

eti

*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

Seymour Hill Primary School
Dunmurry

Inspected: April 2007

CONTENTS

Section		Page
	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: Seymour Hill Primary Dunmurry** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 23.04.07**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 401-0882** iv. **Nature of Inspection: FI/En/SEN/ICT**

B.

School Year	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Year 1 Intake	25	20	23	26	19
Enrolments					
Primary	211	208	203	196	194
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Class/Classes	0	0	0	0	0
Special Unit	26	20	24	19	26

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): 93.3%

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

- D. i. Number of Teachers
 (including the principal and part-time teachers): 8.7
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours) 0 2
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 21 NI PTR: 20.5
- iii. Average Class Size: 24
- iv. Class Size (Range): 20 to 27
- v. Ancillary Support:
 Number of Hours **Per Week:**
- | | |
|---|------|
| i. Clerical support: | 30 |
| ii. Official Making A Good Start Support: | 35 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 52.5 |
- vi. Number of children with statements of special educational needs: 29
- vii. Number of children who are not of statutory school age: 0
- viii. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 25%

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Seymour Hill Primary School is situated near the village of Dunmurry, about four miles from the centre of Lisburn. Nearly all of the children attending the school come from the neighbouring area. The school's enrolment currently stands at 194 which includes 26 children attending the two special units catering for the needs of children with moderate learning difficulties (MLD). Just over 25% of the children are entitled to free school meals.

1.2 As part of the arrangements for pastoral care, parents were invited to complete a confidential questionnaire. Of the 153 questionnaires issued, 61 were completed and returned to the Department of Education (DE); 19 of the questionnaires included extended written comments. During the inspection, the inspectors met with representatives of the Board of Governors and a group of year 6 children. Nearly all of the parents' and all of the governors' responses expressed strongly their satisfaction with the work of the school. The responses highlighted, in particular, the leadership of the Principal, the excellent links with the local community, the caring and family ethos, the hard-working and conscientious staff, and the very good provision for children with special educational needs (SEN), including those being taught in the two MLD units. The few matters raised were discussed with the Principal. The children reported they felt safe and happy in school, and knew where to seek help if they had a concern. The inspection findings endorse the favourable comments made by the governors, the parents and the children.

1.3 The inspection focused primarily on the quality of work in English, the effectiveness of the school's provision for SEN, and pastoral care, including the arrangements for child protection. The inspection report also makes reference to the contribution of information and communication technology (ICT) in promoting and supporting learning and teaching in English.

2. THE QUALITY OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK

2.1 A strong emphasis is placed throughout the school on application to work and support for one another. The teachers are hard-working, conscientious and committed clearly to the welfare and education of the children. There is a strong sense of a school identity. An orderly and supportive ethos permeates the life of the school. There is a good sense of team-work, and the non-teaching staff make a very valuable contribution to the work of the school. The quality of the cleaning and caretaking is excellent.

2.2 The children's behaviour is exemplary; they respond well to their teachers, co-operate positively with one another, and are most welcoming to visitors. The foyer area, corridors and classrooms are bright and cheerful, with attractive displays of the children's recent work, including work in English, mathematics, music, and art and design.

2.3 The school's programme for the promotion of health and well-being has many strengths. Appropriate policies and programmes are in place, such as a breakfast club, healthier eating practices at break time, a Comenius supported healthy lifestyle project and a cookery club, all of which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles. There is a developing commitment to promoting healthy eating by means of the school newsletter and

competitions. An assessment of the nature and quality of the arrangements for health and well-being practices should be included in the school development plan (SDP). The children demonstrate a good understanding of the importance of making healthy life choices, and opportunities are provided for all the children to participate in a range of physical activities.

2.4 A programme of extra-curricular activities has been developed which provides the children with valuable additional educational experiences through, for example, sports, music, school trips and residential. These help to develop the children's confidence and self-esteem. The school contributes annually to selected charities and an appropriate emphasis is placed on the importance of caring for others in the wider community.

2.5 The quality of the pastoral care throughout the school is very good. In class, a secure, supportive environment is provided for learning. In recent years, the teachers have undertaken a review of the pastoral dimension of the curriculum to include the promotion of positive behaviour and anti-bullying strategies. A comprehensive range of pastoral policies has been developed to guide the work of the school. A personal development programme has been included within classroom practice; it contributes towards a positive environment in which the children feel valued and at ease. A 'buddy' and peer mentoring system, in conjunction with a peer elected school council, have lately been introduced to encourage the development of personal responsibility amongst the oldest children. Appropriate house and merit systems are in place and are valued highly by the children. There is clear evidence of the reward systems having a very positive impact on the children's motivation and work in class. Morning assemblies are well planned during which the children participate spontaneously, and with enthusiasm, in singing.

2.6 The school is using the guidelines for the vetting procedures as detailed in the DE Circulars 2006/6/7/8/9 to direct practice. Procedures are also in place which enable the staff to implement the main guidelines outlined in DE Circular 1999/10, 'Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection' and in Circular 2003/13, 'Welfare and Protection of Pupils Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order'. Further areas for development have been identified appropriately within the pastoral programme which include, the need to complete the training programme for child protection by May 2007 for all staff, including the designated governor, and the further monitoring and evaluation of the revised pastoral care programme.

2.7 The teachers' written planning is clear and thorough, with intended learning outcomes identified and linked well to appropriate classroom activities and resources. The quality of teaching seen was always satisfactory; in a significant minority of the lessons, it was very good or excellent. In the best practice, the learning outcomes expected were displayed and explained well at the start of the lesson, reiterated during the lesson where appropriate, and assessed well by both children and teacher at the lesson's conclusion. The teaching approaches often challenged the children to think for themselves. In particular, they had frequent opportunities to discuss and to share ideas with their peers, within small groups, and with the whole class as appropriate, and, in particular, to develop their thinking skills and problem-solving abilities. This excellent practice, where the highest standards were reached, needs to be disseminated to all the classes and this is a key priority for development.

2.8 In key stage (KS) 1, the children have regular opportunities to take part in structured play sessions. In the sessions observed, the teachers provided a range of activities which enabled the children to co-operate, share and exercise some choice. The activities provided offer opportunities for the children to develop their social skills. The school is involved in

piloting the Enriched Curriculum and the current programme is effectively co-ordinated. The staff have developed useful planning, based on appropriate themes and topics, which guides their work with the children. Routines are well established and the children are engaged in purposeful activity. As part of its more recent work, and under the able guidance of the newly appointed co-ordinator for play-based learning, the school is drawing up, appropriately, guidance to define the play-based learning programme to be provided from years 1-4, including the further definition of the learning, continuity and progression expected in the children's play experiences.

2.9 The work in English is developing well. The written documentation which guides the learning and teaching is of a good quality. A new Literacy Scheme and a range of other resources, introduced recently, have augmented well the range of resources already available for literacy, and have had a major impact in enhancing further the children's learning experiences. In English, most of the children reach standards in talking and listening, reading and writing that range from satisfactory to very good, in line with their abilities.

2.10 During the inspection, oral work of a very good quality was observed. In a majority of the lessons seen, the teachers employed a wide range of well-planned and imaginative strategies, and they frequently encouraged the children to pose, as well as to answer questions. The children clearly benefited from these approaches, as they expressed their opinions and shared their views with others. For example, in a year 5 class focusing on the key factors associated with a healthy lifestyle, the children listened attentively to the teacher during well-planned lesson exposition, and then displayed good oral skills and produced written work of a high quality in subsequent group work. The children's oral contributions in formal lessons and in Circle Time are valued and they listen attentively to the ideas and opinions of others.

2.11 Reading for enjoyment is encouraged well through the use of class novels, and a wide range of fiction and non-fiction books. Good use is made of Big Books, the core reading scheme and linguistic phonics to promote engagement with text and the enjoyment of reading. There is a systematic approach to the teaching of reading including the use of phonics, where appropriate, and this has helped significantly the language development of the children. The inspection would endorse the further development of these approaches where needed, in both key stages.

2.12 The standard of presentation of the children's written work in English and across the curriculum is excellent. There are many examples of independent writing of a very good standard, in English and across the curriculum, in all of the classes. A few of the children are capable of making an earlier start to independent writing. The development of the children's writing is well integrated with the other aspects of the English curriculum. In KS1, the talking, listening and reading activities in Big Books are developed appropriately into tasks such as illustration, labelling, sequencing, sentence construction and simple story writing. In KS2, the children engage in writing in a wide range of formats. In both key stages, the children write poems and prose with sensitivity and to a good standard.

2.13 Information and communication technology is used effectively by the teachers and children in promoting and supporting learning and teaching in English. The children become increasingly competent and confident in the use of computers. Examples of the children's writing from across the curriculum, often using ICT, are attractively displayed in workbooks, in the classrooms and in the corridors. The ICT co-ordinator has appropriate plans to help the

teachers identify further opportunities for the embedding of ICT in English. The children in year 7 reach very good standards in the Scheme of Information Technology (IT) Accreditation at KS2, organised by the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA).

2.14 There are 26 children enrolled in the two designated classes for MLD at KS1 and KS2. The teachers and classroom assistants provide a well-structured and varied curriculum, and have high standards and expectations for the children. The good quality individual education plans (EPs), combined with the detailed planning and purposeful working atmosphere, ensure that the children progress well, within a stimulating and caring environment. The provision is organised and co-ordinated effectively, and the quality of education is very good. The Principal is informed, interested and supportive. The teachers work hard to involve parents, and there are formal and informal opportunities to share information about the children's progress. The teachers and classroom assistants work well together, and, in collaboration with appropriate speech therapy professionals, they provide a rich environment to develop language.

2.15 The provision for SEN is given a high priority within the school, and significant resources have been made available for this work. The children's learning needs are identified at an early stage through a combination of observations, and the use of standardised and diagnostic tests. The recently appointed special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs) provide good leadership and administer the support programme effectively. The SENCOs, class teachers and classroom assistants collaborate well to compile appropriate EPs, which identify strategies and targets to promote improvement; the targets are communicated effectively to the children. They support the children very well; work is differentiated and well matched to the children's ability levels. The withdrawal sessions are supportive and productive; the children respond well to the teacher, and are gaining confidence, self-esteem and making steady progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills. A 'Reading Partnership' programme, facilitated by the classroom assistants, provides effective in-class support for children experiencing difficulties with aspects of their reading.

2.16 The parents are kept well informed of their children's progress through parental interviews and written reports. All of the teachers mark the children's work regularly. In the best practice, the work is marked with supportive and helpful comments, which often allow the children to improve aspects of their performance. There is an active Parent Teacher Association which supports the school regularly and enthusiastically through a variety of activities.

2.17 The Principal provides very good leadership. His vision and dedication are very evident in the work of the school, in the positive attitudes of the children and the teachers, and in the strong emphasis placed on meeting the individual child's needs. He gives clear direction to the work and development of the school. He knows the children well, and has worked hard to develop a strong sense of team-work and school identity.

2.18 There are excellent links with the parents and the local community. The Principal has played a key and effective role in developing the links and close involvement with the local community and associated community groups, which are outstanding and serve as an example of excellent practice. For example, through his membership of a group within the local community the "Seymour Hill and Conway Lobby Group", he actively and

systematically seeks the views of the surrounding community, and ensures these are taken into account in the review of the school's curriculum, organisation and provision. The regular use of the school premises by the parents and local community, for example, in classes provided during the day for local parents to acquire professional qualifications, in reading partnership schemes, and in the encouragement of the use of a proposed new multi-purpose sports pitch by a range of community groups, have collectively contributed to the development of the existing excellent community links. The school maintains regular and effective communication with the parents about school events and arrangements that affect their children, for example through the regular distribution of an informative newsletter.

2.19 With a recent reduction in staffing there has been an appropriate redefinition of roles and responsibilities for the shorter term. There is a good culture of self-evaluation within the school and the Principal and senior management have played a key role in facilitating this. To develop further this culture, there is an important need to make more extensive use of performance data, including DE benchmarking information, to review and inform further improvements in learning and teaching. The school has already made a good start in this area, for example in the recent good quality analysis of quantitative data available on the children's performance in mathematics; this good practice could be developed further in mathematics and, importantly, be usefully extended to English. The school has been involved in the pilot for the revised curriculum and, as part of its engagement, has identified the need to develop further some aspects of learning and teaching, including, a sustained emphasis on the promotion of the children's thinking and problem-solving skills. To develop this work there will be a need to adjust further the roles and responsibilities, as appropriate, in conjunction with an effectively related professional development programme in support of all staff. The few areas for improvement highlighted in this report have been identified already by the school. The school should consider adjusting its SDP to take into account the detail of the inspection findings.

3. CONCLUSION

The strengths of the school include:

- the caring, orderly and supportive ethos;
- the very good team-work and working relationships;
- the well-motivated children whose behaviour is exemplary;
- the good quality displays celebrating the children's work;
- the hard-working and committed staff;
- the very good quality of pastoral care, including the well-conceived positive reward system;
- the very good or excellent practice observed in a significant minority of lessons;
- the range of in-school and extra-curricular activities, and extensive charity work;

- the work in English which is developing very well: most of the children reach standards in talking and listening, reading and writing that range from satisfactory to very good, in line with their abilities;
- the very good provision for children in the MLD units, and throughout the school for children who have special educational needs;
- the links and involvement with the local community which are outstanding and serve as an example of excellent practice;
- the good range of experiences provided in ICT, and very good standards achieved by the end of year 7; and
- the very good leadership of the hard-working, committed Principal who is supportive of his staff, and who has a clear and appropriate vision for the school, particularly its place within the local community.

In the areas inspected, the school has major strengths in its educational and pastoral provision. The educational and pastoral needs of the learners 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.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2007

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 DE website: www.deni.gov.uk or may be obtained from the Inspection Services Branch, Department of Education, Rathgael House, 43 Balloo Road, Bangor, Co Down BT19 7PR.