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Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Focused Inspection

Londonderry Model Primary School and Nursery Unit

Inspected: November 2007

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Londonderry Model Primary School first opened on the present site near the City centre in 1862. The present building was opened in 1938. It is a large, co-educational school. The children come from a very wide catchment area covering all areas of the City and extending to Eglinton and Prehen and the Donegal border. The school's enrolment has increased slightly over the last number of years. Twenty-seven and a half per cent of the children are entitled to free school meals.

1.2 The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the completion of questionnaires by a sample of the parents, as well as meetings with the Board of Governors (governors), and discussions with groups of children from years 6 and 7. Prior to the inspection, confidential questionnaires were sent to 102 parents; 41% of the parents responded, and 23 took the opportunity to write additional comments. The parents and governors indicated, in nearly all cases, strong satisfaction with the work of the school. The children reported that they felt happy and secure in the school. The few matters raised by the parents in the questionnaires were discussed with the Principal and the governors. Thirteen teachers also completed confidential questionnaires; their responses were supportive of the school's management and all aspects of the life and work of the school.

1.3 The inspection focused on English, including information and communication technology (ICT), the provision for special educational needs (SEN), and the school's arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection.

2. THE QUALITY OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK

2.1 A warm, positive ethos permeates the life of Londonderry Model Primary School; it is a very happy, caring and orderly school. The children come from many different religious and cultural backgrounds and are integrated in a most effective manner into the school community. Many parents commented very positively on the increasing cultural diversity in the school community. The working relationships between the teachers and the children are very good; the teachers show a high regard for the children's development and well-being. The children are well-behaved, respectful to their teachers and to one another, and courteous to visitors. The non-teaching staff make a valuable contribution to the life and work of the school. The standard of cleaning and caretaking is very high.

2.2 The teachers work hard to create an attractive and stimulating learning environment despite the poor state of repair of some areas of the school. There are many attractive displays of the children's current and recent work in the corridors and classrooms; the displays are used effectively to improve the children's understanding and learning in a variety of areas.

2.3 The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection has important strengths. The school has procedures in place which implement the guidance outlined in the relevant Department of Education (DE) Circulars and has identified appropriately a few areas for improvement which it is currently implementing.

Among the strengths are:

- the high quality of the pastoral care provision;
- the good quality of the working relationships throughout the school;
- the effective arrangements that are in place for the reporting of any incidents that relate to the pastoral care of the children;
- the children's participation in a wide range of extra-curricular provision; and
- the promotion of a rewards and sanctions scheme to encourage good behaviour and positive achievements.

The area for improvement identified includes the need to:

- monitor and evaluate further the effectiveness of the implementation of the pastoral care and child protection policies and procedures.

2.4 The school gives excellent 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 free fruit break provision, a breakfast club, annual health and fitness week and assemblies, which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

2.5 The school offers a good range of extra-curricular activities and clubs for the children including judo, choir, chess, soccer, rugby and Gaelic football. The school has established good links with parents; they are well-informed about their children's progress and about school life. They receive a monthly newsletter; there is one formal meeting with teachers each year and one written report. The parents are encouraged to make use of the library facilities when the youngest children finish at 2.00 pm, especially those parents who need to collect older children at the end of the school day. The school has developed strong links with the other local schools including the post-primary schools to which the children transfer.

2.6 The teachers plan their work conscientiously in year groups with a clear focus on the intended learning. The planning addresses differentiation, consolidation and progression. The teachers formally evaluate their planning and discuss this in their year groups with the appropriate co-ordinator and a member of the senior management team (SMT). All the teaching observed during the inspection was satisfactory, the majority was good, and, on occasion, it was excellent.

2.7 The teachers plan thematically and comprehensively for the children's play-based learning in the foundation stage and key stage (KS) 1. The children experience a wide range of appropriate and challenging activities through which they are encouraged to observe, investigate and be imaginative and creative. They participate purposefully and enthusiastically, and with sustained interest. The staff interact effectively with the children, providing sensitive and helpful support, and extending the children's language, ideas and thinking skills. The staff have made a useful beginning to the collation and evaluation of the observational data about the children's play that informs their planning and extends their interaction with the children.

2.8 The literacy and language scheme provides appropriate guidance for the teaching of English; the teachers make good use of four-weekly plans and prepare well for individual lessons. A recent curriculum audit has provided a useful evaluation of the work in English and has resulted in the appropriate inclusion of the development of the children's writing styles in the school development plan (SDP).

2.9 Throughout the school, most of the teachers focus on extending the children's talking and listening skills through an effective and well-planned programme of activities. In the best practice, the teachers use skilful questioning to encourage the children to share ideas, to offer opinions, to explain their learning and to listen to the views of others. The teachers set a positive tone that promotes the children's contribution to whole-class, paired and group discussions. Consequently, many of the children express their ideas confidently. The children in the year 7 classes, for example, discussed key aspects of the class novel by assuming the roles of the main characters, and then answered questions posed by their peers. The children enhance further their oral skills through the valuable participation in school assemblies and performances in school plays. In a small number of lessons, however, the children have too few opportunities to develop their own thinking through talking and listening, for example, through reporting on work completed, group discussion or giving extended answers; oral work in class is unduly dominated by the teacher.

2.10 The children access a good range of fiction and non-fiction reading material, much of it linked to the school's new commercial reading schemes. The teachers make good use of the well-stocked school and class libraries to encourage the children to read for enjoyment, to find information and to research class topics. In years 1 to 3, the children are introduced to an appropriate range of reading strategies which enable them to recognise unfamiliar text and they learn to read with increasing fluency and expression. In year 1, for example, the teacher used the plenary session to develop effectively the children's understanding of characterisation using role-play and the dramatisation of the shared reading story, 'The Three Little Pigs'. In KS2, the structured reading scheme is complemented by the use of class novels. During the inspection, when the children were given the opportunity, they responded imaginatively and critically to the teacher's well-managed discussion in shared reading activities and purposeful written tasks matched to the children's ability. The older children develop appropriate study and research skills. In a minority of classes, there was an over-reliance on the structured reading scheme, leading, for some children, to a narrowing of the contexts for learning. A small number of teachers need to develop systematically and progressively more effective strategies for teaching reading, such as reading sessions which focus on the development of key reading skills, and to provide opportunities for the children to engage in a greater variety of follow-up reading activities.

2.11 The school has identified appropriately the need to link effectively the development of the children's oral work and its application to a range of appropriate writing activities and contexts. In the best practice observed, the teachers introduced the topic in a stimulating way that engaged the children's interest. The children were well prepared for the writing task and were able to empathise with the characters or topic about which they were writing. The younger children use computer programs to write short sentences; this is built on as they progress to KS2 where the children skilfully use word-processing packages to support their writing. The older children use, the Internet to research aspects of their topic work and carry out simple searches using basic search engines. On the occasions where the work was less successful, the language or the piece of text was not set in a meaningful context, the teacher's

expectations were too low and the task did not enable the children to develop their writing skills. To improve further the children's writing, there is scope for them to engage more in revising and editing their own writing, using ICT, where it is appropriate. There is a need to provide the children with consistent and regular opportunities to make personal, written responses across all areas of the curriculum.

2.12 The teachers assess samples of the children's writing and evaluate the standard of work. This has the potential to develop further the range of writing forms and improve the standards of the children's work.

2.13 In general, the children's work is marked regularly with supportive comments; however, in only a minority of classes, do the teachers' comments provide helpful guidance to the children on how to improve their work. During the inspection, in a few classes, the teachers developed well the strategy of peer editing.

2.14 Teachers use a range of standardised and non-standardised testing to identify children's needs, to track children's progress and to inform the short-term planning. There are clear structures in place for reporting to parents on their children's progress. The children attend the annual progress meetings with their parents and are beginning to contribute to the setting of targets for their personal improvement. The internal and external school performance data indicate that the majority of the children achieve a standard which is consistent with that of children of a similar age in similar schools. However, there is a minority of children whose achievement in reading is lower than that expected for their age group. The school has begun to use standardised scores and DE benchmarking data in order to set appropriate targets to further improve children's levels of attainment. The development of individual pupil profiles has been identified as a key issue in the SDP and an action plan has been agreed.

2.15 The school has identified 26% of its children as having special educational needs. Education plans are devised for each of these children with targets for improvement focused sharply on the child's identified needs. Most of the teachers provide appropriately differentiated activities which take account of the range of abilities within the class. All the teachers show a strong commitment to meeting the needs of the children in a sensitive and supportive manner. There are further opportunities which the teachers could use to enhance the provision within current resources: these include a review of the management of the silent reading sessions, and the deployment of the classroom assistants during lessons. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) is effective in her role. She leads the development of special needs provision within the school including the drafting of well-focused annual action plans and developments in writing individual education plans. Good progress has been made in addressing the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Order (SENDO) within the school.

2.16 The Principal has been in post for just over one year. He has a clear vision for the areas that need improvement within the school. The Principal is hard-working, fully committed to school improvement, to the children's education and welfare, and he enjoys the full support of the teachers, governors and parents. He is well-supported by the Vice-principal, the curriculum and other co-ordinators and staff in the identification of areas for improvement and has led a number of important initiatives and organisational changes to address school development needs.

2.17 The staff have availed of a range of training in school and beyond to develop areas of professional development, interest and need, to support ongoing school improvement. There has been a very effective programme of beneficial school-based training delivered by members of the school's SMT and curriculum co-ordinators.

2.18 The school's process for improvement has many strengths. There is a developing commitment to action planning, monitoring and evaluation of the children's attainments and learning experiences. There are effective policies and programmes in place, which support a positive learning environment. The areas for improvement include the need to carry out an evaluation of the effectiveness of the consultation process with children, parents and staff in the preparation of the SDP, and to bring together all the necessary documentation, in order to meet fully the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the warm, positive ethos which permeates the life of the school;
- the excellent attention that the school gives to promoting health and well-being;
- the conscientious planning by the teachers;
- the quality of the teaching observed, which was always satisfactory, the majority of which was good, and which was, on occasion, excellent;
- the effective leadership of the Principal and SMT in implementing curriculum development and change; and
- the strong support of teachers, governors and parents to the work of the school.

3.2 The area for improvement includes the need for the school:

- to improve the standard and extend the range of writing across the curriculum.

3.3 In the areas inspected, the school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified minor areas for improvement which the school has the capacity to address.

The school's progress on the areas for improvement will be followed-up by monitoring visits, conducted by the District Inspector.

4. THE NURSERY UNIT

4.1 The nursery unit is situated in Londonderry Model Primary School. The children come from within a radius of 4 miles.

4.2 The parents 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. In their responses, all of the parents were very satisfied with all aspects of the nursery's provision. Some of the parents added written comments praising the staff and the positive ethos of the unit.

4.3 The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection in the school has important strengths. The nursery has policies and procedures for child protection that address most aspects of Department of Education (DE) Circulars and guidance. There is a need to develop further the procedures for the personal care of the children and for the recording of allegations and concerns.

4.4 The nursery's programme for the promotion of health and well-being has important strengths, with attention paid to the development and implementation of healthy eating and physical activity programmes to encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

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

- The nursery has a very positive ethos with a clear sense of purpose and relationships at all levels are very good. The staff are very caring and supportive. The children's work is thoughtfully displayed to create an attractive learning environment.
- The children are well-settled and respond to the staff's expectations for appropriate behaviour and good manners.
- There are satisfactory or good opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum. On the day of the inspection, there were particular strengths in the promotion of the children's personal, social and emotional development, the enthusiastic story and singing sessions, the range of experiences and skills offered in the outdoors and the physical play sessions.
- The daily timetable is well-organised to provide a lengthy period of free play balanced with group sessions. The children's snack and lunch routines provide very good opportunities for the children to develop independence, acquire early mathematical awareness and social skills.
- The staff have identified a small number of children who require additional support, particularly in relation to speech and language delays and difficulties. They liaise effectively with the parents and other professional agencies and have

appropriately availed of additional training. Valuable links have been established with the school and the SureStart project within the local community.

- The teacher-in-charge of the nursery provides effective leadership. She is committed to reflect on and improve their practice, particularly in relation to the development of outdoor play and language and literacy experiences for the children. The staff are committed to the children's welfare, they are hard-working and have a caring and enthusiastic approach to their work with the children.

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

- The staff need to focus more closely on extending the children's ideas and interests and exploit more fully the learning potential within the resources to enrich their experiences during free play.
- The nursery needs to improve the range of resources in order to provide a pre-school programme that progresses steadily throughout the year and provides appropriate challenge and progression.
- The staff need to develop further the arrangements for the personal care of the children.

4.7 The nursery has a School Development Plan with relevant targets for improvement. Appropriate areas have been identified for improvement and progress has been made in the children's personal, social and emotional development and their language and literacy skills. The staff now need to amend their SDP to incorporate the aspects outlined in the inspection findings.

4.8 In the areas inspected, the nursery has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified minor areas for improvement which the nursery has the capacity to address. The nursery's progress on the areas inspected for improvement will be followed-up by monitoring visits, conducted by the District Inspector.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON LONDONDERRY MODEL PRIMARY SCHOOL NURSERY UNIT

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending full-time	26	
Attending part-time		
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		

* 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.	100%
Average attendance for the previous year.	93.1%

2. Duration of Sessions

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

3. Details of Staff

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

Number of: ****	
Students	0
Trainees	0

**** Total placements since September of current year

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

Number issued	26
Percentage returned	53.8%
Number of written comments	7

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Masonry has fallen from the building into areas used by the children. An internal ceiling has fallen in recently. There is a need for regular inspections to ensure that the children are safe.
- There are a number of rooms in the school that do not have clear visual access.
- The soft-play area of the nursery unit is uneven at the entrance area which could result in children slipping.
- There is a damp smell throughout the playroom of the nursery unit

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