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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**

**Poyntzpass Primary School**  
**Co Down**

**Inspected: March 2007**

## CONTENTS

<b>Section</b>		<b>Page</b>
	STATISTICAL INFORMATION	
1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	THE QUALITY OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK	1
3.	CONCLUSION	5

## BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Poyntzpass Primary School**      iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 12.3.07**  
 ii. **School Reference Number: 5016078**      iv. **Nature of Inspection:  
 Focused/English/SEN & ICT**

B.

School Year	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Year 1 Intake	11	12	10	14	12
<b>Enrolments</b>					
Primary	80	84	91	88	90
Reception	3	4	4	2	0
Nursery Class/Classes	0	0	0	0	0
Special Unit	1	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): 95.33%

<b>Reception</b>	<b>Primary &amp; Unit</b>	<b>Nursery Unit</b>	<b>Special</b>
------------------	-------------------------------	-------------------------	----------------

- |    |  |          |              |        |
|----|--|----------|--------------|--------|
| D. | i. Number of Teachers<br>(including the principal and part-time teachers):<br>(Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours) | 4.48     | 0            | 0      |
|    | ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio):   | 20.1     | NI PTR: 20.5 |        |
|    | iii. Average Class Size:   | 22.5     |              |        |
|    | iv. Class Size (Range):  | 18 to 28 |              |        |
|    | v. Ancillary Support:<br>Number of Hours <b>Per Week</b> :   |          |              |        |
|    | i. Clerical support:   |          |              | 15 hrs |
|    | ii. Official Making A Good<br>Start Support:   |          |              | 10 hrs |
|    | iii. Additional hours of other<br>classroom assistant support:   |          |              | 20 hrs |
|    | vi. Number of children with statements of special educational needs:   |          |              | 1      |
|    | vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register:   |          |              | 0      |
|    | viii. Number of children who are not of statutory school age:  |          |              | 0      |
|    | ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals:  |          |              | 9%     |

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Poyntzpass Primary School is situated on a spacious site within the village of Poyntzpass, approximately eight miles from Newry. The school enrolment stands currently at 90 and this has been steady in recent years. The children come from the village and surrounding rural locality. Approximately nine per cent of the children are entitled to free school meals.

1.2 Prior to the inspection, the parents received a confidential questionnaire seeking their views about the life and work of the school. Over 64% of the questionnaires were completed and returned to the Department of Education (DE). Meetings were also held with the school's Board of Governors (BoG) and Parent Teachers Association (PTA). Almost all of the parents expressed total satisfaction with all aspects of the school's provision; they highlighted in particular, the very caring family ethos; the many extra-curricular activities provided for the children; the dedication of the Principal; the hard-working staff, and the excellent links with the parents and the community. A concern raised by a parent was discussed with the Principal. In addition to these comments the very well informed and committed BoG commended the high quality of the leadership of the Principal; the quality of learning and teaching within the school, and the excellent quality of the personal development of the children. The inspection findings endorse these views.

1.3 The inspection team also spoke with a group of children in year 6. The children spoke very positively about the school; they commented on the strong sense of security they feel when in school, their friendships, the wide range of extra-curricular activities, the benefits of the positive behaviour reward system and the support of their teachers, canteen staff and caretaker.

1.4 The inspection focused on the work in English, and the effectiveness of the school's special education needs provision. In addition, the inspection also evaluated the contribution of information and communication technology (ICT) in promoting and supporting learning and teaching in English and on the arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection.

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

2.1 There is a distinctive and caring ethos in the school, which is characterised by the excellent relationships between the sensitive and conscientious staff and the motivated and enthusiastic children. The behaviour of the children is exemplary; they are courteous, confident and respectful of the staff and visitors. The teachers have worked hard to create innovative wall displays and resource areas to celebrate the children's work and inspire learning. The children demonstrate care for one another and a deep sense of pride in their school, community and local culture.

2.2 A particular feature is the strong community spirit which pervades all aspects of school life. The school regularly utilises the expertise of the local community to enhance curricular development. Strong and effective cross-community links have been established with a neighbouring maintained school through the Education for Mutual Understanding programme which enables the staff, children and parents to work together to the mutual benefit of the children. The teachers, caretaker and parents give generously of their time to supervise additional activities for the children, including sport, science, art, technology,

drama, environment, poetry, music and in the design of an Eco Schools garden. The children have experienced much success in competitions at local, regional and national level. There is evidence that these activities help to develop the children's confidence, sense of inter-dependence and self-esteem.

2.3 Parents are welcomed into the school at any time, formally for organised curriculum and information meetings, and informally for school assemblies, productions and concerts. A 'Newspoyntz' newsletter is distributed regularly to parents, to provide an update in relation to school events and to celebrate the children's achievements. There is an active PTA which meets regularly; through a number of well-organised fund-raising activities, this association makes a significant and valued contribution to providing additional school funds.

2.4 The quality of pastoral care is excellent and concern for the children's safety and well-being, their learning, and their personal and social development permeates the life and work of the school. A merit system has been developed which recognises, values and celebrates achievement. Personal, social and health education is integrated effectively into classroom practice; aspects of the programme are designed to promote health and well-being and are planned in co-operation with local professionals and outside agencies. An appropriate and helpful set of school rules has been developed, in consultation with the children; personal safety notices are displayed prominently in the school. The staff have put in place break and lunchtime arrangements for the children to include the successful development of a 'Playground Pals' scheme which encourages the promotion of personal responsibility amongst the oldest children. The caretaker and classroom assistants make a significant contribution to the personal and academic development of the children.

2.5 The school has a good range of policies to guide its pastoral provision. The procedures and guidance outlined in the relevant DE Circulars in relation to child protection are implemented; the school reports that the staff have received training in child protection matters and relevant personnel have been vetted. The school has identified appropriately further areas for future development.

2.6 The school gives very good attention to promoting health and well-being and has appropriate programmes in place to encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles, for example, the children are encouraged to try healthy breaks and taster sessions for new menus prior to their introduction to the canteen. There is evidence of commitment on the part of the staff to promoting healthy eating and to improving the children's eating habits, for example an initiative is in operation to teach the children about practical cookery and healthy eating. There are excellent opportunities for all children to participate in a wide range of physical activities.

2.7 The quality of teaching is always very good and often excellent. Lessons are well planned, structured and imaginatively resourced, often with materials that the teachers have produced themselves. The teachers use a wide range of effective approaches to promote the children's learning; they take account of the wide range of abilities within the classes and employ relevant teaching strategies which both challenge the children and encourage them to do their best. Skilful questioning is used well to extend the children's learning and there is a strong emphasis on oral work and active approaches to learning. The children enjoy their learning and are well motivated in lessons; effective use is made of whole-class and small group work.

2.8 Throughout the school an important focus is placed on developing the children's talking and listening skills through an effective programme of practical activities. The majority of the children display confidence and enthusiasm in their oral work; they respond to their teachers' open-ended questions with sustained answers that demonstrate their developing knowledge and understanding. In all classes, a careful emphasis is placed on extending the children's vocabulary. A range of teaching strategies is used effectively to develop the children's self-confidence and help them organise their ideas and extend their oral responses. The teachers set a positive tone that encourages the children to contribute to the plenary and the small group discussions. The children's talking and listening skills are well-developed and are linked effectively to reading and writing activities.

2.9 The teachers have undertaken an appropriate review of their approaches to the teaching of reading. The school continues to develop an appropriate range of teaching strategies that encourage the children to read, understand and enjoy books. Within a broad language development framework, the teachers use effectively a levelled reading scheme to encourage the children to respond imaginatively and critically to what they read. By the end of key stage (KS) 1, the majority of the children read with an increasing level of independence and in many instances they discuss, with their teacher and with one another, the characters and events in their favourite stories. In addition the teachers have worked hard to develop their own books, that are of interest to the children, based on life in the village and surrounding area through 'digital story telling'. Parents are provided with good quality practical advice on how to support their child in developing his or her reading skills. In KS2, the children enjoy reading a wide range of fiction and non-fiction material that is of interest to them; they are keen to contribute to discussions in class on the books they are currently reading. The central library and the class libraries are well-stocked and the children have developed appropriate skills that help them select books that assist them in their independent work as well as choose books that might be of personal interest to them.

2.10 The development of the children's writing skills builds effectively upon the children's oral and reading skills. Visits to places of educational interest, practical activities and visits to the school from members of the community are used skilfully to engage the children in developing their ideas for story writing. The teachers have worked hard to develop links between the children's oral work and its application in a range of appropriate shared and modelled writing activities. The children have opportunities for writing in many different forms and for a range of purposes and audiences including: magazine articles, letter writing, book reviews, poems, posters, and story-boards for short films. In all classes the writing tasks are differentiated appropriately, with a range of strategies in place for those who require support, and interesting open-ended tasks for those children who can write creatively on their own. Much of the creative and imaginative work is of a good quality. Increasingly, the writing activities provide opportunities for the children to work independently and in groups and to develop their own ideas. Appropriately the school continues to develop further the opportunities for the children to write across the curriculum using different styles. The use of ICT continues to be incorporated effectively into the children's work in English. The children have good opportunities to draft text and to use software to produce pictures and add graphics. The teachers are making increasing use of the digital camera to record events and educational visits and to manipulate images that can be included in books that the children make themselves. By year 7 the children achieve good standards in the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment KS2 ICT accreditation scheme.

2.11 Additional educational needs are given a high priority within the school and significant resources have been allocated to the provision. The school has identified approximately 33% of the children who require additional support with their learning. The children's learning needs are identified at an early stage, through a combination of teacher and parent observation and the subsequent use of standardised and diagnostic tests. The provision for these children is very well organised and managed. A part-time learning support teacher provides excellent withdrawal sessions for individual children. In consultation with the teachers and the special educational needs co-ordinator, the learning support teacher compiles detailed education plans, which identify the areas requiring improvement. Realistic targets are set in order to assess the improvements made by each child; these are reviewed regularly.

2.12 Increasingly, the teachers are analysing the performance data to monitor individual progress and to help the children set targets for improvement. The school recognises the need to ensure that this work is implemented consistently and that the outcomes are used effectively to inform future planning, learning and teaching. It is appropriate that this area is currently under review. The teachers provide the children with good oral feedback on their work during lessons. Class work is marked regularly; the teachers provide written comments that in the best practice help the children to improve the quality of their work. The parents have regular opportunities to discuss their child's progress; written reports are sent home once a year. The school has identified the need to change the format of these reports to reflect more appropriately the knowledge, skills and understanding that the children have developed.

2.13 The Principal, who has been in post for three years, provides outstanding leadership in all aspects of school life. She inspires confidence and places strong emphasis on school improvement, on enhancing the children's experiences and on empowering the teachers. She is energetic and has a strong sense of purpose; she encourages teamwork and creates a climate where the staff and children feel valued. During her time as Principal, she has managed change successfully and is dedicated to the future development of the school.

2.14 The teachers are hard-working and conscientious; they have participated in a wide range of school-based and centre-based in-service training courses, provided mainly by the Curriculum, Advisory and Support Service (CASS) of the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB). The focus of this good work has been on developing a literacy policy for the school that will improve further the standards the children attain. The teachers report that they have benefited from this effective support.

2.15 The agreed School Development Plan incorporates the findings from the school's own self-evaluation. A developing culture of self-reflection and self-evaluation has enabled the staff to build on the school's strengths and to promote and improve further the provision for the children and the standards which they achieve. The school is developing robust procedures for monitoring and evaluating the quality of its provision.

### 3. CONCLUSION

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

- ethos of mutual respect, the excellent relationships at all levels and the innovative use of display to celebrate the children's work;
- outstanding leadership of the Principal in all aspects of school life;
- hard-working, creative, committed and effective teachers and the high quality of their teaching;
- enthusiasm, motivation and exemplary behaviour of the children and their positive attitudes to learning and school;
- excellent pastoral care provision;
- wide range of extra-curricular activities;
- range and the quality of children's learning experiences, including the emphasis given to oral work;
- effective practice in the learning and teaching of literacy throughout the school and the high standards achieved by the children;
- inclusive approaches used by the teachers to meet the academic and emotional needs of the children;
- high quality provision for children with additional educational needs;
- contribution of the caretaker, classroom assistants and canteen staff to the life and work of the school.
- quality of the support, involvement and commitment of the members of the BoG to the development of the school;
- ongoing support provided by the SELB CASS;
- strong cross-community links with a neighbouring maintained school; and
- strong support of the parents and the local community for the work of the school.

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

No follow-up inspection is required.

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