

# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Riverdale Primary School,  
Lisburn

Report of an Inspection  
in February 2010

## CONTENTS

Section		Page
	STATISTICAL INFORMATION	
1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS	2
3.	THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING	4
4.	LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	5
5.	CONCLUSION	5

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, Inspectors 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: Riverdale Primary Lisburn** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 01/02/10**  
 ii. **School Reference Number: 401-6615** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Year 1 Intake	25	27	19	31	30
<b>Enrolments</b>					
Primary	181	188	188	192	191
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
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): 96.9% **NI Avg Att: 94.9%**
- |  | Primary &<br>Reception | Nursery<br>Unit | Special<br>Unit | Irish Medium<br>Unit |
|--|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
|--|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
- D. i. Number of Teachers  
 (including the principal and part-time teachers): 9.68 0 0 0  
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 19.7 NI PTR: 20.4
- iii. Average Class Size: 27
- iv. Class Size (Range): 19 to 30
- v. Ancillary Support:  
 Number of Hours **Per Week:**
- |   |      |
|---|------|
| i. Clerical support:  | 31.5 |
| ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support:           | 30   |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 103  |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 3%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 13%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 0.5%
- x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2008/09  
 who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics:
- |                |                    |
|----------------|--------------------|
| <b>English</b> | <b>Mathematics</b> |
| 100%           | 100%               |

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT**

Riverdale Primary School is situated in a pleasant rural site with the majority of the children coming from within a seven mile radius of the school. The inspection visit coincides with the school's tenth anniversary. Over the past three years the school has been oversubscribed; it is currently 191. Less than 1% of the children are entitled to free school meals. The school has identified 13% of the children as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning.

### **1.2 FOCUS**

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy;
- the quality of provision for learning; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

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

### **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 a group of children from year 6.

One hundred and twenty-eight questionnaires were issued to parents; approximately 49% of the parental questionnaires were returned to Inspection Services Branch. Seventeen of the returns contained additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaires were highly affirmative, indicating strong support for the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents acknowledged the caring and supportive learning environment, the wide range of after-school activities, the dedicated and hard-working staff and principal, and the strong sense of community within the school.

Seven teachers completed the confidential online questionnaire with two teachers including additional written comments. All of the responses were positive about nearly all aspects of the work of the school.

The governors expressed their strong support for the Principal and staff. In particular, they highlighted the caring and supportive ethos and the contribution made by the school to the local community. The year 6 children talked openly, positively and with a clear sense of pride about their experiences in the school. They indicated that they know to whom to turn if they have any concerns regarding their work or their safety and well-being.

The Education and Training Inspectorate has reported to the Principal and the chairperson of the governors the very few issues emerging from the questionnaires.

## 1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is very good. Among the strengths are: the pleasant, confident and well-behaved children; the effective leadership of the head of pastoral care; the cognisance taken by the staff of the individual needs of the children; the use of circle time to develop the children's attitudes of tolerance and responsibility; and the wide-ranging after-school programme.

## 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, 'Fresh Fruit Friday' and the wide range of sporting opportunities available to the children which encourage them to adopt healthy lifestyles.

## 1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

There are very productive links with the parents, local and wider community. These include a well-established curricular partnership with a local post-primary school, participation in a range of educational visits and engagement with external agencies. The school is a regular recipient of the ECO Schools Green Flag Award and Best Kept Schools Award. The Parent Teachers' Association raises significant funds which are used to develop all aspects of the work of the school.

# 2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

## 2.1 LEARNING

Overall, the children achieve high standards.

Almost all of the children are highly motivated and positive about their learning. Their behaviour is exemplary. They complete tasks co-operatively enjoying many opportunities to interact with each other in group and paired work. In class discussions, the children are responsive and articulate.

An analysis of the key stage (KS) 1 and KS2 assessment data over the past four years shows that, in English, the school's performance has remained consistently high with the most recent data indicating that the percentage of children achieving Level 4 or above, at the end of KS2, remains significantly above the Northern Ireland (NI) average for schools in the same free school meals category. In mathematics, at the end of KS1 there has been a slight fluctuation in performance, which the school has identified and is working to address. Data for the end of KS2, over the same period shows a similar trend to English with the most recent data indicating that the percentage of children achieving Level 4 or above is significantly above the NI average for schools in the same free school meals category.

## 2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The overall quality and effectiveness of provision for English and literacy is very good.

Literacy is promoted effectively across the curriculum. The children are encouraged to develop and use skills in talking, listening, reading and writing in meaningful contexts. The attractive class reading areas, displays, writer's wall and the central school library all contribute to a rich, stimulating literacy environment in the school.

In all key stages, the children are keen to talk about their work. A variety of well-planned opportunities for children to engage and interact with others promotes very good thinking, talking and listening skills.

Throughout the school the children experience a variety of approaches to reading including shared, guided and independent reading and have regular opportunities to read for research, personal interest and pleasure. An effective reading partnership scheme involving the parents of KS1 pupils is in operation to support and enhance the children's reading. As they progress through the school the children are introduced to a broad range of texts including fiction, non fiction and poetry. They read with increasing accuracy, fluency, expression and understanding of the text.

The standard of written work achieved by the children is very good and is often celebrated in attractive, stimulating displays throughout the school. The children have opportunities to develop their writing skills by writing in different forms including poems, letters, reports, stories and instructions. They are also provided with opportunities to write for a variety of purposes and audiences across the curriculum. In KS1 and KS2 the children make effective use of word-banks, dictionaries and thesauri to assist them in their writing. The teachers encourage them to edit and redraft their work to improve the quality of their writing. Information and communication technology is effectively integrated into classroom activities. The children take pride in producing their best work and make very good use of ICT to present their work to a high standard.

## 2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The quality of provision for mathematics and numeracy is very good.

The children are given a wide range of experiences in numeracy. In the foundation stage (FS), there is a significant emphasis on practical and oral work to provide valuable opportunities for the children to gain a sound understanding of number and basic number operations, simple measures and common shapes. Numeracy lessons begin with interactive mental mathematics sessions which the children greatly enjoy. Throughout the school the children's mathematical knowledge and skills continue to be developed through well-organised practical activities and opportunities for discussion. By year 7 most of the children have a good understanding of place value; they calculate accurately, measure and record in different units, know how to present and interpret data in a variety of ways and are aware of the properties of two-dimensional (2D) and three-dimensional (3D) shapes.

During the inspection, there were very good opportunities for children to apply their mathematical skills across other areas of the curriculum, for example measuring activities relating to the Chinese New Year and addition and subtraction mental math's activities within a physical education lesson. Appropriate links to everyday life often enhanced the relevance of numeracy lessons.

The co-ordinator provides very good leadership in numeracy. The school is currently reviewing long-term planning for mathematics to ensure progression in the children's learning in the areas of measures, data handling and shape and space. An appropriate action plan is in place.

The majority of children achieve standards in mathematics and numeracy in line with their ability. However, while KS1 children effectively demonstrated their knowledge of important ideas and concepts such as place value and multiplication facts, they were less sure of the most effective mental mathematics strategies. The teachers need to provide more challenging activities to develop these areas, for example, problem-posing as well as problem-solving and to extend the opportunities for the children to explain their mathematical reasoning. Appropriately, the school has identified the need to extend further these aspects of the children's mathematical understanding and skills.

Throughout the school ICT is used very effectively to support learning and teaching in numeracy. Interactive whiteboards were used appropriately in almost all the numeracy lessons observed, to motivate children and develop mathematical thinking.

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

#### **3.1 PLANNING**

The teachers have adopted a new approach to whole-school planning for English and mathematics and they recognise the importance of monitoring and evaluating this, to ensure that it provides clear guidance for the teachers and that there is an appropriate match between planning and classroom practice.

#### **3.2 TEACHING**

During the inspection, the teaching was always satisfactory with almost two-thirds of the lessons observed being very good or outstanding. In the most effective practice, the lessons were well-paced with ample opportunities for active learning through group and paired work; teachers built on prior knowledge, establishing effective connections across the areas of learning and making the learning relevant to the children's own experiences.

In the less effective practice, there were missed opportunities for collaborative work and promoting the children's thinking skills and there was insufficient time for the children to consolidate their learning.

#### **3.3 ASSESSMENT**

The school is currently reviewing its assessment policy. The teachers have made a good start to using the results from standardised tests and DE benchmarking data to assess the level of the children's achievement in literacy and numeracy and to set realistic targets for improvement. The parents are kept well-informed of their children's progress through parental interviews and written reports, and the school maintains information and performance data on the children's progress. All of the teachers mark the children's work regularly and supportively. This is at its most effective when the teacher informs the children how they might improve their work; this good practice needs to be introduced consistently across all year groups.

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

The provision for children with special educational needs is outstanding. Thirteen percent of the children have been identified by the school as being in need of additional learning support. Most of these children have learning difficulties in literacy and numeracy and a small number have special needs of a behavioural nature. The programme recognises effectively the importance of early identification through classroom observation and the analysis of assessment data.



There is a clear action plan which, along with a policy statement and supporting individual education plans, supports effectively the work in special educational needs. The plans are well-written and set out meaningful and well-focused learning targets and teaching strategies. The special educational needs co-ordinator is currently undergoing joint Education and Library Board training. She works very effectively with the class teachers, the learning support teacher, and the classroom assistants to provide high quality support for the children. This work is carried out both in class and during withdrawal sessions in a systematic, patient and effective manner and is benefiting the children involved.

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

##### **4.1 LEADERSHIP**

The quality of the leadership provided by the Principal is very good. From the inception of the school, he has demonstrated enthusiastically that he has an appropriate vision for the development of the school with a clear understanding of how to realise this. He has overseen many initiatives that enhance and support the learning experiences of the children and is thoroughly committed and dedicated to providing high standards of education for all the children in his care. He is supported effectively by the Vice-principal and senior teacher and team of co-ordinators.

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

The School Development Plan meets fully the requirements of the Department of Education School Development Planning Regulations/Schedule 2005/19.

##### **4.3 ACCOMMODATION**

The school building is modern, spacious and well-organised. Outstanding use is made of corridors and classrooms to creatively celebrate the children's work and achievements. There are many bright and colourful displays depicting aspects of school life. The internal and external environments of the school are pleasant and well-maintained; the standard of caretaking is excellent.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

##### **5.1 The strengths of the school include:**

- the highly motivated, articulate children whose behaviour is exemplary;
- the high quality of the pastoral care and the provision made for the children with special educational needs;
- the high standards achieved by the children in literacy and numeracy;
- the quality of the teaching, with almost two-thirds of the lessons observed being very good or outstanding;

- the enthusiastic and effective leadership of the Principal supported strongly by the Senior Management Team; and
- the wide range of after-school activities which enrich the children's learning experience.

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is very good. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the learners; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2010

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the ETI website: [www.etini.gov.uk](http://www.etini.gov.uk)

