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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
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Providing Inspection Services for
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Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Focused Inspection

**Kilmaine Primary School
Bangor**

Inspected: May 2007

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Kilmaine Primary School is situated on an extensive site in an area of private housing in Bangor. A new school building was opened in 2005 and was built under the Department of Education's 'Design Build' initiative, through which the Board of Governors (governors) and staff contributed to the design solutions. The children come from the town and the surrounding area. The enrolment of the school currently stands at 659. Approximately 4% of the children are entitled to receive free school meals.

1.2 Prior to the inspection, the parents received a confidential questionnaire seeking their views on the school. Of the 131 questionnaires issued to the parents in the primary school, approximately 62% were returned to the Department of Education (DE); 38 contained additional written comments. Nearly all of the parents endorsed strongly the school's work and standing in the community, the quality of learning and teaching and, in particular, drew attention to the commitment of the Principal and the staff and to the well-being and education of the children. Members of the inspection team also met with the governors and a group of children from years 6 and 7. The well-informed governors highlighted the high esteem with which the school is held in the community, expressed their appreciation of the dedication and hard work of all the staff, and commented on the quality of the learning and teaching, as well as the very positive ethos that exist. The governors have given many years of service to the school, and are actively involved in decision-making on all aspects of the life and work of the school. The inspection team endorses all of these views. All of the comments and areas for clarification raised by the parents have been discussed with the Principal. The children indicated that they felt happy and safe in the school.

1.3 The inspection focused on the work in English and the effectiveness of the school's special educational needs (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, and activity-based learning.

2. THE QUALITY OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK

2.1 The school is characterised by its welcoming atmosphere and positive ethos which promotes tolerance and mutual respect for all. The children are friendly and are very willing to talk about their work; the standard of their behaviour is excellent. There is a sense of order and purpose throughout the school; relationships at all levels are excellent. The classroom assistants, ancillary and non-teaching staff make a valuable contribution to the children's learning and well-being.

2.2 The children learn within a caring and supportive environment with a strong sense of community. The extensive and attractive displays throughout the school enhance the environment and place appropriate value on the children's work. Parents are encouraged to participate in the life of the school through class visits and are kept informed through a newsletter. The Parent Teacher Association has raised significant funds on behalf of the school which are used to further enhance the experiences offered to the children.

2.3 The children participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities including a variety of sport, art and music; in particular a school production brings together the many talents of the children. They are encouraged to be involved in the wider community through

the support of charities. The children's learning, cultural and social development are enhanced well through the regular visits to places of educational interest.

2.4 The school gives consistently good attention to promoting health and well-being, and has appropriate policies and programmes in place to encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles, for example there is a Healthy Eating policy, operation of a brain gym initiative, and access to drinking water. There is evidence of commitment, on the part of the staff, to promoting healthy eating through excellent links between the canteen and the classroom staff, the encouragement of healthy lunchboxes, and the incremental introduction of healthy breaks. There are opportunities to participate in a range of physical activities, both during and after the school day. The children demonstrate a good understanding of nutritional messages and the importance of making healthy life choices. The work of the designated teacher, with responsibility for promoting health and well-being practices within the school, is of a good quality in guiding effectively the developments in this area. Recently, the school has been successful in competitions related to promoting healthy lifestyles.

2.5 There are major strengths in the quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection. The school has procedures in place which implement appropriately the guidance outlined in the relevant DE Circulars. The governors, staff, parents and children are fully aware of the school's procedures, and have had the opportunity to contribute to a range of helpful policies which guide the work of the school. These policies and the effective pastoral care systems underpin well the good relationships and the good learning and teaching which take place both within and outside the classroom. In particular, the importance placed on the children's personal development, the effective leadership of the teacher-in-charge of pastoral care, and the good development of the policies which are linked to the school development plan (SDP), all contribute to the strengths of the arrangements.

2.6 The teachers have put a great deal of effort into planning effectively for learning and teaching; they meet regularly, in year groups, to plan for and evaluate teaching and learning, and there is a clear match between the written planning and the classroom practice. The medium-term planning is coherent and consistent across the year groups, and identifies clearly the intended learning intentions in terms of key knowledge and skills. The teachers produce detailed lesson plans, following a common format, which outline teaching strategies and resources. In the best practice, the individual planning takes into account the needs of the different abilities in the class.

2.7 The teachers are hard-working and committed fully to promoting the children's learning. In the lessons observed, during the inspection, the teaching was always satisfactory, most was good and, a significant minority were excellent. In the best practice observed, the children were engaged in interesting and challenging activities, their independence was promoted well, and opportunities were provided for them to reinforce their learning through discussion and reflection. The lessons, including the effective use of a range of resources, were well-paced and skilfully managed by the teachers.

2.8 The work in English is progressing very well. The management of the recent developments in English by a group of teachers comprising a member of senior management, and the co-ordinators for key stage (KS) 1 and KS2, is of an excellent quality; they work effectively as a team. The written documentation which guides all aspects of the learning and teaching for English is comprehensive and of a very good quality. This includes detailed schemes of work where, for example, teaching strategies, expected learning outcomes, and a

comprehensive range of written and other resources are clearly set out. A new literacy scheme and a range of other resources, introduced recently, have augmented well the range of resources already available for literacy, and have had a major impact in enhancing further the children's learning experiences. Additionally, a wide range of teacher-produced resources, generated by all of the teachers for use on the interactive whiteboards, was used to good effect by both teachers and children during the inspection. In English, nearly of the children reach standards in talking and listening, reading and writing that range from satisfactory to excellent, in line with their abilities.

2.9 In both key stages, oral work of a very good quality was observed. In a large majority of the lessons seen, the teachers used a wide range of well-planned and imaginative strategies, and, in the best practice, the children were frequently allowed opportunities to ask and answer questions, both of themselves and of their teacher. The children clearly benefited from these approaches, as they were allowed to develop their own initiative and freely expressed their opinions and shared their views with others.

2.10 The school engaged in the South-Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS) Literacy Strategy, and the more recent work has focused on guided and shared reading, and independent writing. In KS1, the children learn to read using a variety of commercial and supplementary resources. In KS2, they continue to develop their reading skills through the study of novels and other commercial materials. Reading for enjoyment is encouraged well through the use of class novels, and a wide range of fiction and non-fiction books. The inspection findings confirm that the use of new reading resources, including those produced by the teachers themselves, is having a positive impact on the children's quality of experiences. Good use is made of Big Books, the core reading scheme and recent training on phonological awareness to promote the decoding, understanding and engagement with text, and the enjoyment of reading. There is a systematic approach to the teaching of reading including the use of phonics, where appropriate, particularly in the infant years, and this has helped significantly the language development of the younger children. The inspection would endorse the further development of these approaches where needed, in both key stages.

2.11 In nearly all of the classes, the standard of presentation of the children's written work in English and across the curriculum is excellent. There are many examples of independent writing of a very good standard, in English and across the curriculum. In the early years, the children make an excellent start to independent writing. The development of the children's writing is well integrated with the other aspects of the English curriculum. In KS1, the talking, listening and reading activities are developed well into tasks such as sequencing, sentence construction and simple story writing. In most of the KS2 classes, the children engage in writing using a wide range of formats. In a minority of KS2 classes, the children spend too much time on the completion of written comprehension exercises linked to, and associated with, commercial schemes; they need more frequent opportunities for independent writing in English and across the curriculum. This is an area for further development.

2.12 Under the effective guidance of the ICT co-ordinator, there is excellent ICT provision to support the learning and teaching of English and literacy across the curriculum. In talking and listening, the children's oral confidence is often supplemented well by the use of software packages and digital videoing to record and enhance presentations and activities. There are many examples of very effective use of interactive whiteboards, both by the teachers and the children. Most of the teachers are enthusiastic about incorporating the use of

ICT to support and stimulate effectively the children's interest in writing. Often texts are displayed on the interactive whiteboards to further facilitate shared and guided reading. In view of the high quality of much of the work produced in ICT, the children would greatly benefit from participation in the Scheme of IT Accreditation at KS2 organised by the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment.

2.13 There is a very good culture of self-evaluation evident within the school, and one which is developing further. In particular, over the past five years, and under the excellent leadership of the Principal and other key members of the senior management team (SMT), the school has made extensive and effective use and analysis of performance data, including standardised tests and DE benchmarking information, to review and inform further improvements in learning and teaching. This work serves as a model of outstanding practice. As part of the ongoing work, the school has recently analysed all of the data available from standardised tests available on the children's performance in English and mathematics, and used this analysis to set some appropriate targets for further improvement in mathematics. The school could usefully extend these target-setting arrangements to English.

2.14 The teachers mark the children's work regularly and conscientiously; often annotating it with positive comments which recognise the efforts the children make. In the best practice, the marking often includes a comment on how the children can improve their work. In a minority of classes, the teachers encourage the children to evaluate the quality of their own work and suggest how they might improve; this good practice could be developed more fully across the school.

2.15 The school values the importance of learning through play. The early years co-ordinator has worked hard with the early years team of teachers in developing a play programme; they have made good progress. The children in the early years classes have regular sessions of play-based learning. The staff have been reviewing and developing the programme for play, and have begun to involve the children in the planning process. During the inspection, the thematic planning was based around the topics of 'Pets' and 'Zoo animals', and provided clear progression during years 1 and 2. In the sessions observed, the children were engaged in a wide variety of stimulating and challenging activities which helped to develop important aspects of their learning, both indoors and outdoors. The children work well together and most are able to sustain extended periods of concentrated and motivated play. They share equipment readily, discuss their learning, and collaborate on shared tasks. In the best practice, the teachers and classroom assistants interact effectively with the children and, through skilful questioning and prompting, they enhance the children's language and learning. The staff have identified appropriately the need to build on and extend these experiences in year 3 and develop further their methods of assessing the children's learning and development.

2.16 Support for those children who require extra help with their learning is a high priority for the school. These children are identified at an early stage, through the use of teacher and parental observation and the analysis of external assessments. Additional help in English and mathematics is provided through periods of withdrawal from classes; the extra support provided is of a very high quality and is linked, where possible, to class work. In the withdrawal sessions observed, the children were supported well by the teachers. The work was well planned; the children were motivated to complete the tasks which were matched appropriately to their learning needs. The targets in individual education plans (EPs) are specific, reviewed regularly, and are a useful guide to classroom practice. The children's

progress is monitored effectively by the teachers and the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO), and close contact is kept with parents.

2.17 The Principal, has been in post for five years, and provides outstanding leadership. He sets high standards for himself and the whole school community, and is thoroughly committed and dedicated to providing the highest possible standards of education for all the children in his care. He takes a personal interest in the work of each class, and the progress and development of individual children. He is highly reflective in his work and fosters well a culture of self-evaluation leading to improvement. His effective communication of a clear vision motivates the staff well and promotes a strong sense of team-spirit. The hard-working Vice-principal is highly professional and well-informed in his work. Both the Vice-principal and the members of the SMT ably support the Principal in his work and contribute to the overall effectiveness of the school.

2.18 The School Development Plan (SDP) is comprehensive and identifies important areas for development: appropriate action plans have been drawn up to address each priority identified. The few minor areas for development highlighted in this report have been identified already by the school. The school should consider adjusting its development plan to take into account the detail of the inspection findings.

2.19 The staff display high levels of professionalism, and are encouraged to take on additional responsibilities and to pursue opportunities for further professional development. The co-ordinators play an important role in monitoring and evaluating the work in their subject areas. The school's staff development programme includes school-based and external in-service training, and has focused appropriately on several of the priorities identified in the SDP. The teacher-tutor provides excellent monitoring, support and guidance for beginning and early professional development (EPD) teachers within the school.

2.20 The quality of the accommodation, in this new 'Design Build' school is excellent. The internal and external environments of the school are pleasant, well maintained and fit for purpose. The standards of caretaking and cleaning throughout the school are excellent.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the very positive ethos which promotes an atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect for all;
- the exemplary behaviour and good manners of the children and their positive attitude to learning;
- the attractive and well-organised learning environment which is used well to promote learning and to celebrate the children's work and achievements;
- the excellent working relationships at all levels, and the strong links established with the governors, parents, appropriate support agencies and the local community;
- the high quality of the pastoral care;

- the high quality of the play-based learning programme which effectively supports learning and teaching in the early years;
- the satisfactory to excellent standards, achieved by nearly all of the children in literacy in line with their abilities;
- the excellent facilities for, and the use of, ICT to enhance the learning experiences of the children;
- the excellent use made of the quantitative data for monitoring, evaluating and target-setting, as an integral part of the school's self-evaluation process;
- the very good quality education provided for the children with special educational needs;
- the interesting and varied range of extra-curricular activities which enrich the children's experiences;
- the quality of the lessons observed which were always satisfactory; most were good and a significant minority were excellent;
- the outstanding leadership and management of the Principal who promotes the highest possible standards of education for the children in his care;
- the hard-working Vice-principal, SMT and co-ordinators, who contribute to the overall effectiveness of the areas under inspection;
- the professionalism of the hard-working teachers who demonstrate a collegial approach to their work; and
- the excellent contribution of the classroom assistants and other ancillary staff to the life and work of the school.

3.2 In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided in this school is excellent. The educational and pastoral needs of the learners are being very well met. The parents can have confidence in the school's capacity for sustained self-improvement.

No follow-up inspection is required.

4. THE NURSERY UNIT

4.1 The nursery unit is situated in the grounds of Kilmaine Primary School. The children come from the immediate area. In the last three years, the unit has been relocated into new purpose-built premises, the outdoor area landscaped and a new teacher-in-charge has been appointed.

4.2 The parents, staff and management group were given opportunities to express their views about the nursery through the inspection questionnaires. The responses from the parents and the governors indicated a very high level of satisfaction with the quality of the provision.

4.3 The nursery unit has an excellent ethos and comprehensive policies and procedures for child protection that comply fully with Department of Education (DE) Circulars and guidance. The inspection evidence indicates that these policies and procedures are implemented effectively by all of the staff who show a very high level of concern for the children's welfare.

4.4 The nursery unit demonstrates a strong commitment to promoting a healthy lifestyle among the children. Very good opportunities are provided for the children to participate in a wide range of physical activities.

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

- There is a very positive ethos in the nursery unit based on good relationships and a sense of mutual respect between the staff and the children.
- The staff work hard each day to prepare a very stimulating and imaginative learning environment both indoors and outdoors.
- The children are very well behaved and display high levels of motivation and engagement in their learning.
- The daily timetable is well organised to make effective use of all of the time available to promote learning.
- The staff demonstrate very high levels of skill and professional expertise in their work with the children. Throughout the session they promote purposeful and productive play which builds on the children's own ideas and extends their thinking, language and learning.
- There are good, or excellent, opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The children display very high levels of independent learning and confidence. There are very good opportunities for the promotion of movement and the children's physical development. The children make very effective use of the excellent range of opportunities for imaginative role-play and music-making. There is very good use of books as an integral part of the play. Further strengths are the very effective promotion of early mathematical language

and ideas informally through the play and the good opportunities to observe and investigate living things and the environment.

- Effective links are continually being developed with the parents whose contribution to the life of the nursery unit is valued by the staff.
- There are very good links with the adjoining primary school to which almost all of the children transfer.
- The teacher has made good progress in developing the detailed written planning which clearly identifies the learning to be promoted and is implemented consistently by the staff.
- The standard of the new purpose-built accommodation and resources is very high both indoors and outdoors.
- The teacher-in-charge of the nursery unit brings a high level of enthusiasm, innovation and professional expertise to her work.
- There is a strong sense of team-work among the committed and hard-working staff.

4.6 The nursery has a comprehensive development plan which identifies appropriate priorities for future work; this includes the development of the assessment methods to meet children's individual needs. The staff have developed useful methods of self-evaluation and there is clear evidence that the process has led to improvements for example in improving the information for parents and the development of learning outdoors. The current teacher-in-charge of the nursery unit has brought about many improvements in the provision over recent years and has a clear vision of future developmental work.

4.7 The nursery unit has major strengths in its educational and pastoral provision. The educational and pastoral needs of the children are being well met. The parents can have confidence in the nursery's capacity for sustained self-improvement.

No follow-up inspection is required.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON KILMAINE PRIMARY SCHOOL NURSERY UNIT

1. Details of Children

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

* 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.	0
Average attendance for the previous year.	97.9%

2. Duration of Sessions

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

3. Details of Staff

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

Number of: ****	
Students	
Trainees	3

**** Total placements since September of current year

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

Number issued	52
Percentage returned	61%
Number of written comments	12

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