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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*



Providing Inspection Services for
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Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Focused Inspection

**Holy Trinity Primary School,
Nursery and Special Units
Enniskillen**

Inspected: January 2009

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Holy Trinity Primary and Nursery School is situated in the town of Enniskillen in County Fermanagh. The co-educational school was formed in 2001 by the amalgamation of two single-sex schools and is accommodated on a split site. The school has a double nursery unit attached to it; enrolment to the unit has been oversubscribed over the past five years and 5% of the nursery children are entitled to free school meals. Much time has been spent on the acquisition of an appropriate site for a new school building; this process needs to be accelerated to address the severe limitations in the current accommodation. Most of the children who attend the school come from the town. The primary school enrolment has ranged from 567 to 600 over the last five years and is currently 590. Approximately 19% of the primary school children are entitled to receive free school meals. The school welcomes children from all cultures. Thirty percent of the children are registered with a range of special educational needs (SEN) in the primary school and 11% are registered in the nursery unit.

1.2 FOCUS

The inspection focused on the quality of the children's experiences in literacy and numeracy, the effectiveness of the school's SEN provision, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in promoting and supporting learning and teaching and the school's arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection.

1.3 THE VIEWS OF THE PARENTS, TEACHERS, GOVERNORS AND CHILDREN

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents and the teaching staff 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. A nutritional associate met with a group of year 7 children and evaluated the healthy eating and physical activity provision.

One hundred and twenty-three questionnaires were issued to the parents in the primary school including five to the parents of children in the autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) unit; 39% were returned to the Department of Education (DE) and 12 of these contained additional written comments. The responses from the questionnaires indicated that almost all of the parents appreciate the care provided for the children, the school's encouragement for the children to behave well and the arrangements made to ensure that the children are safe and well-settled in the school. Almost all the written comments were appreciative of the dedicated work of the Principal and the staff and expressed satisfaction with the supportive, inclusive and welcoming atmosphere of the school. A very small number of parents indicated that they would like to have more information on how to help their child and that work should be matched better to the needs of the children. The issues arising from the parental questionnaires, including the shortcomings of the split site arrangements, the large class sizes, parental involvement, the assessment arrangements and the effectiveness of the leadership of the school were shared with the senior management team (SMT) and governors. These issues are addressed in the body of the report.

The parents and nursery staff were given opportunities to express their views about the nursery unit through inspection questionnaires. Fifty-three questionnaires were issued to parents; 43% were returned to DE of which 14 contained written comments, all of which were positive. In particular the parents appreciated the happy and friendly atmosphere, the dedicated and approachable staff and the development of self-esteem and confidence in the children. The responses from the staff questionnaires were wholly positive.

Twenty-eight questionnaires were issued to the teaching staff and almost all responded; 14 teachers added written comments. The responses indicated a very high level of satisfaction with the effectiveness of the pastoral care system for the children, the attention given to staff welfare, the quality of the teaching and learning and the effective leadership and management arrangements. A significant minority (42%) stated that more needed to be done to enable the children to contribute to aspects of decision-making in the school and a very small number of teachers were concerned about poor communication between the governors and the staff.

The governors expressed their appreciation of the welcoming ethos of the school, the sense of team-work within the school and the school's reputation in the local community.

The year 6 children talked enthusiastically about the range of curriculum activities provided for them, the support provided by the teachers and classroom assistants and stated that they were aware of what to do if they have worries about their safety and well-being.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is very good. The well-being of the staff and the children has a priority. A part-time counsellor is employed to support children, parents and staff. The positive relationships at all levels foster an inclusive and supportive ethos throughout the school and within the local community. The children respond well to the teachers' high expectations and their behaviour is excellent. The opportunity to take part in drama, to perform in public and to participate in sporting and cultural competitions develops very well the self-esteem of many of the children.

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the nursery unit is outstanding. The main strengths of the provision include the care and kindness shown to the children, the very good working relationships at all levels and the links established with the parents.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school and nursery unit have very good comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding the children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department.

1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school and nursery unit give very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example health promoting schools status and fruit breaks, which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

The school learning and teaching policy provides useful guidance and underpins classroom practice. The children are responsive learners, who display good levels of interest and engagement. The caring environment and provision of challenging activities in most of the lessons enables the children to persevere with tasks and develop as resilient learners. They are ably supported to evaluate their own learning and can apply effective strategies, should they encounter difficulties.

There are significant strengths in the literacy and numeracy provision which result in suitable learning outcomes for the children. Good curricular leadership, recent policy and planning developments, well prepared lessons, effective practical work and the good use of resources including ICT support learning effectively.

By year 7 most of the children are achieving standards in English and mathematics appropriate to their age and ability levels. The school has identified a minority of children, however, who would benefit from more challenging and differentiated learning tasks to improve their attainment. This is supported by the school's analysis of the internal and external performance data of the children's attainment. The inspection team endorses the school improvement plans and the teachers' capacity to ensure consistency and progression in teaching and learning in order to raise the levels of attainment for those children appropriately identified by the school as underachieving in English and mathematics.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

By the end of key stage (KS) 2 most of the children read with fluency and understanding. There is very good support provided to enable the children with difficulty in learning and those with English as an additional language to read. The reading programme is supplemented by a good range of fiction and non-fiction material which supports the children's development as competent readers.

In the foundation stage (FS) and KS1 the children are provided with a language rich environment which promotes effectively their interest in books and the written word. They have regular opportunities to listen to stories; the children give good levels of oral response to the text and are able to identify words, letters and associated sounds. The children are acquiring basic reading skills through the development of phonological awareness, word recognition and exposure to modelled and shared reading using a range of books; they are beginning to use these skills to assist them in reading unfamiliar text. By the end of KS1 most of the children read with a good level of fluency, understanding and enjoyment.

In the FS and KS1 most of the writing activities are well matched to the children's interests and experiences. The quality of the presentation of the children's written work is often very good. The children are encouraged to become independent writers and learn through supportive writing strategies. As they move into KS2 most of the children continue to develop and improve the quality of their writing. There is a need for some teachers to provide a wider range of more purposeful contexts for writing in order to foster the children's creativity and to provide greater challenge.

In the early years, the children talk readily about their work. They express their thoughts and ideas confidently and articulately. As they progress through KS2 the children's talking and listening continues to be supported through role-play and the effective use of plenary sessions to review learning. The children are encouraged to take part in public speaking, drama activities and to learn Irish and Spanish. New children to the school who do not speak English when they arrive are immersed in the English language and in a short space of time many have gained good levels of spoken and written English.

The teachers make good use of ICT and use a range of software, programmable devices and educational websites to enhance and consolidate the children's communication skills. The school has invested in interactive whiteboards, which are being used effectively in most classes to motivate children, to raise their levels of engagement and to support learning and teaching. Video conferencing is used effectively to maintain links between the school's two sites, to support the children's transition from KS1 into KS2 and to provide an additional audience with whom the children can share their work. Some of the children in KS2 use video conferencing well to maintain links with their partner schools in the Dissolving Boundaries programme.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

By the end of KS2 most of the children are achieving standards in mathematics appropriate to their age and ability levels.

In the FS and KS1 the children develop mathematical concepts and language through a combination of well-planned play activities, games, songs and rhymes and well-structured lessons which are often set within an appropriate thematic context. The children have an appropriately broad range of learning experiences across the components of the revised curriculum. In the best practice the teachers use a range of effective questioning strategies to challenge the children and to encourage them to articulate their thinking; this very good practice should be more widespread to raise the standards of a majority of the children to a higher level. Recently introduced support measures include efforts to reduce class size and to improve standards for those who experience difficulty in mathematics by enhanced SEN teaching and team teaching by the SMT in some of the targeted classes.

In KS2 whole-class teaching is carefully planned to ensure that all the children understand the main concepts being taught. The older children display a good knowledge and understanding of essential mathematical vocabulary and talk has a high profile in all lessons. Most of the older children have acquired a useful breadth of mathematical knowledge; they can express their ideas with confidence and appreciate the value of mathematics for everyday life.

The teaching approaches used ensure that there is a suitable balance between effective whole-class teaching, practical activities and discussion about mathematics. In almost every lesson the children focus very well on their teachers' exposition of new concepts and they are keen and willing to work on the many and varied practical and written tasks that they are given; they work hard to be successful. The effective integration of mental mathematics in most lessons provides an additional source of enjoyment and challenge and often allows the children opportunities to consolidate the concepts that are being taught. There are many examples of good collaborative work, both paired and group activities and almost all of the

children are confident in talking about their experiences and in using the language of mathematics. There is a whole-school need to integrate more fully mental mathematics, learning through play, practical activities and investigations in lessons to provide additional challenge, to consolidate learning and to highlight the relevance of mathematics to everyday life.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The teachers plan their work consistently and effectively in the medium- and short-term. The plans identify clearly the intended learning outcomes to be used and are developing appropriately to take account of the revised curriculum. All the teachers complete evaluations of the response of the children to the taught programme. In the best practice, which needs to be shared, these evaluations are used to inform future planning and to meet the learning needs of the children.

3.2 TEACHING

During the inspection, most of the teaching observed was good to very good and in a small number of lessons it was outstanding. In the best practice the lessons were well-managed and resourced; the high levels of interaction between the children and the teachers sustained involvement and met the needs of all the children effectively.

The teachers have worked hard to create within the classrooms, attractive, well organised learning environments. There are many interesting and informative displays in classrooms and corridors which record and celebrate the children's achievements across the curriculum and within the local community.

The school is making steady progress in the implementation of the revised curriculum. There is a self-evaluative culture; the staff are reflective about the teaching methodologies deployed and are regularly keeping teaching and learning under review in order to provide the best possible learning experiences and outcomes for the children. Good links are established with the nursery unit and the head of the nursery is a member of the SMT. Links with the local community to enrich the children's experiences are being extended. As a result the children display very good behaviour, positive attitudes, motivation and engagement in their learning.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

The school marking policy is implemented consistently and evaluated at a whole-school level. The teachers mark the children's written work regularly and in the majority of cases the marking is of a supportive nature. There is also a whole-school approach to assessment for learning strategies and the children, in the best practice, are encouraged to reflect on what they have learned and to manage their own learning. The school uses a variety of standardised and non-standardised tests to assess the children's levels of achievement, for benchmarking and for whole-school target-setting in literacy and numeracy. Information on the children's progress is reported to the parents annually. It is appropriate to develop further the assessment for learning strategies based on the class teachers' professional judgements of the children's progress and development and to use these outcomes more effectively alongside standardised and InCas test results.

3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The school has a very inclusive and welcoming ethos for children with additional needs, including those pupils with English as a second language. There are effective links between the nursery and the primary for the SEN programmes.

Some 180 of the children in the primary school have been identified as requiring special help with their learning, mainly through the use of a range of standardised tests and the teachers' knowledge and observations. Two teachers, one in KS1 and one in KS2 support children with difficulties in literacy in well-structured classes which set realistic targets for progress and engage the children with well-paced and interesting activities and experiences designed to further develop their literacy skills. This assistance is provided for the children through effective support in class, withdrawal sessions and team teaching. The learning support teachers liaise effectively with the classroom teachers. The SMT support groups in mathematics lessons.

The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) is systematic and effective in her work; she works diligently to liaise with, and support, the teachers and they, in turn, take responsibility for the in-class implementation of individual education plans (IEPs). Relevant IEPs, in a majority of classes, feature concise targets; these are subject to regular review and to further development. In the best practice the teaching is well-planned and designed to encourage and support the children as they work alongside their peers. The SENCO has appropriately identified and agreed an action plan which recognises the need to ensure consistency in the format and content of IEPs. The school receives beneficial multi-disciplinary support for those children requiring specialised help and the SENCO has established good collaborative working relationships with relevant agencies and professionals.

The school has a class for five pupils at KS1 with a confirmed autistic spectrum disorder. The ethos in this class is child-centred. The children are made aware of class routines and procedures and staff re-direct or displace any challenging behaviour and frequently praise the children for their efforts and achievement. Good planning and working relationships between staff enable the children to integrate with and learn alongside their peers in the mainstream classes. The teacher, who has been in post for only a short time, has received appropriate training and has already established a good blend of individual and group work which is underpinned by meticulous planning and thorough assessment and recording of progress. The strategies used in class enable the children to make progress and the teaching is imaginative and engaging. Good emphasis is put on play and the children learn within a context which makes good use of visual, tactile and auditory resources to encourage them to learn. The staff know the children well and use a visually structured programme flexibly in order to meet their individual needs. At the time of the inspection a new classroom was being planned to accommodate the class in a more suitable environment for the children with autistic spectrum disorder.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The Principal, who has been in post for four years was absent at the time of the inspection. During the inspection the Vice-principal, who has a responsibility for pastoral care, is managing the school effectively in his role as the Acting-principal. A recently appointed second Vice-principal has responsibility for curricular leadership. A new management structure has been agreed reflecting the areas of staff responsibility for the revised curriculum and accountability for standards and outcomes for the children. The SMT demonstrate effective leadership and provide good support for the staff and the children; they are ably-supported by the middle management tier and the committed teaching staff.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The improvement process is clearly linked to a comprehensive school development plan (SDP) and to self-evaluation processes which have focused on pastoral care, use of data and target-setting and planning for the revised curriculum. There are very good structures for consultation about the SDP priorities within the school community of governors, parents, children and the staff. The use of performance data from standardised and end of key stage tests has recently been managed at a whole-school level to assist the process of target-setting to promote improvement. As a result of an in-depth whole-school audit, new policies and action plans are in place, to guide teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy over a three-year period. The school gives very good attention to and meets fully the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the supportive pastoral care arrangements, inclusive school ethos and the effective use of ICT in most of the lessons observed;
- the children's excellent behaviour, positive attitudes, high levels of motivation and engagement in their learning which supports ongoing improvement in standards in English and mathematics;
- the good to very good quality of the teaching in most of the lessons observed and the instances of outstanding teaching leading to good outcomes for most of the children in English and mathematics;
- the inclusive and supportive arrangements for children with special educational needs and the good start made to the development of the ASD Unit;
- the outstanding quality of the educational and pastoral provision of the nursery unit and the effective links to the primary school;
- the good progress made following the amalgamation of two schools by overcoming many of the problems of a split site to develop successfully a unified school culture, values and approaches to teaching and learning; and

- the significant contributions made by the SMT to progressing a culture of self-evaluation, review and effective school development planning leading to improvement effected through the high levels of co-operation and support by the committed staff.

In the areas inspected, the quality of 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.

6. THE NURSERY UNIT

6.1 The main strengths within the nursery unit's educational and pastoral provision are as follows:

- the happy, supportive and caring ethos which promotes the children's self-confidence and self-esteem;
- the outstanding opportunities for the children to learn across all the areas of the curriculum particularly the development of language and communication, and early mathematical experiences; and personal, social and emotional skills, the arts, aspects of the world around us and physical development are also given priority on the curriculum provided;
- the committed and hard-working teachers ably supported by a team of enthusiastic and dedicated assistants;
- the effectively planned opportunities for the children to learn away from the nursery unit environment through visits to appropriate local venues; in particular the emphasis placed on developing learning across the curriculum at the local forest and Bundoran beach;
- the outstanding quality of the staff interaction with the children; the use of effective questioning which enhances the learning potential of the planned activities and helps sustain the children's interest and concentration for extended periods; and
- the identification of and assessment profiles for the children's individual needs; effective links with the parents, the support and guidance provided by the staff and the sourcing of external agencies to meet the special educational needs of the children.

In the areas inspected, the quality of the education provided by the nursery unit is outstanding; the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. This organisation has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self improvement.

**STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON HOLY TRINITY PRIMARY SCHOOL
NURSERY UNIT, ENNISKILLEN**

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending full-time	26	27
Attending part-time	0	0
Under 3 years of age*	0	0
With statement of SEN**	0	1
At CoP stages 3 or 4***	3	0
At CoP stages 1 or 2***	0	2
With English as an additional language	0	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.	4.68%
Average attendance for the previous year.	93.3%

2. Duration of Sessions

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

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-Time	Part-Time
Teachers	2	0
Nursery Assistants	0	0
Qualified Nursery Assistants	2	0

Number of: ****	
Students	2
Trainees	0

**** Total placements since September of current year

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

Number issued	53
Percentage returned	43%
Number of written comments	14

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