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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*



Providing Inspection Services for
**Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Focused Inspection

**Maghera Primary School
Co Londonderry**

Inspected: October 2008

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BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Maghera Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 06.10.08**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 301-2291** iv. **Nature of Inspection: FI/Ma/En/ICT**

B.

School Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Year 1 Intake	12	14	10	13	7
Enrolments					
Primary	92	94	83	90	80
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Class/Classes	0	0	0	0	0
Special Unit	5	7	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):

94.6%

Primary & Reception	Nursery Unit	Special Unit
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- D. i. Number of Teachers
 (including the principal and part-time teachers): 4.8 0 0
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 16.7 NI PTR: 20.8
- iii. Average Class Size: 20
- iv. Class Size (Range): 16 to 27
- v. Ancillary Support:
 Number of Hours **Per Week**:
- | | |
|---|----|
| i. Clerical support: | 30 |
| ii. Official Making A Good Start Support: | 25 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 55 |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 5%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 17.5%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 5%

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Maghera Primary School is a co-educational school situated on Station Road in Maghera. The enrolment has decreased over recent years and currently stands at 80. Most of the children come from the surrounding area and a small number come from the local rural areas. At the time of the inspection, approximately 5% of the children were entitled to free school meals, just over 17% of the children required additional help with aspects of their learning and 5% of the children were from other cultures.

1.2 FOCUS

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

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

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents and the teaching staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection, as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and groups of the children from year 6 and 7.

Sixty-four questionnaires were issued to parents in the primary school; approximately 44% of these were returned to the Department of Education (DE). Nine returns contained additional written comments. The majority of the responses indicated a high level of satisfaction with the school. In particular, the parents highlighted the caring ethos and the opportunities for the children to develop their personal and social qualities. A minority of the parents who responded were unsure of the procedures that the school uses to deal with child protection issues.

All of the teaching staff completed the teachers' questionnaires, and their responses were highly supportive of the work of the school. The governors commented on the commitment and dedication of the teachers and the provision for pastoral care in the school.

The children in year 6 talked enthusiastically about their enjoyment of school and indicated that they feel safe and know whom to turn to in the event of a concern. The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) has reported to the Principal and a representative of the governors the main issues emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is good. The strengths of the provision include the consultation with the children, for example in the creation of the school rules, the supportive ethos and the appropriateness of the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding programme. The children have opportunities to develop their personal and social skills through a range of extra-curricular activities and links with children from other schools. The support staff make a valuable contribution to the life of the school.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department, but the following minor areas need to be addressed. The schools needs to update and review the training in child protection for staff and governors and to ensure that arrangements for child protection are made known directly to the parents/guardians at least every two years.

1.6 HEALTHY EATING/PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, the establishment of the healthy living club and links with relevant outside agencies. The areas for improvement identified include the need to formalise healthy breaks, and to monitor and evaluate whole-school healthy eating programmes.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

The children display high levels of motivation and engagement in their learning. They interact well with one another and have good opportunities to work in pairs and groups, to be creative and engage in problem-solving activities, and to develop their thinking skills and understanding.

The analysis of DE benchmarking data indicates that the children in key stage (KS) 1 are making good progress. In KS2, a significant minority of children are not achieving at a standard in literacy and numeracy that is consistent with children of a similar age in similar schools.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The children's learning experiences in language and literacy in the lessons observed are of a good quality. The school creates a stimulating environment for literacy where children feel confident to express themselves. The children have good opportunities to develop their talking and listening skills as individuals, in pairs and in small groups. In the foundation stage (FS), the teacher and classroom assistants encourage the development of vocabulary through play-based activities. In KS1, the children were encouraged to discuss their learning in groups, and through good questioning to give extended answers. In KS2, there are increased opportunities for the children to express their views. The children listen well to the opinions of others and engage enthusiastically and confidently.

The children display a confidence and enjoyment in reading. Throughout the FS and KS1, the children begin to decipher unfamiliar text through a range of strategies, including the use of a phonics programme and shared reading. In KS2, the reading scheme is complemented by group novels which are suitably linked to writing activities. The school has identified, appropriately, the need to engage boys further in reading and is addressing this by building up the range of fiction texts and providing greater opportunities for the children to access class libraries. At the end of KS1 and KS2, the majority of the children are reading at a level commensurate with their age.

In the FS, the children develop their letter formation and word-building skills through shared writing activities. In KS1, the children are beginning to express their ideas at length. By KS2, the children are writing in a variety of styles and for a range of audiences. The school celebrates the children's writing through displays and in assembly where they have opportunities to read their poetry and perform their dramatisations.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

In the FS, there is an increasing emphasis on play-based learning, which provides good mathematical experiences for the children to observe, investigate and to be creative. In the lessons observed, the teachers used mathematical games, well-chosen practical resources, and effective questioning to help the children develop their understanding of simple number operations, shape and space, and measurement.

Throughout KS1, the children's mathematical concepts are developed, consolidated and extended in a range of purposeful activities. During the inspection, the teachers used practical equipment effectively; for example, the children explored the properties of three-dimensional shapes and consolidated their skills of sorting and classifying using relevant criteria. By the end of KS1, the children have a good level of understanding of shape and space, number and measurement.

The children's learning across a broad range of mathematical work is developed further in KS2. The children have a positive attitude to mathematics and they work well in groups during practical sessions. In the lessons observed, the teachers used sessions of mental mathematics to promote the children's reasoning and applied skilful questioning techniques to encourage the children to think and talk confidently about their mathematical learning. In the year 5/6 composite class, the children made effective use of ICT to analyse and display the findings from their mathematical investigations and surveys. By year 7, the majority of the children can measure and record in different units, present and interpret data in a variety of ways and understand the properties of two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The literacy and numeracy lessons are planned well and incorporate a range of teaching strategies, including group and paired work, practical activities and discussion sessions. The long-term planning provides sound guidance for the progressive development of skills across the key stages. The teachers' short-term planning includes the learning intentions and success criteria for the lessons.

3.2 TEACHING

In the lessons observed during the inspection, the teaching was always good and in the majority of lessons was very good. In the best practice, the teachers employed effective whole-class teaching, which incorporated good opportunities for the children to learn through appropriate combinations of group work, ICT presentations, creative activities, and

problem-solving tasks. At the beginning of the lessons, the teachers shared the learning outcomes with the children, and used skilful questioning to reinforce and assess the children's learning against agreed success criteria. During the plenary sessions, the children had good opportunities to summarise and consolidate key learning points from the lesson.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

There are appropriate procedures and records for keeping the parents informed about their child's progress, which include written reports and formal parent-teacher consultations. In addition, the parents are encouraged to meet with the teachers, both on a formal and informal basis, to discuss their child's educational and pastoral needs. The school uses a suitable range of standardised and non-standardised testing to assess the children's level of achievement in English and mathematics. The school has identified the need for the more effective use of performance data to inform the planning for learning and teaching and to raise further the standards of attainment. The inspection findings endorse this as a priority for development.

3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The school makes good use of standardised tests to identify the children in need of additional support in their literacy. The individual education plans contain clear and measurable short-term goals, which are linked to the teachers' planning and are supported by detailed reviews of the children's progress. The children benefit from in-class and withdrawal support, including the 'Reading Partnership' programme. The teacher supports the children well in the withdrawal sessions through a range of planned activities, which are clearly matched to class work and their specific needs. The progress of children receiving additional support is well tracked by the withdrawal support teacher and special educational needs co-ordinator to inform future intervention. The school has good links with other professional agencies and these provide valued assistance to individual children.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The Principal has been in post for nineteen years. He works well with the staff and encourages a collegiate approach to curriculum development work. It will be important in the light of the inspection findings that the Principal provides effective strategic leadership and curricular management of the school to lead the work in the monitoring and evaluation of the children's learning and attainment across the curriculum. In addition, more effective use needs to be made of the analysis of the collated school's performance data to inform whole-school planning and to evaluate the effectiveness of target setting.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The school's process for development planning has few strengths. There are important areas for improvement, which include the financial position of the school, the evaluation of previous targets and action plans that need to be addressed promptly in order to meet fully the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005.

It will be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision and school budget, in order to address the current and future needs of the children and the staff.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the caring and supportive atmosphere for learning and teaching;
- the motivation and engagement of the children in their learning;
- the quality of the teaching which was always good and in the majority of lessons seen very good;
- the commitment and dedication of the staff; and
- the valuable contribution of the support staff to the life of the school.

5.2 The areas for improvement include:

- the need for the more effective use of performance data to inform the planning for learning and teaching and to raise further the standards of attainment in literacy and numeracy particularly at KS2; and
- the need to develop more strategic leadership and curricular management linked to effective school development planning.

5.3 In most of the areas inspected, the quality of the education provided by this school is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh the areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in standards, and leadership and management, which need to be addressed if the needs of all the learners are to be met more effectively. The Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- The school needs to carry out immediately a comprehensive risk assessment of the access and security arrangements to the school buildings and the school site to ensure the safety of the children and the staff.

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