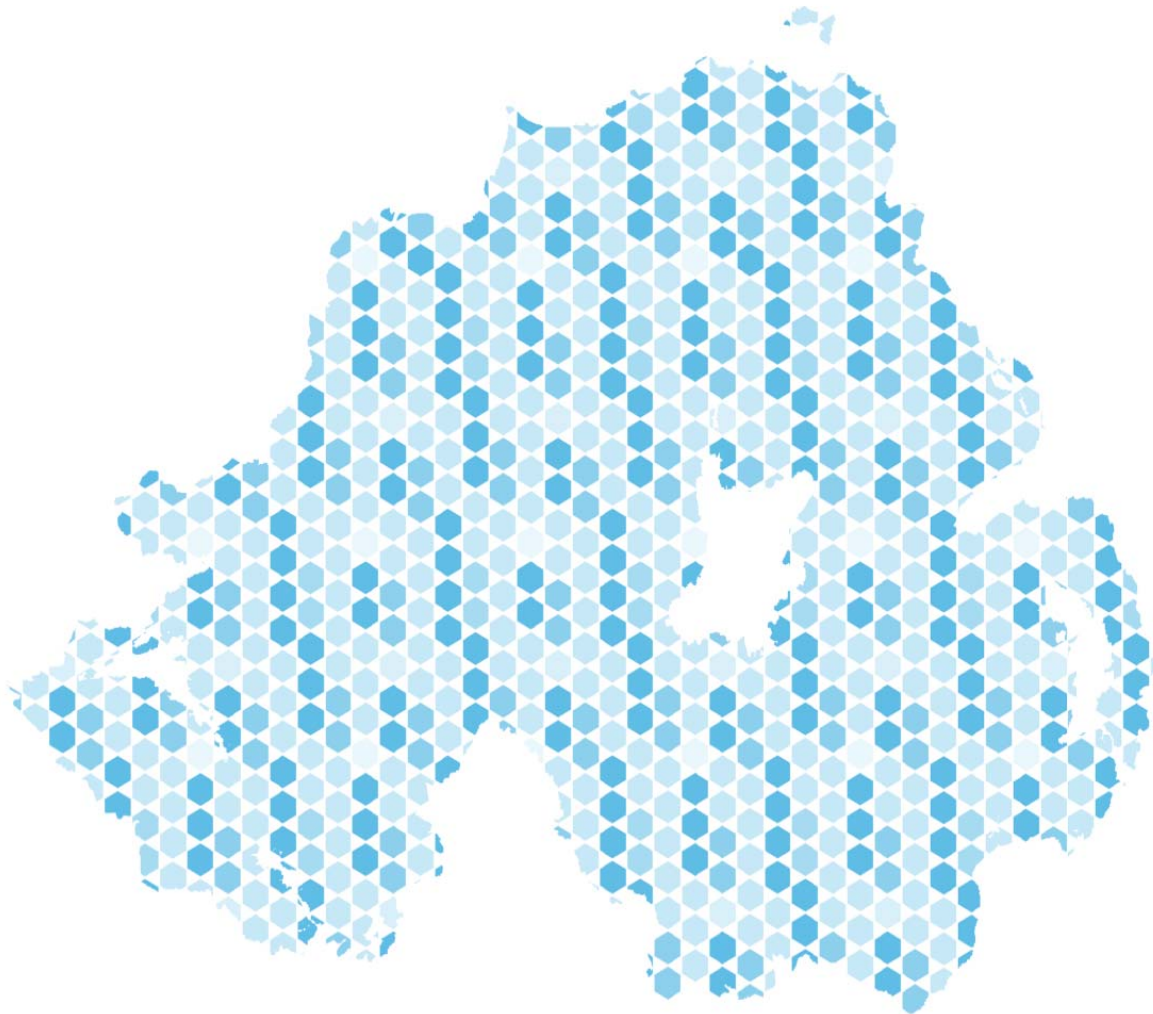


# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Linn Primary School and  
Nursery Unit, Larne

Report of an Inspection  
in May 2010

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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



## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Linn Primary School is situated in Killyglen Road within the Craigyhill Housing Estate, in Larne, Co Antrim. The majority of the children come from the local area. The nursery unit is situated at some distance from the primary school, in the building which originally accommodated Larne Nursery School. The nursery unit has been managed by the Board of Governors of Linn Primary School since 2006 and offers 52 full -time places. The enrolment of the school has decreased over recent years and currently stands at 336 children within the primary school. The school reports that approximately 19% of the children are entitled to free school meals. The school has identified approximately 26% of the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning.

### 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,
- the quality of leadership and management; and
- the school's arrangements for pastoral care and child protection.

The inspection also evaluated the contribution of information and communication technology (ICT) in promoting and supporting learning.

### 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 support staff to complete confidential questionnaires prior to the inspection. Meetings were held with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors), and a representative group of children from years 6 and 7.

One hundred and twenty-two questionnaires were issued to parents within the primary and fifty two to parents within the nursery; approximately 42% of the parents with children in the primary school responded to Inspection Services Branch and 13 provided additional written comments. Nearly all of the responses indicated a high level of satisfaction with the school. In particular, they appreciated the recent refurbishments throughout the school both indoor and outdoors, the support provided for children with special educational needs, the opportunities for the children to take part in the recent school production of the Wizard of Oz, and the developing methods of communication between home and school.

Seventeen teachers and eleven support staff completed the on-line questionnaire and 15 of the teachers and four support staff included written comments. The responses were very positive regarding the support of the Principal and the work of the school.

In the nursery unit, a majority of the parents (50%) responded to the questionnaire and 12 made additional written comments. Those who responded indicated a very high level of satisfaction with the overall provision and they recorded their appreciation of the caring and

professional staff; they are satisfied that the children are safe and secure and that the nursery is well thought of in the community. The staff reported positively on the sense of team spirit and their commitment to the welfare of the children.

The governors expressed their appreciation of the leadership provided by the Principal and the Vice-principal in promoting school improvement, the commitment of the staff to the children, and the efforts made to strengthen the school's links with the local community.

The children in year 6 spoke very highly of the support provided by their teachers, the good range of extra-curricular activities and the class council system, which encourages their decision-making and negotiating skills. There is evidence from the discussions with the children that they know what to do and who to speak to if they have any worries about their safety and well-being.

An analysis of the questionnaires and the written comments made by the parents and the staff were shared with the Principal and the governors.

#### 1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in both the school and the nursery unit is very good. The supportive environment in the school helps the children develop their self-confidence and nearly all demonstrate good standards of behaviour. The staff give good attention to promoting positive behaviour and this is generally reflected in the classrooms, the corridor displays, and the outside play areas. The children are very proud of their garden and play areas, which are interactive and well-matched to their needs. There is good support for the teachers and younger children in the school from 'the year 7 'buddies'. In year 6, the children are well supported to take on mentoring responsibilities for the younger children. They value this opportunity to extend their relationships, to help their teachers, and to contribute to the life of the school community. In the nursery unit, appropriate policies and procedures are in place, the nursery has a warm, and welcoming atmosphere and relationships at all levels are good. The children are settled, confident and happy, and their behaviour is very good.

#### 1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

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

#### 1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school and the nursery unit give very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity for example the healthy breaks and the regular opportunities for energetic outdoor play and sports, which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

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

There is a strong sense of community within the school and the parents are encouraged to become involved in school events and in supporting their children's learning. The school values the support of the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) in raising funds to further enhance the environment, the provision and the experiences provided for the children. The school has developed very good links with other schools, including a local special school and with the local and wider community, as well as links with local businesses and churches.

## 2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

An analysis of the key stage 2 (KS2) assessment data over the past four years shows that, in English and mathematics, the school's performance is in line with the Northern Ireland (NI) average. Compared with schools in a similar free school meals category, the levels of attainment in English and mathematics are also in line with the average.

### 2.1 LEARNING

The children are generally attentive and motivated and engaged in their learning. When given the opportunity, the children worked collaboratively and co-operatively in pairs, supporting and encouraging one another. At foundation stage (FS), the children experience an enriched play based curriculum and most are able to sustain extended periods of concentrated and purposeful play. They access equipment independently, discuss their learning confidently, and a few work collaboratively on shared tasks. As they progress through KS1 and 2, the children are acquiring a range of skills and abilities across the curriculum. On some occasions however, in KS1 and 2 a minority of the children became unsettled and disengaged in the task, or were more reticent in contributing to class discussions.

### 2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The quality of provision for Language and Literacy is good.

Literacy is generally promoted well across the curriculum. Most of the children have opportunities to develop and use skills in talking, listening, reading and writing in meaningful contexts. The school has recently acquired a range of attractive and stimulating reading material and class libraries are well-stocked and attractively displayed.

The children's oral language skills are developed effectively in FS and KS1, through well-planned play-based learning, and an appropriate emphasis placed on the development of their phonological awareness. As they progress through KS2, the children's talking and listening skills are supported mainly through drama and paired work. In the best practice, the teachers provided opportunities to promote the children's talking and listening and develop their confidence in sharing ideas through discussion, group work and plenary sessions. The children are being introduced to the concept of reflecting on their own work. On too many occasions, routine or closed question and answer sessions and overly adult-directed introductions limit the children's oral responses. The teachers need to develop further their questioning skills to ensure that the children are given appropriate opportunities to speak in a more extended manner, to think for themselves, to speak confidently and to respond to the opinions of others.

Throughout the FS and KS1, the children enjoy listening to stories and show an interest in fiction and non-fiction books. The teachers use a range of strategies, including a structured phonics programme to ensure that the children acquire basic reading skills through modelled and shared reading sessions. Children continue to make good progress in reading in KS1 and demonstrate fluent and expressive reading in year 4. In KS2, the children's reading skills are further enhanced and developed across many areas of the curriculum. Many of the older children talk enthusiastically about their favourite books and authors and most can read with fluency and expression. The standard of reading observed and the school's performance data suggest that, by the end of KS2, most of the children are achieving in line with their ability. The phonics programme and the introduction of reading partners have resulted in improvements in the children's reading skills, as evidenced by the school data.

In the FS, the children develop their letter formation and word-building skills through simple sentence structure, writing frames, work sheets and shared writing activities. Some good independent writing is emerging at the end of year 2. Writing skills are developed in KS1 and KS2 through a variety of forms including poems, letters, stories, persuasive pieces and instructions. The children are encouraged to improve their writing through the promotion of basic grammar, spelling and writing conventions. The children's writing is celebrated through displays around the school and in opportunities to read and write poetry. When the children are given the opportunity to write in an extended manner at KS2, much of the work is very good. There is evidence to show that the children are developing their craft as writers but these opportunities for extended writing are not evident in all classes. At times, there is an over-reliance on closed comprehension and worksheets. The teachers need to ensure that all children have opportunities to write for different purposes and audiences, and in appropriate contexts.

The staff are aware of the need to develop a comprehensive scheme for all areas of Literacy to guide the teachers' planning and ensure coherence and progression across all Key Stages. The literacy co-ordinator, in conjunction with the senior management team, needs to draw up appropriate action plans to address this issue which should be reflected in the school development plan (SDP).

### 2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The overall quality of provision in mathematics is satisfactory.

Mathematics has recently been identified as an area for whole-school development and has been included as a key priority in the current SDP. A basic action plan has been created to support the work in this area. Whilst the plan identifies a few key areas for development, it is over-ambitious and lacks sufficient detail to guide the strategic development of this important area of the curriculum.

The co-ordinator has been in post for ten years; she has recently updated the school's mathematics policy and has begun to collect information about current practice and provision. It will be important to build upon this good work in order to effectively monitor and evaluate the quality of learning and teaching in mathematics and to raise the children's levels of achievement.

The school has identified the need to develop an agreed whole-school programme for mathematics. This needs to be addressed promptly in order to provide sufficient progression across each area of the mathematics curriculum, to ensure that each area is revisited regularly and to provide appropriate guidance for class teachers to create their medium and short-term planning. The teachers' current medium term plans outline the learning intentions, activities and success criteria. There is a need for these plans to be reviewed, to include the mathematical language to be developed and to clearly identify how the teacher plans to meet the range of needs within the class.

The majority of the mathematics lessons observed during the inspection incorporated a mental mathematics activity. The most effective of these activities were practical, appropriately challenging and were used effectively to consolidate the children's learning. In the less effective sessions, the activities were low level and the pace was too slow.

In the most effective practice in the early years, the children are developing mathematical concepts, skills and language through a combination of well planned play-based activities, practical mathematics lessons, games, action songs and effective questioning by the



teacher. They are encouraged to explore and investigate and to use their mathematical knowledge in meaningful contexts. This good practice needs to be shared and applied more consistently throughout the FS classes.

As the children progress through KS1 and KS2, they continue to develop their understanding in all aspects of the mathematics curriculum. In the most effective lessons observed, the children engaged in purposeful practical activities; they were encouraged to talk about their work using appropriate mathematical language and they had the opportunity to apply their learning in a range of problem solving activities. In the less effective practice, the content was not matched to the children's abilities and there was an overuse of worksheets.

During the current academic year, the teachers have developed a series of mathematics trails in the school grounds to support and enhance the children's learning in all aspects of the mathematics curriculum. This has been effective in raising the maths profile within the school and in providing a meaningful context for the children to apply their knowledge and understanding.

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

#### **3.1 PLANNING**

The teachers plan their work conscientiously in year groups. The medium-term planning identifies the intended learning outcomes, the resources and the assessment strategies to be used. Most of the teachers complete detailed written evaluations, which in the best practice are used to inform future planning. The planning needs to focus more clearly and consistently on differentiation, consolidation and progression.

#### **3.2 TEACHING**

During the inspection, most of the teaching (82%) observed was good or better with a small number of the lessons evaluated as outstanding. The classroom assistants were deployed very effectively to support learning and teaching. Where the teaching was very good or outstanding, there was skilful questioning to challenge the children's thinking, appropriate pace and challenge, and the class work was differentiated well for the children's range of abilities. In the less effective practice, the lessons lacked a focus on learning, there was over direction by the teacher, an over emphasis on worksheets and a lack of opportunity for the children to articulate their thinking.

#### **3.3 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

The teachers are making increasing use of ICT to support learning and teaching in Literacy and Numeracy. Each classroom has an interactive whiteboard, two networked computers and time-tabled access to individual laptops. The teachers also make effective use of programmable devices such as bee-bots and logo to support and extend the children's understanding of shape and space. During the inspection, children at KS2 imported photographs and added text to create Powerpoint presentations and the interactive whiteboard was used very effectively as a stimulus to support the children's understanding of direction and position. The teachers have begun to plan for participation in the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment Accreditation Scheme. In further developing the use of ICT, it will be important for the SMT to ensure that ICT is detailed in the teachers planning and fully integrated into learning and teaching.

### 3.4 ASSESSMENT

The teachers mark the children's written work regularly. A number of the teachers have begun to use appropriate strategies, both oral and in their written marking, to encourage the children to engage in peer and self assessment; these teachers also provide the children with guidance on how they can improve the quality of their work. This good practice should be shared, further developed and applied more consistently throughout the school.

Within the past year the school has agreed and begun to implement new assessment procedures. The teachers carry out a range of standardised testing in English and mathematics and have begun to use a computerised system to generate information about the levels of achievement of individual children. The outcomes from teacher observation and the testing are currently used to identify those children who require additional support with aspects of their learning in literacy and numeracy. The management team acknowledges that this work is at an early stage of development. It has appropriately identified the need to engage in rigorous analysis of the assessment outcomes in order to track the children's progress at individual, class and whole-school level, to identify low or under-achievement and to help prioritise key areas for whole school development.

The parents are kept informed of their children's progress through annual parent interviews in the first and second terms and an annual written report at the end of the academic year.

### 3.5 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The quality of the provision for special educational needs (SEN) is good. Support is provided through in-class differentiated teaching supplemented by withdrawal sessions for literacy and numeracy. The children who require additional support with their learning are identified early through the teachers' observations and evaluations. The inclusive ethos of the school helps ensure the children are integrated fully into all aspects of school life. The classroom assistants work well alongside class teachers to support the wide range of needs of the children. The school receives beneficial multi-disciplinary support for those children requiring specialised help. For almost all of the children, individual education plans (IEPs) identify appropriate targets which are reviewed regularly with parents and include an input from the children about their progress and future targets. The withdrawal support is closely linked to the targets set in the IEPs and to the work in class. The children respond well to this support, are gaining in confidence and all are making satisfactory to good progress. The school recognises the need to evaluate more effectively the extent to which its SEN arrangements lead to improvements in the standards achieved by the children.

## 4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

### 4.1 LEADERSHIP

The Principal provides very good leadership and manages the school very effectively. Since taking up her post, almost two years ago, she has brought about many significant developments in the life and work of the school, and she has ensured that the pace of change within the school has been managed well. She has developed an effective team spirit and collegiality amongst all of the staff and operates a collaborative decision-making approach within the school which is promoting curricular development. She has appropriately identified the need to disseminate more widely the existing good practice within the school. Appropriate procedures are in place to monitor and evaluate the work of the nursery unit and to develop further the role of the teacher-in-charge. The vice-principal provides effective support, helping to establish a sharper focus on learning and teaching and promoting a positive behaviour initiative. The management team is aware that the roles and

responsibilities of key post holders need to be reviewed and developed to ensure coherence and progression within whole school planning for English and mathematics, and a more rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluating the provision for learning and the expected outcomes for the children.

#### 4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

A reflective culture of self-evaluation is being established within the school and the staff demonstrate a commitment to on-going improvement. The current school development plan (SDP) contains an overview of the school's priorities for the three year period with associated action plans and meets the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005. In adjusting the SDP for the next three year planning period, the management team needs to ensure that annual action plans are more clearly informed by the analysis of available performance data and more sharply focused on key stage and class targets to improve standards in English and mathematics.

#### 4.3 STAFF DEVELOPMENT

The school's staff development programme includes school-based and external in-service training and has supported effectively several priorities identified in the SDP, with a focus on special educational needs and the development of a structured phonics programme. A specialist teacher for physical education has been deployed to enhance the children's learning experiences through a varied and enjoyable programme of physical activities and to provide a programme of support for the teachers.

#### 4.4 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The principal, the governors and the management team have made sound decisions in relation to the school's budget surplus and have invested appropriately in improvements to the fabric of the school and the grounds, and to support the programme of staff development.

#### 4.5 ACCOMMODATION

The school accommodation consists of a main building which contains 12 classrooms, two mobile classrooms, a double nursery unit, an assembly hall, a small special needs teaching room, a canteen and a staff room. The standard of caretaking is very good and the staff work hard to create bright and inviting classrooms and corridors celebrating the children's work. The car-parking arrangements at the school are inadequate. The space available for withdrawal support is inadequate.

### 5. CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the good standards attained in literacy and numeracy by the end of KS2;
- the very good quality of the pastoral care provided for the children and the staff and the significant contribution made by the support staff to the children's learning and development;
- the quality of the teaching which was good or better in most of the lessons observed;

- the very good leadership provided by the Principal who is ably supported by the vice principal;
- the developing culture of self–evaluation within the school and the willingness of the staff to improve the quality of the teaching and learning; and
- the very attractive and stimulating outdoor learning environment and the variety of resources provided which are used effectively to promote learning and to celebrate the children’s achievements.

5.2 The areas for improvement include the need to:

- revise the roles and responsibilities of key co-ordinators to ensure that comprehensive schemes of work are developed for Literacy and Numeracy; and
- promote further improvement in the standards achieved by all of the children in English and mathematics through the use of performance data to set key priorities, and more sharply focused action plans.

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) will monitor the school’s progress on the areas for improvement.

## 6. THE NURSERY UNIT

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

- the very positive ethos, the links with the parents and the settled behaviour of the children;
- the high levels of motivation shown by the children and the progress they are making in their learning and development;
- the caring and supportive staff interactions with the children which promote the children's personal, social and emotional development, and to extend the children's knowledge of and interest in the world around them;
- the use made of the outdoor area to create an exciting and stimulating learning environment;
- the written planning which helps to guide the staff in their work with the children; and
- the good opportunities for learning in most areas of the pre-school curriculum;

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

6.3 The teacher in charge of the nursery needs to ensure that:

- appropriate systems are put in place to identify and support more effectively those children who require additional help with aspects of their learning; and
- the staff continue to improve their methods of assessing and recording the learning of all the children, to inform the planning and to ensure sufficient challenge and progression within the programme.

6.4 The nursery unit has a development plan which has identified priorities for review over the last three years. The development plan should now be adjusted to take account of the findings of this inspection.

6.5 In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the nursery unit is good. The nursery unit has important strengths in most of its educational provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the nursery unit has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Inspectorate will monitor the nursery unit's progress on the areas for improvement.

## STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON THE NURSERY UNIT IN LINN PRIMARY SCHOOL

### 1. Details of Children

<b>Number of children:</b>	<b>Class 1</b>	<b>Class 2</b>
Attending full-time	0	0
Attending part-time	26	26
Under 3 years of age*	0	0
With statement of special educational needs	0	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	1	0
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	0	0
With English as an additional language	0	1

\* On 1 July.

\*\* 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.	25%
Average attendance for the previous year.	91.45%

### 2. Duration of Sessions

<b>Full-time</b>	<b>Part-time: am</b>	<b>Part-time: pm</b>
4 hours 55 mins	-	-

### 3. Details of Staff

<b>Number of:</b>	<b>Full-Time</b>	<b>Part-Time</b>
Teachers	2	0
Nursery Assistants	0	0
Qualified Nursery Assistants	2	0

<b>Number of: ***</b>	
Students	0
Trainees	3

\*\*\* Total placements since September of current year

### 4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued	52
Percentage returned	50%
Number of written comments	12

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