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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
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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

Mossley Primary School
Newtownabbey

Inspected: May 2007

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BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Mossley Primary Newtownabbey** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 21.05.07**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 301-6015** iv. **Nature of Inspection: FI/En/ICT**

B.

School Year	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Year 1 Intake	79	86	90	77	83
Enrolments					
Primary	610	600	599	592	602
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Class/Classes	0	0	0	0	0
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):

96.6%

Primary & Reception	Nursery Unit	Special Unit
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- D. i. Number of Teachers
 (including the principal and part-time teachers): 25.5 0 0
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 23.6 NI PTR: 20.5
- iii. Average Class Size: 28.6
- iv. Class Size (Range): 27 to 32
- v. Ancillary Support:
 Number of Hours **Per Week:**
- | | |
|---|-------|
| i. Clerical support: | 60.25 |
| ii. Official Making A Good Start Support: | 45 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 135.5 |
- vi. Number of children with statements of special educational needs: 9
- vii. Number of children who are not of statutory school age: 0
- viii. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 14%

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Mossley Primary School is a controlled co-educational school situated on a spacious site in a pleasant residential area on the north side of Newtownabbey, in south east Antrim. In January 2007, the school which opened in 1970, moved to new premises constructed within the original campus. Against current local trends, the population of the school is stable. Approximately 14% of the children are entitled to receive free school meals.

1.2 The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care included the completion of questionnaires by parents as well as meetings with members of the Board of Governors (governors) and with a group of the year 6 children. Approximately 45% of the parental questionnaires were returned and almost half of these included a written comment. The responses were highly positive and supportive of the work of the school, mentioning, in particular, its ethos, range of extra-curricular activities, management and teaching staff. At the meeting with the governors, they expressed their support for the school, commenting particularly on the hard-working staff, effective management, good communications internally and externally, the range of extra-curricular activities, the very good parent/teacher working relations and the school's welcoming and family ethos. The very few minor concerns or areas for clarification raised by the parents have been discussed with the Principal.

1.3 The high quality of pastoral care is a significant feature of the school. The staff are committed to the ongoing development, monitoring and evaluation of the pastoral provision. In her role as the pastoral co-ordinator, the Vice-principal has overseen the development and review of a range of policies to inform and guide the work of the school in relation to pastoral care and child protection. Throughout the school there is evidence of a strong commitment to the welfare of the children. They reported that they feel safe and secure and that they know to whom to turn if they have any concerns.

1.4 The designated teacher is very clear about her responsibilities in relation to child protection. Parents are given a copy of the pastoral care policies including the child protection policy and information on the school's procedures for handling complaints. The school has procedures in place which enable the staff to implement the guidance outlined in the relevant Department of Education Circulars. All pastoral documents are available to staff on the public folder of the school C2k system and to parents on request.

1.5 The school's programme for the promotion of health and well-being has many sound features. Attention is given to the development and implementation of programmes which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles, including a fruit trolley and ready access to drinking water. There is a developing commitment to promoting healthy eating through the extension of healthy breaks, the development of a cookery club, and links with health-related organisations and resources. The year 7 children can confidently articulate their food knowledge and understanding of nutritional messages. Opportunities are provided for the children to take part in a wide range of physical activities both during and after the school day. To comply with statutory regulations the above details should be included in the school development plan (SDP) as a formal assessment of the nature and quality of arrangements for health and well-being practices within the school.

1.6 The inspection focused on the work in English and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in supporting literacy. The inspection also evaluated the school's procedures in relation to pastoral care, including child protection, health and well-being.

2. THE QUALITY OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK

2.1 A major strength of the school is its caring, friendly and welcoming atmosphere and the excellent working relationships at all levels. There is a relaxed but orderly atmosphere around the school and the children display exemplary standards of behaviour. In class, they are well-focused on their work, persevere with the tasks set, work co-operatively with others when required, and often respond enthusiastically. It is evident that the significant majority of the children enjoy their time in school; this view is supported by comments from parents. The teachers have created a stimulating learning environment for the children; they celebrate and acknowledge the work and achievements of the children through displays of their work across the curriculum. Further, they place a high priority on enriching the children's experiences through music, sport, art and literature.

2.2 In the majority of lessons, the quality of teaching is good, and in a significant number it is outstanding and inspirational. The teachers are hard-working and very conscientious; they support one another and work effectively as a team; morale is evidently high and the teachers are confident, secure and reflective. In year groups, they prepare well for the range of ability within their classes, often sharing their resources and expertise; this leads to much consistency in their practice. In addition, the well-guided support staff make a significant and much valued contribution to the school and to the welfare and learning of the children.

2.3 The development of all aspects of literacy is a strong feature of the work of the school. Imaginative literacy environments have been created in the classrooms and shared areas; samples of the children's written work are displayed and word banks, collections of fiction and non-fiction texts and the Internet are used effectively to support information work and to stimulate the children's reading. The school library is well stocked with a range of appropriate reading text and materials.

2.4 The teachers have devoted considerable effort and expertise in agreeing a framework for writing, reading, talking and listening and have interpreted and illustrated their own understanding of the levels of attainment. They have anticipated the implications of the revised Northern Ireland Curriculum and some new practices, including the introduction of a phonic approach to reading in certain year groups, prepares the school well for continued improvement.

2.5 Literacy co-ordinators for the foundation stage, key stage (KS) 1 and KS2 are responsible for the development and implementation of the literacy policy. They regularly monitor planning documents and provide constructive feedback to teachers. The introduction of Professional Review and Staff Development (PRSD) has enabled them to observe and evaluate classroom practice; the school has correctly identified the need to increase opportunities for them to observe and share practice as the revised curriculum is implemented and to liaise with the co-ordinators for play-based learning and special education support.

2.6 The school's literacy frameworks provide helpful guidance to each teacher to develop detailed short-term lesson plans with intended learning outcomes and success criteria shown clearly; while these inform much classroom practice they need to do so more consistently.

2.7 In much of the practice observed, the teachers achieve a good balance across the three attainment targets by their skilful integration of the children's reading, writing and talking and listening activities.

2.8 Open-ended and often skilful questioning by the teachers extends the children's thinking, encourages them to ask questions and improves their answers. The children learn to talk and listen, to read and write within a broad range of contexts and, often, the children's own responses and interests are used as suitable starting points.

2.9 The children's reading skills are developed systematically across the school. In the early years, the children are introduced to a variety of reading books with complementary computer software, and are taught to read through a range of phonic and Reading Recovery strategies which encourage them to try to decode unfamiliar words. Effective strategies used include sounding out letters, using clues, writing out, predicting, singing, rhyming and exploring letters through play with robotic toys and by using the interactive whiteboard and the computer screen. The approaches adopted are narrower in the middle years where further staff development will be required as the revised curriculum is introduced.

2.10 Throughout the school the children are exposed to a broad range of texts including Internet sources, class novels and reference books. Their understanding of text becomes increasingly proficient; they are learning to extract meaning and summarise information and can read with accuracy, comprehension and expression. In the best practice, they are able to make and explain critical judgements about novels and poetry that they have chosen to read.

2.11 A number of children from KS2 undertake paired reading with children from years 2-4 children at lunch times and adults from a Business in the Community scheme 'Time to Read' provide role models in reading.

2.12 Across the school a strong focus is placed on listening to promote effective learning. The children listen carefully to their teachers and to one another, are willing to express their thoughts and feelings and to talk about their learning. In paired and group sessions they support one another; some children demonstrate very effective leadership skills and the ability to take the initiative in literacy tasks.

2.13 From year 1 onwards, some children are fully confident when expressing themselves in front of the class, and this confidence develops well throughout the school; for example, when children address the class fluently, from memory, with a researched talk on the history of their school and its environment, or give opinions, or discuss poetry, or take part through drama, in improvisational role-play, in order, for example, to better understand relationships.

2.14 By the end of year 1, almost all children have developed well-formed handwriting and write sentences and short passages accurately and neatly. Some are able to write in their own words. During KS2, the children learn how to plan and structure their writing in an increasing range of forms to a good standard, including letter and story writing, accounts of visits, book reviews and newspaper reports. The grammatical aspects of writing also develop well and poetry is an especially strong feature. In some areas of the curriculum, where there

is often an over-dependence on work-sheets that require single word or brief responses, there is insufficient emphasis on independent writing. The children would benefit from greater opportunities to write independently in every area of the curriculum, and from a much earlier age.

2.15 The school works systematically, supported by two hard-working co-ordinators, to develop the role of ICT to support all aspects of learning, including literacy, and has invested considerably in additional interactive resources. Most of the teachers plan to use these effectively and the children have many opportunities to use software to support their reading and interactive whiteboards to explore and develop their language, to make presentations and to prepare reports. The school website provides an excellent forum for children to publish their work for a wide public audience and it is also used well as a research resource.

2.16 In English, the children achieve well from the early years, providing a sound foundation, which is built on progressively throughout the school; by the end of KS2, the standards achieved in literacy are good. Standards in writing, in the presentation of the children's work and in the enjoyment of poetry, in particular, are often outstanding.

2.17 The school has a clear assessment policy which is implemented effectively. Results from standardised tests are used well to track the children's progress as they move through the school. The class teachers and the Principal use their professional judgement about patterns in standardised scores to promote improvement and to provide additional support where required. The school has a good range of intervention strategies to help children facing particular challenges. The children's written work is marked regularly by the teachers. In some instances, the quality of the marking is outstanding; the feedback provided commends effort and suggests how the work might be improved.

2.18 A good start has been made in developing a programme for learning through play. At present, the play is based appropriately on class themes and topics. During the sessions, the children are well-settled, co-operate well with one another, and, when given the opportunity, use the resources with imagination and enthusiasm. In the sessions many examples of good interaction were observed which developed the children's learning. The teachers should review the range of activities which they provide to ensure that the adults present have more opportunities to interact effectively with the children to promote and support their learning. There is a need to develop further the programme for play in order to identify and focus more sharply on the defined learning outcomes as well as continuity and progression on the children's previous experiences across KS1.

2.19 The school has a strong commitment to supporting those children who require additional help for their learning. The school has identified 26% of its enrolment as requiring support with aspects of their learning in literacy and numeracy; almost 1.5% of the children have statements of special educational needs. A strong emphasis is placed on providing a programme of support to address the children's difficulties; significant financial resources are used effectively to enable two full-time and one part-time teacher together with a number of learning support and classroom assistants to assist children in class and in small withdrawal groups. Extensive resources are made available and are used effectively to support the special educational needs (SEN) programme.

2.20 The teachers have procedures in place to identify those children who need help with reading, writing and with aspects of their behaviour. Their difficulties and needs are identified, at an early stage, and appropriate education plans are drawn up by the special needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and the class teacher. The targets set are matched closely to the needs of the children and are reviewed regularly by the staff and the parents. The school makes effective use of outside agencies, including educational psychologists, to assist with diagnosis and support. The classroom and learning support assistants provide good support for the children. An effective Reading Recovery programme benefits a significant number of children in KS1.

2.21 The SENCO has a good understanding of her role; she oversees the SEN programme effectively and has helped teachers to develop strategies to enable them to address some of the children's particular difficulties and needs through in-class support. There is good liaison between the special educational needs staff and the class teachers to ensure progression and continuity in the children learning. The SENCO is well-supported by the other special educational needs teachers and by the Principal and staff. Comprehensive evaluations are maintained to track the children's progress and to assist the teachers to plan for further learning. The provision for the children with special educational needs is good.

2.22 The Principal, who has been in post for 9 years, provides excellent leadership. He inspires confidence and has a clear strategic vision for the school which he communicates well to staff, parents, governors and the local community. He sets a positive tone throughout the school and his consultative approach to school development work promotes a strong sense of collegiality amongst the staff. He sets high expectations with respect to learning and teaching and has introduced a series of rigorous and systematic school self-evaluation processes and procedures to monitor and evaluate all aspects of the schools provision. In this work he is very ably supported by the Vice-principal who, in addition to her commitment and pragmatic approach to curricular and pastoral development, is a good role model as a classroom practitioner.

2.23 The teachers are deployed effectively in ways that make good use of their interests and expertise. Roles and responsibilities within the school are clearly defined and there is a high level of skill and commitment among the staff which enables them to lead and manage their areas of responsibility well. There is a strong culture of self-evaluation which contributes positively in ways that support and enhance their professionalism.

2.24 The priorities for staff development are identified clearly and matched closely to the needs and priorities of the school as identified in the SDP. Staff development needs are well met through carefully selected in-service training which, in addition to external support, makes effective use of existing expertise within the school.

2.25 The new accommodation is excellent and many of the good and imaginative features in its design represent input by the Principal and staff, in partnership with the contractors and planners throughout the planning and building phases for the new school. The staff, in a short time, have created a pleasant, attractive and child-centred learning environment.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the caring, friendly and welcoming atmosphere and the excellent working relationships at all levels;
- the exemplary behaviour of the children;
- the quality of the teaching which is good, and in a significant number of lessons is outstanding and inspirational;
- the high quality of pastoral care;
- the range of extra-curricular activities;
- the increasingly effective use of the very good ICT resources in supporting learning and teaching in literacy and across the curriculum;
- the examples of good practice observed during the inspection in the teaching of English and the good standards being attained;
- the strong commitment to supporting those children who require additional help for their learning and the effectiveness of this provision;
- the developing self-evaluative culture which results in effective monitoring and evaluation by management at all levels;
- the strong support of the parents and the governors and the school's high standing in the community; and
- the professionalism, leadership and vision of the Principal and Vice-principal and their dedication and commitment to the life and work of the school and the community which it serves.

3.2 There are minor areas for improvement identified within the report which the school is well able to take forward.

3.3 In the areas under focus the quality of education provided in this school is excellent. The educational and pastoral needs of the children are being well met. The parents and the local community can have confidence in the school's capacity for sustained self-improvement.

No follow-up inspection is required.

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