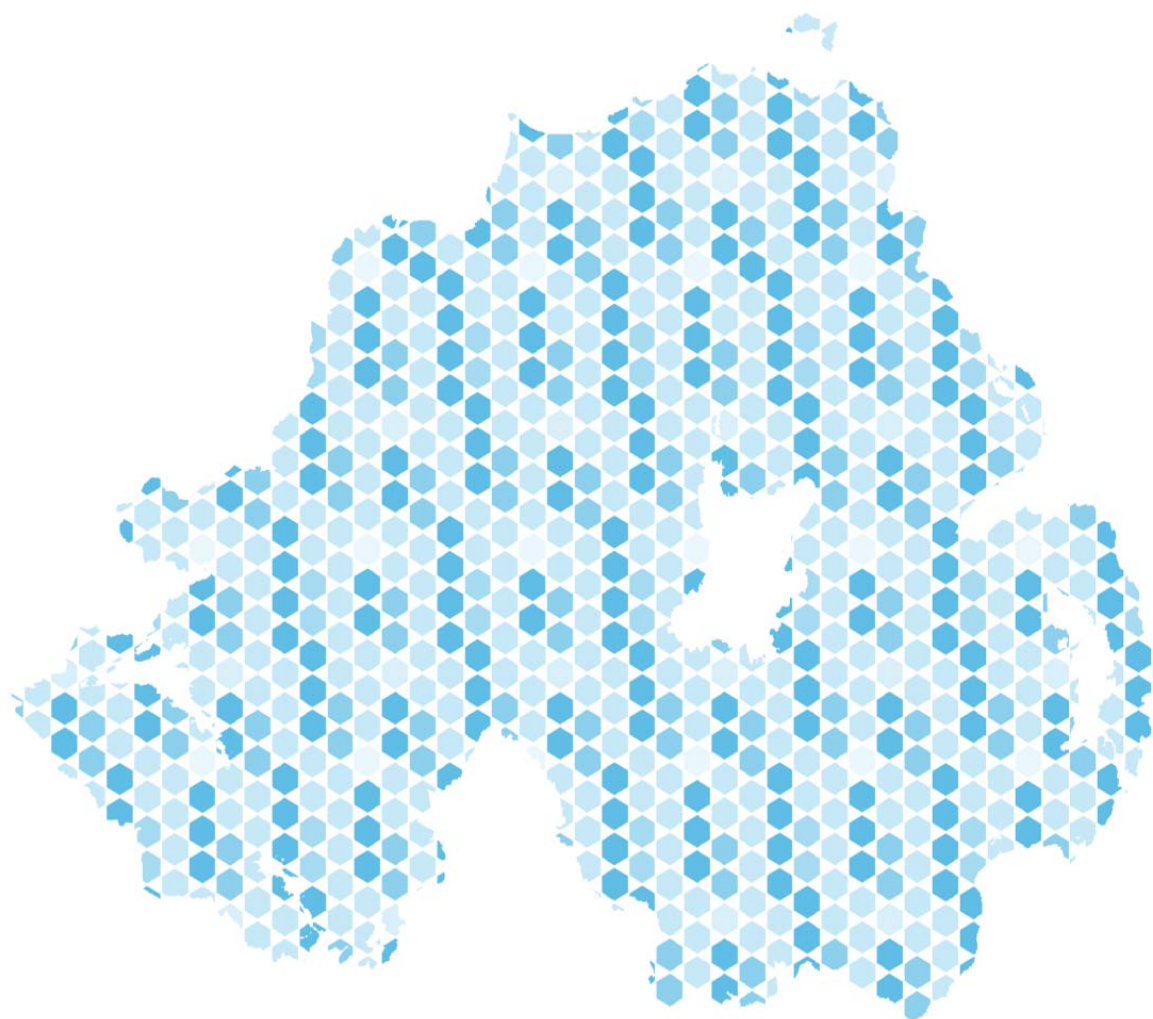


# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Macosquin Primary School,  
Coleraine

Report of an Inspection  
in March 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, the Inspectorate relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

## BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Macosquin Primary Coleraine** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 01/03/2010**  
 ii. **School Reference Number: 301-3700** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Year 1 Intake	24	28	27	25	25
<b>Enrolments</b>					
Primary	130	137	163	178	185
Reception	5	4	5	7	13
Nursery Unit	0	0	0	0	0
Special Unit	0	0	0	0	0
Irish Medium Unit	0	0	0	0	0

The enrolment for the current year is the figure on the day of notification of inspection.  
 For previous years it is the figure in the annual return to the Department of Education.

The calculations at C and D should be based on the total of the primary and reception enrolments only.

- C. Average Attendance for the Previous School Year  
 (expressed as a percentage): 96% **NI Avg Att: 94.9%**
- |  | Primary & Reception | Nursery Unit | Special Unit | Irish Medium Unit |
|--|---------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
|--|---------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
- D. i. Number of Teachers  
 (including the principal and part-time teachers): 10.36 0 0 0  
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 19.1 NI PTR: 20.4
- iii. Average Class Size: 25
- iv. Class Size (Range): 13 to 29
- v. Ancillary Support:  
 Number of Hours **Per Week:**
- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| i. Clerical support:  | 27.5  |
| ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support:           | 42.25 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 122   |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 2%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 21.9%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 13
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 11%
- x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2008/09 who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics: **English** 94.11% **Mathematics** 88.24%

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT**

Macosquin Primary School is situated in the village of Macosquin, three miles west of Coleraine, County Londonderry. The enrolment has increased significantly over the past five years and currently stands at 198. A quarter of the children come from the village, and the rest of the children travel from within a wide catchment including the town of Coleraine. They travel to school by car and bus, and the school's minibus is used to transport some children home after school. At the time of the inspection, 11% of the children were entitled to receive free school meals and approximately 22% of the children were on the special needs register.

### **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, and the quality of leadership and management. The inspection also evaluated the contribution of information and communication technology (ICT) in promoting and supporting learning. In addition the school's arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection, were evaluated.

### **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 teachers and the support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and groups of children from year 6 and year 7. One hundred and fourteen questionnaires were issued to the parents; 49% were returned to Inspection Services Branch and 24 contained additional written comments. The responses from the questionnaires indicated that almost all of the parents appreciate the welcoming Principal, the professional and approachable staff and the progress made by the children. The very few issues arising from the parental questionnaires have been shared with the Principal and the governors.

The governors expressed their appreciation for the work of the Principal, the Deputy Head and the staff. They reported that they are informed of the standards the children achieve and are fully involved in the development of the school's policies and school development plan (SDP). The governors raised their concerns about the limitations of the accommodation and the space available for parents to set down and pick up their children at the start and end of school.

Nine of the teaching staff responded to the online teacher questionnaire, and two included additional written comments about the life and work of the school. The responses were all positive about all aspects of the school. Eleven support staff responded to the support staff questionnaire and one provided a written comment; all expressed high levels of satisfaction with nearly all aspects of their work at the school; a small number wish to have more opportunities to contribute to the decision-making processes and in evaluating the work of the school.

The year 6 children spoke with enthusiasm about the friendly staff and the range of after-school activities; they also spoke with confidence about what to do if they have worries about their safety and well-being. The year 7 children contributed to the discussion on healthy eating and physical activity.

## 1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is outstanding. The school has a caring and friendly atmosphere and there are excellent working relationships at all levels. All of the staff are committed to the care and welfare of the children and work together to promote and maintain an orderly and supportive environment for learning.

The children's behaviour is exemplary and they are courteous and welcoming to visitors. The teachers motivate them well through good use of praise and encouragement and the reward system. The older children enjoy being involved in the school council through which they can bring forward ideas for consideration, and appropriate implementation, by the School Leadership Team (SLT).

The children's learning experiences are enhanced through participation in competitions and sporting events, in which they regularly achieve success. The children benefit from their involvement in a Comenius Project with other schools across Europe. They experience a wide range of educational visits to local sites of interest, some of which are joint visits with children from other schools, and they enjoy annual residential visits within the UK and Europe. The children have extensive opportunities to develop their interest in music through membership of the school's choirs and orchestra which are actively involved in the local community. The staff give generously of their time to extend the children's experience through this broad range of school activities.

## 1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school has very good comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education (DE).

## 1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, the communication with parents through the 'Healthy Harry' feature in the weekly school newsletter and the 'Healthy Me' after-school club, both of which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

## 1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Effective links with the parents are maintained through the weekly school newsletter, year group information seminars and curriculum evenings. In addition, the teachers communicate effectively with parents through comments and information in the children's books. The parents of the younger children are invited to participate in induction days and there is an active parent teacher association which provides considerable additional resources.

The school provides day care services before and after school and during school holidays and its premises are used occasionally in the evenings for various activities that serve the local community.

## **2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS**

### **2.1 LEARNING**

The children are well motivated, interested and enthusiastic, and display very positive attitudes to their work. They participate well in grouped and paired work, are willing to ask questions, and show respect for the opinions of others. They take pride in the presentation of their work in response to the high expectations set by the teachers, and are systematically acquiring a range of skills and concepts across the curriculum.

An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 assessment data over the past four years shows that in English, the school's performance is consistently above the Northern Ireland (NI) average. When compared with schools in the same free school meals category, the levels of attainment in English are above the average. In mathematics the school's performance is also above the NI average, and has been generally close to, or above, the average for schools in the same free school meals category.

### **2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY**

The quality of the provision for English and literacy is very good. By the end of each key stage, the children have made good progress and a majority of them achieve very high standards.

Talking and Listening is developed across a range of areas of learning. In the foundation stage (FS) and KS1, play-based learning promotes appropriately the development of the children's oral skills and helps develop their confidence. As they progress through KS2, the children's talking and listening continues to be supported through extensive group and paired work, in which thinking skills and personal capabilities, such as working with others, are being developed. The teachers have developed effective questioning styles, creating opportunities for the children to provide extended responses.

Reading is developed appropriately in the FS and KS1 through a programme of phonological awareness, shared and guided reading experiences and a range of commercial reading schemes which have been banded to provide a systematic approach to the development of reading skills. The children achieve very good standards in reading; for example, those observed reading aloud in KS1 displayed confident word recognition and increasing fluency, and by KS2, the children read independently and with understanding from a range of fiction and non-fiction texts. The children who experience difficulties with reading receive well-targeted and effective individual support and intervention, through programmes such as Reading Partners, to ensure that the gaps are closed between their reading and chronological ages.

Writing is developed appropriately through the systematic teaching of the structures and conventions of various writing genres. In the FS, the children become familiar with different forms of print and experiment with informal mark making. The children's letter formation, word building skills and knowledge of the basic conventions, such as simple sentence structure, are developed through shared writing activities. As their skills develop, the children's independent writing is promoted appropriately; by the end of KS1, the majority of children can express their ideas in formats appropriate to their ability. As they progress through KS2, the children extend their range of writing styles and have opportunities to write for a variety of purposes and audiences.

Very good use is made of ICT to develop writing skills; for example, in year 5 the children's responses to a class discussion were collated on screen and used to provide effective prompts for persuasive writing. The older children have developed very good study and research skills, and there are very effective links made using cross-curricular topics and themes which provide meaningful contexts for developing the children's literacy skills.

The literacy co-ordinator has rightly identified the need to update the literacy policy and scheme of work in line with the revised NI Curriculum and the staff have prioritised the further development of writing across the school.

## 2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The overall provision for mathematics and numeracy is very good. By the end of each key stage, the children have made good progress and a majority achieve very high standards across the full range of the mathematics curriculum. These high standards reflect the appropriate expectations which the teachers set for the children.

The children enjoy their mathematics and the presentation of their work in their books is frequently very good. In general, they develop confidence in their mathematics and have good opportunities to demonstrate their understanding in an appropriate range of realistic contexts and applications. The children are frequently challenged; for example, the year 6 children discuss and plan the design of a garden and in doing so extend well their understanding of area, estimation and budgeting.

The quality of almost all the teaching of mathematics observed was good or better. The children work with mathematics in clear contexts which were often innovatively connected to their work across the curriculum; for example, the year 7 children used LOGO to draw lighthouses to illustrate their work about the story of Flannan Isle. From their early years, the children are given time to think about their work and are then encouraged to share their understanding with others with an effective emphasis on the accurate use of mathematical language. The work in class is well differentiated to match the needs of individual pupils, particularly those identified as having special educational needs. In the best practice, ICT is used excellently to stimulate the children's interest in mathematics, to monitor their progress and to review and consolidate their knowledge and understanding.

## 2.4 RECEPTION PROVISION

At the time of the inspection, 13 children of below statutory school age were enrolled in a reception class in mobile accommodation in the school grounds. The overall quality of the provision in the reception class is good.

The children are settled and their behaviour is very good. They approach the staff easily and respond well to the topics and themes. They enjoy stories, songs and rhymes, and many of their drawings and paintings show signs of representational detail.

The organisation of the day provides opportunities for free play and for activities led by the staff. The staff should review aspects of the daily routines to provide longer periods of freely chosen play and to ensure that all of the time is used appropriately to extend the children's learning.

The planning is detailed and identifies a range of themes and topics to be covered throughout the year. The staff are caring and supportive and their interactions with the children often help to promote the children's language and extend their play.



The staff make regular observations of the children's responses to their play activities and are building up individual profiles of their achievements. The links between the planning and the children's records should be developed further to track the progress in the children's learning across all areas of the pre-school curriculum.

In line with DE guidelines, the governors should continue to review the policy of admitting children who are below statutory school age, to avoid, where possible, the displacement of existing funded pre-school education in the local area.

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

#### **3.1 PLANNING**

The teachers' preparation for their lessons is exemplary; they use medium- and short-term planning which identifies appropriately differentiated activities and experiences for the children. A significant feature of all the planning is the professional evaluation of the effectiveness of the activities and the outcomes in relation to the children's learning. The teachers use this evaluation judiciously to inform future planning for learning and teaching.

#### **3.2 TEACHING**

Almost all of the teaching observed was good or better and in three-fifths of lessons it was very good or outstanding. In the best practice: the learning intentions were shared with the children; the teachers used effective questioning to provide opportunities for the children to think and give extended answers; there was good pace and challenge to the lessons; the teachers regularly reviewed the intended learning and success criteria with the children; and they encouraged them to think about and share their learning through well-managed plenaries.

#### **3.3 ASSESSMENT**

The teachers mark the children's work thoroughly, in line with school policy, with a careful focus on improving the children's attainment. The parents are well informed about their children's progress through detailed reports which provide clear information on attainment across the curriculum and also sensitive and specific guidance on how an individual child can improve on this performance. Detailed records are maintained on each child's attainment across a range of standardised tests and these are analysed rigorously by the class teacher in order to provide a future learning programme matched to their identified needs.

#### **3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

The quality of the provision for special educational needs is very good. The special educational needs co-ordinator works very effectively to organise the provision for those children who require additional support with their learning. The children's needs are identified appropriately at an early stage, through the use of classroom observation and analysis of performance data. Good quality individual educational plans (IEPs) are drawn up with the help of the class teacher and a part-time teacher who provides withdrawal support. An extensive range of diagnostic assessment supports the identification of sharp, challenging medium-term learning targets. The IEPs are reviewed thoroughly and regularly and, when appropriate, children are identified for further external support.

The withdrawal support focuses on either, or both, the children's literacy and numeracy needs. During the inspection, the withdrawal sessions observed were most effective when they addressed the specific difficulties of the children through appropriate intervention strategies. The teachers use differentiated approaches in class and frequently, in the best practice, these are inclusive and are appropriately challenging for all ability ranges. The classroom assistants support skilfully the teaching and enhance the children's learning. There is evidence that the children respond well to the range of support provided and have demonstrated improvement in their understanding and learning.

The school also identifies and plans appropriate provision for the children who are gifted and talented.

#### **4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

##### **4.1 LEADERSHIP**

The quality of the leadership and management at all levels in the school is outstanding. The Principal has been in post for nine years and has led the school with commitment and professional acumen. He promotes the well-being of the children and the staff and has established a culture of collaborative and collective decision-making. The SLT provides clear direction and focus for whole-school improvement, and is ably supported by all of the teaching staff, most of whom have identified curricular responsibilities.

##### **4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT**

The school has very comprehensive arrangements in place to monitor and evaluate all aspects of its provision. Lesson observations, using agreed criteria for each area of learning, in addition to evaluations of the quality of the teachers' planning and the work completed by the children, are undertaken by co-ordinators on a half-term basis. Procedures for peer observations are also a part of the self-evaluating culture of the school.

The above arrangements, and the effective use of data, enable the thorough review of yearly action plans, including those for literacy and numeracy, and the identification of appropriate priorities for future development work. All of the teachers are involved in benchmarking standards and target setting for the children's attainment in literacy and numeracy. The school gives very good attention to and meets fully the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005.

##### **4.3 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE**

The governors are fully involved in the strategic planning and policy development for the school and effectively support the Principal and staff in the implementation of the SDP. The governors manage effectively the school's finances and the classrooms are well resourced for learning.

##### **4.4 ACCOMMODATION**

The accommodation is insufficient for the full range of provision currently offered by the school. In some cases, the quality of the accommodation is detrimental to the promotion of active learning approaches which underpin the NI Curriculum. The standard of caretaking is excellent. The displays in the classrooms are used to celebrate the children's work and aid their learning.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The strengths of the school include:

- the strong interest and motivation of the children and the progressive acquisition of skills and concepts across the year groups;
- the very good standards achieved in English and mathematics;
- the quality of the teaching observed, a majority of which was very good or outstanding;
- the caring ethos and high expectations which permeate the life and work of the school;
- the outstanding quality of the monitoring and evaluation of the learning and teaching, and the structures in place to promote self-evaluation leading to improvement; and
- the outstanding leadership of the Principal and the SLT.

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is outstanding; the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. The school has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

## **APPENDIX**

### **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

- The areas used by the parents to set down and pick up their children at the start and end of school are restricted resulting in a risk to the children's safety.
- The outdoor play areas are small and limit the opportunities for safe physical play at break and lunch times.

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