. A concern regarding accommodation highlighted by the governors and issues regarding communication raised by a small number of parents, have been discussed with the Principal. The school secretary, caretaker and classroom assistants contribute significantly to the life and work of the school. The school is well-maintained to a high standard of cleanliness.

1.3 The inspection focused on the work in English and the effectiveness of the school's SEN 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 Working relationships between the teachers and the children are good. The majority of the children are interested in their work and try hard to complete their tasks to the best of their ability. Importantly, the children have opportunities for their work to be displayed; art work, ICT work, as well as personal and shared writing reflect the range of the children's learning experiences.

2.2 The group of year 6 children who met with the inspection team spoke positively about the school; they reported that they enjoyed school, in particular, the after-school activities provided, and know how to seek help if a problem arises.

2.3 The arrangements for pastoral care and child protection have a few strengths. There are, however, important areas for improvement which require prompt action to ensure that the policies and procedures are fully in line with the guidance outlined in the relevant DE Circulars. In particular, the school needs to review and update the policy documents and guidance materials for pastoral care and child protection. In addition, the reviewed policies need to be communicated effectively to teaching and non-teaching staff, children, parents and governors. The District Inspector will return to the school, within a six week period, to ensure that these important issues are addressed appropriately.

2.4 The school gives very good attention to promoting health and well-being including opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity. There are effective policies and programmes in place, for example healthy breaks, access to drinking water, and programmed physical activity opportunities at break times, which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

2.5 In the majority of teaching sessions observed during the inspection, the quality of teaching was good, with the remainder of the sessions always satisfactory. In the best practice the teachers used short active learning activities to motivate and maintain the children's interest in their work. Often teachers adapted their teaching to meet the needs and abilities of the children. It is important that this good practice is identified and disseminated within and across the key stages.

2.6 There is a need to update whole-school planning, as well as support and guidance materials to ensure that the learning needs of all of the children are met consistently. The school has appropriately identified the need for all planning to build upon previous learning. In addition, it is important that individual class planning identifies how the children's progress will be monitored and learning evaluated.

2.7 In some of the classes, group work was observed and many opportunities exist for Circle Time. The teachers' questioning is satisfactory but does not always permit the children time to consider and reflect before they answer. In the early years the children develop their vocabulary and understanding and the atmosphere within the classrooms allows the children to feel at ease when expressing their opinions. In order to develop further the children's oral skills, there needs to be a greater emphasis placed on the children listening respectfully and attentively to others and to promoting the children's listening skills in all areas of the curriculum.

2.8 In the early years classes the children hear stories and rhymes, and through shared reading activities they have opportunities to become more familiar with the written word. Good use is made of interactive whiteboards to help the children build up a phonic awareness and provide them with strategies to read unfamiliar words. In key stage (KS) 2 the children talk enthusiastically about the books they have read and enjoyed. There needs to be a more planned approach to allow the children in KS2 to develop their early reading skills in all areas of the curriculum. By the end of year 7 over half the children are reading below their ability.

2.9 There is evidence to show that the children have appropriate opportunities to write for different purposes and audiences. For example, the older children are writing a book for the younger children; children respond in writing to novels read in class. Shared writing takes place and some of the classes have written class poems. There needs to be greater care taken in the presentation of the written work and there are too few opportunities for the children to develop their writing skills in all areas of the curriculum. Further, there needs to be a shared vision for developing language and literacy across the school and supporting schemes of work need to be in place to guide and inform the teachers' individual planning.

2.10 The use of ICT as a teaching tool to develop the children's literacy skills is developing well. The younger children use simple word-processing software packages to support their development as independent writers. The teachers use the digital camera effectively to record the children's work and promote their learning. The older children have

good opportunities to develop their communication skills through the range of computer software available. The increasing use of interactive whiteboards has the potential to integrate the children's experiences in ICT across a range of topics and themes. Importantly the school needs to monitor and evaluate the progress of individual children to ensure that their ICT skills are being developed progressively to support learning across the curriculum.

2.11 An effective start has been made in foundation stage planning and provision. The children engage in regular sessions of play-based learning in which they talk with confidence about what they are doing and what they have learned. In the sessions observed, the children explored similarities and differences between themselves and others and showed enthusiasm for learning. The teachers and classroom assistants interact effectively with the children, supporting them when appropriate. Planning for the play-based sessions outlines good opportunities to promote the children's language and numeracy skills and build effectively upon their interests and curiosity. Detailed observations and evaluations increasingly enable the teachers and classroom assistants to reflect on the children's progress and to plan the next stage of their learning.

2.12 All teachers maintain relevant education plans for the children who have additional learning needs. The school has identified the need to make individual targets for improvement more sharply focused. In addition the arrangements for monitoring and evaluating progress need to be more clearly set out. A teacher who works on a part-time basis, provides additional and effective support for those children requiring help in developing numeracy and literacy skills. Increasingly, the work in the classrooms complements the work in the withdrawal sessions; the teachers and classroom assistants support the children well. Effective links have been established with a range of external support agencies, in order to meet effectively the children's needs.

2.13 The school has a wide range of data relating to the children's reading ages. There is a need for more effective use to be made of this data to promote improvement.

2.14 The Principal has been in post for three years; she has established good working relationships with various groups in the community. She knows the children and their families well and understands the needs of the children. In addition, she has facilitated a parent education programme aimed at helping them to support their children's learning. The Principal now needs to become more strategic in working with teachers to plan for ongoing school improvement and raised levels of attainment for the children. The preparation of clear action plans should assist the staff to guide, monitor and evaluate the extent of improvement.

2.15 The School Development Plan needs to be updated and reviewed in line with the requirements of the Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005 Order on School Development Planning, and to reflect the findings of the inspection report.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the quality of the teaching sessions observed during the inspection;
- the good arrangements for promoting healthy eating and active lifestyles;

- the opportunities provided for parents to enable them to support their children's learning;
- the good start made in the use of interactive whiteboards to teach early reading skills; and
- the work of the Principal in overseeing the development of good working relationships with the local community.

3.2 The areas for improvement include the need to:

- review, update and communicate the policy documents and guidance materials for pastoral care and child protection in line with the relevant DE Circulars;
- develop a more strategic approach to planning for learning and teaching to improve the standards the children achieve; and
- develop a shared policy which guides and directs the work in language and literacy across the curriculum.

3.3 In the areas inspected, the school 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 learners.

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

4. THE NURSERY UNIT

4.1 The nursery unit, which opened in 1999, is situated in refurbished accommodation within the primary school. The children come mainly from the local area and a significant minority of the children are in their penultimate pre-school year. There have been recent staffing changes within the nursery. The teacher in charge took up post in October 2007 and the nursery assistant was appointed on a temporary basis at the beginning of September 2007.

4.2 The parents and staff 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. Those parents who responded expressed satisfaction with the work of the nursery.

4.3 The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection in the nursery has a few strengths. There are, however, important areas for improvement which require prompt action to ensure that the policies and procedures are in line with the guidance outlined in the relevant Department of Education Circulars. In particular, the school needs to ensure that procedures related to the safety and personal care of the children are documented and shared with the parents.

The District Inspector will return to the school within a six week period to ensure that these important issues are addressed appropriately.

4.4 The nursery's programme for the promotion of health and well-being has some strengths with a developing commitment to encourage the children to eat healthily and be physically active.

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

- The nursery is bright and welcoming and the children approach the staff with ease. The staff are caring and responsive to the needs of those younger children who require additional support to settle into the nursery routines.
- The staff provide a range of play activities, both indoors and outside, which facilitate satisfactory opportunities for learning in most areas of the pre-school curriculum. The nursery has a suitable range of resources which the children can access to extend their play.
- Appropriate systems of planning have been developed which help to guide the staff in their day-to-day work with the children.
- There is a commitment to inclusion within the nursery, and the staff have the opportunity, through the North-Eastern Education and Library Board's Multi-Agency Support Team, to liaise with other agencies to provide valuable support for those children identified with having special educational needs.
- The staff are energetic and enthusiastic and display a commitment to ongoing development and improvement.

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

- There is a need to review and improve aspects of the organisation of the daily timetable, including the snack routine and the story sessions, to ensure that all time is used effectively to promote learning.
- The staff need to implement their behaviour management strategies more consistently to ensure settled and productive play.
- The staff should ensure that their interactions with the children are more effective in exploiting the learning potential within the play activities and extending the children's thinking and independence.

4.7 The teacher in charge of the nursery demonstrates a reflective approach to her work and a willingness to improve the practice and provision within the nursery. The team is well placed to create a Development Plan for the nursery, which should include action plans to take forward the issues identified during this inspection. The staff should begin to take a structured approach to self-evaluation and start to gather evidence of ongoing improvement.

4.8 The nursery 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 children.

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

**STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON THE NURSERY UNIT IN HARRYVILLE
PRIMARY SCHOOL, BALLYMENA**

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1
Attending full-time	0
Attending part-time	26
Under 3 years of age*	9
With statement of SEN**	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4***	1
At CoP stages 1 or 2***	3
With English as an additional language	0

* 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.	19%
Average attendance for the previous year.	90%

2. Duration of Sessions

Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
2½ hours	-

3. Details of Staff

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

Number of: ****	
Students	0
Trainees	2

**** Total placements since September of current year

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued	19
Percentage returned	68%
Number of written comments	5

ACCOMMODATION (PRIMARY SCHOOL)

- Some of the rooms have single glazing with metal frames set in wooden surrounds. Some of the wood is rotten in places.

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