



*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**

#### **Millisle Primary School**

**Inspected: January 2008**

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## BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Millisle Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 21.01.08**  
ii. **School Reference Number: 401-1681** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

<b>School Year</b>	<b>2003/04</b>	<b>2004/05</b>	<b>2005/06</b>	<b>2006/07</b>	<b>2007/08</b>
Year 1 Intake	14	20	17	14	14
<b>Enrolments</b>					
Primary	116	112	116	117	119
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Class/Classes	26	26	26	26	26
Special 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): 94.3%

Primary & Reception	Nursery Unit	Special Unit
---------------------	--------------	--------------

- |    |       |   |          |              |   |
|----|-------|---|----------|--------------|---|
| D. | i.    | Number of Teachers<br>(including the principal and part-time teachers):<br>(Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours) | 6        | 0.8          | 0 |
|    | ii.   | PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio):  | 19.8     | NI PTR: 20.8 |   |
|    | iii.  | Average Class Size:   | 23.8     |              |   |
|    | iv.   | Class Size (Range):   | 17 to 30 |              |   |
|    | v.    | Ancillary Support:  |          |              |   |
|    |       | Number of Hours <b>Per Week</b> :   |          |              |   |
|    |       | i. Clerical support:  |          | 30           |   |
|    |       | ii. Official Making A Good Start Support:   |          | 30           |   |
|    |       | iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support:   |          | 85           |   |
|    | vi.   | Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs:  |          | 5.04%        |   |
|    | vii.  | Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register:   |          | 21.8%        |   |
|    | viii. | Number of children who are <b>not</b> of statutory school age:  |          | 8            |   |
|    | ix.   | Percentage of children entitled to free school meals:   |          | 21%          |   |

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Millisle Primary School is situated on Abbey Road in Millisle, County Down. The children come mainly from the surrounding rural area. The enrolment of the school currently stands at 119; in addition, 26 children are enrolled in the nursery unit. Approximately 21% of the children are entitled to receive free school meals.

1.2 The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection, as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and a group of children from year 6. Eighty-two questionnaires were issued to parents in the primary school; approximately 44% were returned to the Department of Education (DE), of which 17 contained additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaires highlighted the commitment of the staff to the well-being and education of the children. The governors expressed their appreciation of the dedication and hard work of all the staff, and commented on the school's high standing in the community. The comments made by the parents have been shared with the Principal and the governors. The children indicated that they feel 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, it also evaluated the work in information and communication technology (ICT) in promoting and supporting learning and teaching in English and the school's procedures for pastoral care, including child protection. The inspection also included the quality of the provision in the school's nursery unit.

## **2. THE QUALITY OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK**

2.1 The staff have worked very hard to create a strong sense of community which is reflected in the very positive ethos of the school. The children are friendly and welcoming to visitors. Good use is made of the learning environment to celebrate the children's work and to record their activities and achievements.

2.2 The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, and has effective policies and programmes in place to encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

2.3 The school provides an extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities for the children. These include modern languages, sports, creative and expressive and personal and social development activities. Through the extra-curricular programme, the children have the opportunity to develop their skills, abilities and confidence. In addition, their learning and social development are enhanced through participation in speech and drama festivals, educational visits, and community events.

2.4 A particular feature of the school is the wide range of links it has developed with the local community. The school has a year 6 cross-community programme with another local primary school. The choir participates in community celebrations and the children benefit from the annual book week events. Recently, the school opened a Holocaust Memorial Garden in memory of Jewish children who had attended the school during the Second World War. The school operates well-organised and successful breakfast and afterschool clubs through the Extended Schools Initiative. In addition, the school offers a variety of classes for parents and members of the community; these range from relaxation classes to numeracy and ICT courses.

2.5 The arrangements for pastoral care and child protection have important strengths. The school has procedures in place which implement the guidance outlined in the relevant DE Circulars. The governors, staff, parents and children are aware of the school's procedures and have had the opportunity to contribute to a range of helpful policies that guide the work of the school. A variety of reward systems is used to acknowledge the children's positive behaviour, efforts and attainments.

2.6 The teachers have agreed an appropriate rolling, thematic programme which takes account of the school's composite class arrangements. Within each key stage individual teachers have developed medium and short-term plans around these themes. Whilst the plans identify clearly the learning intentions for each area of the curriculum, there is a lack of consistency in relation to the planning format, to the detail about the strategies to be employed to cater for the needs of all children and to the completion of evaluations. In order to ensure continuity and development in the children's learning, and to facilitate the effective monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum, there is a need for the teachers to agree and implement a more comprehensive consistent approach to planning.

2.7 During the inspection, the quality of the teaching in most of the lessons observed was always satisfactory; 42% of the lessons observed were consistently good or better. In the most effective practice observed, the intended learning was made clear to the children, the activities were matched closely to the range of ability within each class, the lessons had clear focus and purpose, and the work had appropriate pace and challenge. In addition, the teachers used skilful questioning to develop the children's thinking and to consolidate their learning, for example, at the conclusion of the lessons. However, on a significant number of occasions, the lessons lacked sufficient pace and challenge for the more able children and the difficulties experienced by the less able children were not adequately addressed. Further, there were insufficient opportunities for the children to interact with one another and to talk about their learning.

2.8 The quality of the medium and short-term planning for literacy varies greatly within and across the key stages. In most instances, the planning identifies the content to be taught and the resources to be used in the lessons. Within the agreed task grid planners, reading and reading related tasks are listed for each group. However, there is limited indication of the teaching strategies to be used to promote the development of specific skills within talking and listening, reading and writing. In the best practice, the teachers complete regular evaluations which focus on the extent and quality of the children's learning. These evaluations are used effectively to inform future planning.

2.9 Throughout the school the children have the opportunity to listen to a range of stories, poems and reports. In a small number of the lessons observed, the children benefited from listening to the teacher read with expression and feeling. In these instances the children listened attentively and engaged enthusiastically in the ensuing discussion; the teachers' open questioning technique promoted the development of thinking skills and encouraged children to form, express and justify their opinions. On other occasions, the children had the opportunity to discuss their learning, to respond to particular stimuli and information and to participate in paired and collaborative group work. In the less effective practice, there was a lack of appropriate stimulus to promote discussion, there were missed opportunities to build upon the children's ideas, and the lessons were over-directed by the teacher. There is a need for the school to develop a more structured programme for talking and listening in order to ensure that children's skills are developed in a progressive and consistent manner across the school.

2.10 The school has a good range of resources to support the teaching of reading. In addition to the commercial reading scheme, there is a wide range of “big books” and appropriately levelled fiction and non fiction materials which the children read at home. These home reading books are aimed at promoting children’s interest, enjoyment and confidence in reading. They are supported by teacher designed tasks for completion as part of the homework. The children also have access to the school library and to topic related books within each classroom. The potential offered by these facilities and resources should be further maximised to capture the children’s interest and to promote an even more explicit reading culture.

2.11 In the early years, the children learn to read through a combined “look and say” and phonic approach. The school has recently introduced a new phonics programme to support the teaching of reading. There is a need for all teachers in the early years to plan for the systematic development of phonological awareness and reading.

2.12 At key stage (KS) 1 and KS2 reading is developed through regular shared and guided reading sessions which are aimed at the continued development of language and comprehension skills. In the most effective practice observed, teachers used “big books” very skilfully for shared reading and to develop spelling and grammar in context.

2.13 By the end of year 7 most children read with fluency and confidence. There are a number of children, however, who are reluctant to attempt to read new words and who cannot employ the taught reading strategies.

2.14 The approach to the development of the children’s early writing skills lacks structure. Whilst some children were observed writing their own name, there were limited examples of the children’s early mark-making or writing. In all the lessons observed, children displayed a reluctance to “have a go” at spelling words.

2.15 As they progress through the early years into KS1 and KS2, the children have the opportunity to write for a broad range of purposes and audiences. In the best practice, the stimulus for writing related to real life situations, for example, developing scripts for interviews and making a shopping list. In the majority of cases, however, writing was over-directed by the commercial scheme, there was insufficient time to consolidate skills, work was not sufficiently differentiated to meet the needs of all children, and there was an over-reliance on the use of worksheets. This resulted in limited opportunity for personal, extended writing.

2.16 The school is well equipped to support learning and teaching through the use of ICT. The teachers use ICT effectively in the planning of their lessons and, in a few of the classes, it is well-integrated into learning and teaching. The school has appropriately identified ICT on the School Development Plan (SDP) as an area for development and the recently appointed co-ordinator for ICT has begun a programme of school based in-service training in order to share and build upon existing good practice.

2.17 The teachers mark the children’s written work regularly. In the majority of classes, marking is of a supportive nature that praises children’s efforts. In the best practice the teachers are beginning to implement assessment for learning strategies and to advise children on how they can improve their work. The school has identified this as an area for continued development.

2.18 The school uses a range of standardised and non-standardised testing to assess the children's level of achievement in literacy. The school performance information gained is currently used to identify the range of ability within each class and to make comparisons within the school. There is a need for the further development and more rigorous analysis of school performance data in order to identify under-achievement, to set appropriate targets, and to raise the overall standards that the children attain.

2.19 There are clear procedures in place for reporting to parents on their children's progress. In the first term the parents are invited to meet with class teachers to discuss their children's progress and how they might provide additional support at home. The parents receive a learning information sheet each week outlining the children's homework and providing helpful suggestions on how they might support their children's learning. Detailed reports are sent to parents in the third term each year; these provide information on attainment, particularly in English and mathematics.

2.20 Almost 24% of the children have been identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning. The school's planning for SEN highlights appropriately the importance of early identification of those children experiencing difficulties with aspects of their learning and is linked closely to the pastoral care policy. The children's needs are met through effective withdrawal sessions, both for individuals and small groups. In withdrawal lessons, the learning support teacher is well-prepared, highly supportive of the children and uses a very good range of effective teaching strategies to provide intensive support for literacy. There is evidence that the children are making good progress. The school has a designated team for SEN; they collaborate regularly with the class teachers and external agencies and have devised a useful SEN policy. The Special Educational Needs register is regularly reviewed and updated. The SEN team collaborates with the class teachers to write education plans which identify, for the most part, general targets and support strategies to promote improvement and to address each child's needs. In line with the review of its assessment procedures, the school recognises the importance of ensuring that the targets are more specific and measurable in order to evaluate each child's progress. There is a need for the staff, to review the procedures in relation to the five-stage framework of identification and assessment in order to comply fully with the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice.

2.21 The Principal has been in post for two and a half years and is an effective role-model for the staff. She combines well her teaching role with the administration of the school and is supported ably by the hard-working secretary. The staff are hard-working and committed to the children. They work together as a team to ensure the smooth organisation of the school. The SDP identifies, in the main, appropriate areas for development. The current school improvement work forms a sound basis on which to develop further the curricular leadership roles of the staff, and to assist them to focus more specifically on monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the quality of the learning experiences and the attainments of the children. It is appropriate that the school should now adjust the SDP, to take account of the areas identified by this inspection for further improvement and to include the recommendations in DE Circular 2007/11 in relation to targets for literacy.

2.22 Overall, the school's accommodation is of a satisfactory standard. There are some maintenance matters which require urgent attention; these are outlined in the Appendix. The Principal and staff work hard to use all of the space available for the benefit of both the children and the families within the community. The school has recently refurbished and

resourced a school library. The grounds of the school have been enhanced through the provision of additional equipment for use outdoors and a garden area which has the potential to provide additional opportunities for the staff to enhance the children's learning experiences.

### 3. **CONCLUSION**

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

- the very positive ethos and the well-organised learning environment which is used effectively to celebrate the children's work and achievements;
- the effectiveness of the Principal, who is a good role-model for the hard-working and committed staff;
- the strong links established with the governors, parents, appropriate support agencies and the local community;
- the interesting and varied range of extra-curricular activities which enrich the children's experiences;
- the good, or better, quality of the teaching in 42% of the lessons observed and the consistently good quality of teaching within the SEN withdrawal sessions; and
- the very good quality of the provision for the children in the nursery unit.

#### 3.2 The areas for improvement include the need to:

- set in place a more comprehensive system to monitor and evaluate the quality of provision and the attainments of the children; and
- ensure that the learning experiences provided are appropriately differentiated to address more closely the ability of all the children.

3.3 In the areas inspected, the school has strengths in many aspects of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified a few areas for improvement in important areas which need to be addressed to meet effectively the needs of all the learners.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing these areas for improvement.



#### 4. THE NURSERY UNIT

4.1 The nursery unit is situated in the grounds of Millisle Primary School. The children come from the wide catchment area.

4.2 The parents, staff and management group 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. A number of parents included written comments indicating a high level of satisfaction with the nursery's provision.

4.3 The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection in the nursery is excellent. The nursery has an excellent ethos; comprehensive policies and procedures for child protection that comply fully with Department of Education (DE) Circulars and guidance. The 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 gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, and has effective policies and programmes in place to encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

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

- There is a very positive ethos which is based on excellent working relationships between the staff and the children.
- The staff create a well-organised, rich and stimulating learning environment which the children clearly enjoy.
- The well-organised planning and assessment methods are implemented consistently and used effectively to meet the needs of the children.
- There is high quality interaction between the staff and the children; the staff promote the children's language, learning and thinking skills throughout the play activities and daily routines.
- There are good or very good opportunities to learn in all areas of the pre-school curriculum. Particular strengths are the promotion of the children's confidence, independence, oral language, creativity and the development of early mathematical language and ideas.
- The nursery teacher is an effective role-model in her work with the children; she manages the session effectively and gives good leadership in developing the work of the nursery.

4.6 The nursery has a comprehensive Development Plan with some appropriate targets for improvement. The nursery teacher is very reflective in her own practice and is developing useful methods of self-evaluation. There is clear evidence that the process of self-evaluation has led to improvements in the children's learning experiences.

4.7 The quality of education provided in this nursery unit is very good. The educational and pastoral needs of the children are being well met. The parents and local community can have confidence in the nursery's capacity for sustained self-improvement.

No follow-up inspection is required.

# STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON MILLISLE PRIMARY SCHOOL NURSERY UNIT

## 1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending full-time	0	0
Attending part-time	26	0
Under 3 years of age*	8	0
With statement of SEN**	0	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4***	0	0
At CoP stages 1 or 2***	1	0
With English as an additional language	0	0

\* 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.	3.8%
Average attendance for the previous year.	90.8%

## 2. Duration of Sessions

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

## 3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-Time	Part-Time
Teachers	0	1
Nursery Assistants	0	0
Qualified Nursery Assistants	0	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	15%
Number of written comments	3

**HEALTH & SAFETY (PRIMARY SCHOOL)**

- The school needs to have arrangements in place which ensure the security of the external doors at all times and access to and from the mobile classroom.
- The room that is used to provide support for SEN is too small.
- The playground surface is deteriorating in places and poses a potential trip hazard.
- The window frames and wooden cladding on the wall of the main building are in a very poor state of disrepair.
- There are inadequate hand washing facilities in the year 1 toilets.
- There is no disabled access.

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