

# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

St Bernard's Primary School  
and Nursery Unit, Glengormley

Report of an Inspection  
in February 2010

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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: St Bernard's Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 01/02/10**  
**Glengormley**  
 ii. **School Reference Number: 303-3313** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Year 1 Intake	59	63	71	75	70
<b>Enrolments</b>					
Primary	468	465	470	473	457
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Unit	51	52	52	52	52
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):

95.7%

**NI Avg Att: 94.9%**

<b>Primary &amp; Reception</b>	<b>Nursery Unit</b>	<b>Special Unit</b>	<b>Irish Medium Unit</b>
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- D. i. Number of Teachers  
 (including the principal and part-time teachers): 21 1 0 0  
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)

- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 21.8 NI PTR: 20.4

- iii. Average Class Size: 25.5

- iv. Class Size (Range): 19 to 31

- v. Ancillary Support:

Number of Hours **Per Week:**

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| i. Clerical support:  | 36    |
| ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support:           | 112.5 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 32.5  |

- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 0.4%

- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 24.2%

- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0

- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 8.5%

- x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2008/09 who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics: **English 77.03%** **Mathematics 77.03%**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT**

St Bernard's Primary School is situated in Glengormley, County Antrim. The school serves the parish of St Mary's on the Hill and the children come mainly from the surrounding area. The enrolment of the school has remained steady over the last ten years and presently stands at 457. Fifty-two children are enrolled in the nursery unit which offers two part-time sessions each day. Approximately 9% of the children are currently entitled to free school meals. The school has identified approximately 24% of the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning. At the time of the inspection, the Principal was absent on sick leave and the Vice-principal was absent on maternity leave. Substitute teachers were employed in the nursery unit, in year 1, year 4, year 6, and year 7, and as Learning Support teachers.

### **1.2 FOCUS**

The inspection focused on the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy, the quality of provision for learning and teaching and the quality of leadership and management. In addition, the inspection evaluated the contribution of information and communication technology (ICT) in promoting and supporting learning. 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 groups of children from year 6 and year 7. One hundred and nineteen questionnaires were issued to the parents; approximately 24% were returned to Inspection Services Branch of which 14 contained additional written comments. Nearly all of the responses (90%) indicated a high level of satisfaction with the school. The responses from the parental questionnaires indicate that the parents believe their children are safe, secure and well-settled at the school; they appreciate in particular the approachability of the Principal and staff, and the extent to which the children's contributions to school life are valued. A small number of parents raised concerns in relation to the quality of the accommodation, levels of staff absenteeism and insufficient information on their children's progress. In the nursery unit, approximately 33% of the questionnaires issued to the parents were returned. All of the parents who responded expressed a high level of satisfaction with the work of the nursery unit.

Seventeen of the teachers completed the online questionnaire and ten made additional written comments. Most of those who responded reported that the pastoral and educational needs of the children are met effectively, and that the children's success is celebrated regularly. They also commented positively on the links established with the parents. However, a majority of those who responded expressed concern at levels of staff absenteeism, and aspects of school leadership and management.

The Governors expressed their appreciation of the pastoral care provided for the children and raised concerns about the standards attained by the children, the quality of leadership and levels of staff absenteeism.

The children in year 6 spoke very positively about their enjoyment of school life, their supportive teachers and the opportunities they have to take part in a range of after-school clubs. They commented that the playgrounds have rough surfaces and one area is too small to play properly. They reported that they feel safe, and know whom to turn to in the event of a concern.

The views of the parents, the teachers and the children have been shared with the Acting Principal and the Governors. The concerns raised are commented on within the relevant sections of the report.

#### 1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school and in the nursery unit is very good. Each has identified areas for development and has put in place appropriate action plans to improve further the pastoral provision. These plans include revising the arrangements for the working of the school council to ensure it is a more effective body for harnessing and building upon the ideas and concerns of the children. The strengths of the pastoral provision include the welcoming and inclusive ethos in which all the children are cared for, the effective arrangements for addressing any concerns which the children have, and the effective leadership and management provided by the pastoral care co-ordinator, supported by the pastoral care team.

#### 1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school and the nursery unit have 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 and the nursery unit give good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity through, for example, the provision for healthy breaks and the links made with health promoting organisations. The co-ordinator and the management team recognise the need to consult with the children, the parents and the staff in continuing to develop the school's healthy eating programme.

#### 1.7 LINKS WITH THE PARENTS AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY

The staff have developed effective links with the parents and communication is maintained through a variety of means including a monthly newsletter, curriculum information sessions at the beginning of each school year, parent-teacher meetings and annual progress reports. Parental involvement is encouraged through consultation on school policies and membership of the Parent Council. The school receives very good support from the Friends of St Bernard's Association which raises significant funds each year to enhance many aspects of the life and work of the school.

The children's learning experiences are enriched through the wide range of extra-curricular activities and the effective use of visitors and educational visits. Active links have been established with the wider community including, in particular, the local post-primary specialist school, the Education for Mutual Understanding link with a neighbouring controlled primary school and international links with schools in Germany, Poland and Portugal through the Comenius programme.

## **2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS**

### **2.1 LEARNING**

The children are friendly, courteous and very well behaved. Almost all are articulate, confident, and show good levels of interest and motivation in their work. They work well together in pairs or groups and, when given the opportunity, are able to discuss their ideas and share their understanding of their work.

An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 data over the past four years shows that in English and mathematics, the school's performance was above the Northern Ireland (NI) average for the first two years. Since then, it has fallen to below the NI average in the most recent two years. Compared with schools in the same free school meals category, the levels of attainment in English and mathematics are below the average throughout the four-year period.

### **2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY**

The quality of the provision for English and literacy is inadequate. In the last three years, while almost all of the children achieved the level expected of them by the end of KS1, just under four-fifths of the children achieved the level expected of them by the end of KS2. A minority of children are not achieving the level expected of them by the time they leave the school.

The quality of work in the children's books ranged from inadequate to very good. The better examples of the children's work had stimulating and engaging tasks that allowed them to write about their thoughts, feelings and opinions and allowed them to respond to what they had read. By contrast, the over-reliance on worksheets and tasks that required limited responses did not enable the children to develop fully extended responses. The school is using data to identify children who require additional support or who are under-performing in English. The inspection findings support the school's aim to ensure that future learning for these children has the necessary support and challenge in order to raise levels of attainment for all.

Reading is developed appropriately in the foundation stage (FS) and KS1 through a phonics programme, shared and guided reading experiences and a commercial reading scheme to provide a systematic approach to developing reading skills. By KS2, the school attempts to create more independent readers through supplementing the reading scheme with a range of fiction and non-fiction texts and uses reading records to involve parents more fully in supporting their children. During the inspection, the children were observed reading aloud from a range of increasingly demanding texts, which they did very well. The good use of a bright and fairly well stocked library supports other initiatives to develop better readers. However, the overall standards in reading across the school are not as good as they need to be and the school itself has correctly prioritised the need to improve the reading provision. The children who experience difficulties with reading need intensive and effective individual support and intervention to ensure that gaps are closed between their reading ages and their chronological age. The more able children require greater challenge in order to develop further their responses to text.

The teachers build on the children's emergent writing skills by teaching the structures and conventions of various writing genres. Although children are taught how to write appropriately in a range of contexts, the teachers need to provide the children with opportunities to write for a range of real audiences, such as, for example, providing a forum like a school magazine or an area on the school website to exhibit and celebrate their work. The standards in writing across the school are not as good

as they need to be and the school itself has recognised the need to improve the standards by introducing new initiatives. When the teachers made use of ICT to develop writing skills, it made a significant impact on the children's motivation, inter-personal skills and on the quality of the writing produced; this good practice needs to be implemented more consistently within and across the key stages.

Talking and Listening is developed across a range of areas of learning. The senior management team (SMT) and the literacy co-ordinator need to take a more strategic overview of progression in this strand of English. The children, when given the opportunity, were confident and articulate speakers with very good social skills.

The quality of the planning for literacy, as it is currently devised, does not ensure that there is progression and appropriately differentiated teaching that is matched closely to the needs of all the children.

The literacy co-ordinator has rightly identified the need to improve the quality of the provision in reading and writing and has taken some appropriate actions to make improvements. It is important that the SMT provides keener oversight and continued support to the work in literacy to ensure that there is greater consistency in the quality of the provision across the school. The SMT needs also to build the capacity of the staff to monitor and evaluate the impact of these changes in terms of the children's motivation and attainment.

## 2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The provision for mathematics and numeracy is inadequate. While most of the children achieve satisfactory standards by the end of KS1, by the end of KS2, the standards are below the expected outcomes. Furthermore, the standards achieved by the children have declined in recent years.

The children often show interest in their mathematics and the presentation of their work in their books ranges from satisfactory to good. They demonstrate satisfactory to good standards in number and shape and space but are less confident with using measures. In general, they have insufficient opportunities to talk about and explain the mathematical processes they use and the mathematical understanding they acquire, and consequently they lack confidence in applying their knowledge in wider contexts.

There is variation in the quality of teaching of mathematics. A minority of the work observed was very good whereas a significant minority needs to improve. In the best practice, the children worked with mathematics in clear contexts which were often well connected to their work across the curriculum. They were given time to think about their work and encouraged then to share their understanding with others. In the less effective practice, the work was over-directed by the teacher, it was poorly matched to the differing needs of the children, there was a lack of pace in the activities and there was insufficient evidence that the children were learning. There is a lack of coherence and progression in the children's mathematics through the school, for example in their work with handling data and using ICT.

The whole-school planning and management of mathematics requires greater cohesion. It has insufficient priority in the school development plan (SDP) and there is little evidence in this planning of the need to improve standards. The recently appointed KS1 co-ordinator for mathematics has made a good start to addressing relevant areas for improvement. At the time of inspection, there was no co-ordinator for mathematics at KS2. The school has appropriately identified the need to provide greater differentiation in the planning and practice through more regular monitoring and analysis of the work in the children's books.



The SMT needs to have greater oversight of the work in numeracy to ensure that teachers are fully supported and that the quality of the provision is consistently good. The school leadership needs to do much more to build the capacity and expertise of staff with regard to mathematics.

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

#### **3.1 PLANNING**

There is significant variation in the quality of planning across the curriculum. Whole-school schemes of work in the key areas of the curriculum are under review. The medium-term planning outlines a range of appropriate themes and topics but does not show sufficient progression within the areas of the curriculum and across the key stages. It is appropriate that the school has identified the need to evaluate more thoroughly the teachers' short-term planning and classroom practice, to ensure that the teaching strategies are sufficiently differentiated to match more closely the needs and abilities of all the children.

#### **3.2 TEACHING**

The teachers are hard-working and dedicated to the children. The quality of the teaching observed ranged from inadequate to very good. The majority of the lessons observed were good or better. In the best practice, the lessons were well-planned and organised, the learning intentions were realised and the teachers helped the children to make connections in their learning. During these lessons the pace was appropriate, the children engaged actively in their learning and developed their thinking skills by responding to the teacher's effective questioning. In two-fifths (40%) of the lessons observed, there were areas for improvement. In the less effective practice, there was a lack of challenge, the teaching was over-directed, and there was insufficient differentiation to meet the learning needs of all of the children. The staff need to ensure a more consistent and systematic approach to the acquisition of skills and concepts, and provide opportunities for the children to apply these skills across the curriculum. The classroom assistants provide very valuable support for the teachers and they contribute significantly to the development of the children's learning.

#### **3.3 ASSESSMENT**

There is a clear emphasis on the collection of assessment data and the co-ordinators are beginning to use a suitable range of standardised and non-standardised tests, and classroom observations to assess the children's level of achievement across the curriculum. The school has identified the need for more effective use of the analysis of this performance data to inform planning for learning and teaching, and to raise the standards in literacy and numeracy attained by the children. There is a variation in the quality of the marking of the children's work. In the best practice, the teachers mark and annotate the children's work, indicating appropriately what has been achieved and how, if necessary, the work could be improved. This good practice should be disseminated throughout the school and the children should be made aware, more regularly, of their strengths and areas for improvement in written work.

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

The school has an inclusive ethos and the class teachers, the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and the parents are involved in the development of the children's individual education plans (IEPs). There is variability in the quality and effectiveness of some of the targets set in the IEPs, and insufficient monitoring and recording of the

children's progress and attainments. There is currently insufficient evidence to show that the children are making progress. A more rigorous system of diagnostic testing has been recently introduced to inform future IEPs and ensure that more sharply focused targets are identified and that progress can be measured.

During the inspection, support was provided at the FS and KS1 through in-class differentiated teaching and withdrawal sessions for some of the children. The quality of the teaching observed in the withdrawal groups was variable. There is inadequate additional learning support provided for children in KS2. The SMT needs to evaluate the effectiveness of the current provision for special educational needs (SEN) and ensure that the support provided, both in class and in withdrawal, is more appropriately differentiated and tailored to match more closely the needs of individual children.

The SENCO is aware of the need to develop further the quality and effectiveness of the SEN provision. The teachers and classroom assistants require a planned programme of staff development, focusing on teaching strategies to support the children with their learning.

Appropriate links are maintained with a range of support services and the school receives beneficial multi-disciplinary support for those children requiring specialised help. There is evidence that these children are making satisfactory progress.

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

##### **4.1 LEADERSHIP**

The quality of leadership and management is inadequate. The Governors report that over the past few years, the attendance of the Principal in school has been erratic. This has affected adversely coherence, progression and strategic leadership in the school's development. The Governors and the employing authority need to address the issues within the leadership and management as a matter of urgency to restore the staff's confidence that they can overcome the challenges faced by the school.

In the absence of the Principal and Vice-principal, the Acting Principal has worked hard to provide a stable and supportive environment for the pupils, staff and the parents. She understands the key issues facing the school and is leading and managing the school very well within a difficult and challenging context.

The school has experienced a significant level of staff absenteeism in recent years and this has affected adversely working relationships among the staff and the development and co-ordination of key curricular areas. The roles and responsibilities of various post holders and other members of staff need to be reviewed to ensure there is a whole-school approach to improvement in key curricular areas and greater consistency in the quality of the learning and the teaching.

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

All staff have contributed to the current SDP which contains an overview of the school's priorities for the three year period and associated action plans. In order to meet fully the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005, there is a need to include the arrangements for the Governors, in consultation with the Principal, to monitor, review and evaluate progress against the SDP. In adjusting the SDP in response to the inspection, the challenge now facing the school's leadership team is to ensure that annual action plans are more sharply focused on raising the standards attained by the children and that the plans are rigorously evaluated to identify improvement and inform future targets.

Currently, the nursery unit does not have an SDP. The management of the school need to develop an appropriate plan with associated actions to outline the strategic development of the work within the nursery unit.

#### **4.3 STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

The staff development programme is linked to the SDP priorities and the staff have accessed recent training on the Northern Ireland Curriculum. There is a need for a more systematic approach to the dissemination of best practice and more effective in-school support for teachers and classroom assistants in order to build teacher confidence and ensure that the quality of learning and teaching is consistently good.

#### **4.4 GOVERNANCE**

The Governors take an eager interest in the school. They are keen to take on a more strategic role but are frustrated in that most of their time is diverted to what they view as operational matters which really need to be carried out by the school's leadership and management. They are very knowledgeable of the issues facing the school and are willing to work with the appropriate authorities to have these addressed as expeditiously as possible.

#### **4.5 ACCOMMODATION**

The internal accommodation is clean and bright, and the SMT is carrying out a programme of refurbishment of classrooms and corridors. Many of the classrooms are cramped and short of storage space and are not conducive to active learning. The school's exterior is poorly maintained and in need of urgent repair.

### **5 CONCLUSION**

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

- the very good behaviour of the children, their interest and motivation, and their positive attitudes to their learning;
- the welcoming and inclusive ethos for the children and the parents;
- the very good pastoral care of the children;
- the hard work and dedication of the teachers; and
- the good links which have been established with the parents, other schools and support agencies.

#### **5.2 The areas for improvement include:**

- the inadequate leadership and management of the school;
- the inadequate standards and achievements of the children in literacy and numeracy across the school;

- the quality of provision for SEN; and
- the quality of the teaching, to ensure it is more sharply focused on the children's learning and more closely matched to their needs and abilities.

5.3 In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is inadequate; the areas for improvement significantly outweigh the strengths in the provision. The inspection has identified major areas for improvement in standards, learning and teaching and leadership and management, which need to be addressed urgently if the school is to meet effectively the needs of all the children.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12-18 month period.

## 6. THE NURSERY UNIT

6.1 The nursery unit offers 52 part-time places; currently, six of the children attending the unit are in their penultimate pre-school year. At the time of the inspection, the teacher-in-charge of the nursery unit was absent on secondment to the South-Eastern Education and Library Board; a substitute teacher-in-charge was in post.

6.2 The main strengths within the nursery unit's educational and pastoral provision are as follows:

- the nursery unit has a very positive ethos; there is a welcoming atmosphere and caring relationships between the staff and the children. The playroom is bright, attractive and colourful. Good use is made of the space available to create distinct areas for play. The children's own art work, interest areas, posters and photographs are used to create an inviting and interesting learning environment;
- most of the children's play is settled and their behaviour is very good. Many show good concentration in their activities; they are becoming increasingly more independent as they demonstrate their ability to make choices and decisions for themselves. Most of the children are articulate, friendly and show a natural curiosity as they explore the materials and activities on offer;
- during the inspection, there were many examples when the staff joined the children in their play and provided useful ideas to extend the children's thinking and learning. The children are at ease with the staff and approach them confidently to join in their play or to provide them with support. The younger children are well supported and have been helped to settle well into the nursery unit;
- the staff make good efforts to identify, support and address the difficulties experienced by some children with their learning. There is effective liaison with the parents and other professionals;
- the nursery unit curriculum offers satisfactory to good opportunities for learning in all areas of the curriculum. A particular strength of the programme is the promotion of the children's language and early mark making during play. The daily timetable is organised well to provide a good balance of free play and activities organised by the staff. The necessary routines are managed unobtrusively and used effectively to promote the children's social and conversational skills; and
- the acting teacher-in-charge displays commitment to the children and the work of the nursery unit; she has identified appropriately areas for further development within the nursery unit's provision. She is well supported by the nursery assistant; they work together effectively in the best interests of the children. The staff have identified the need for more time to develop the planning of the programme and to work more closely with their colleagues in the FS to ensure continuity and progression. The SMT needs to ensure that the teacher receives appropriately targeted support in her early professional development.

The inspection identified areas for improvement. The following are the most important areas that need attention:

- the staff need to develop further the methods for planning and evaluating the programme and for assessing the children's progress; and
- the staff need to use their evaluations and their assessment information to guide them more effectively in their interactions with the children.

## **CONCLUSION**

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the nursery unit is good. The nursery unit has important strengths in most of its educational provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the nursery unit has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the nursery unit's progress on the areas for improvement.

# **STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON THE NURSERY UNIT IN ST BERNARD'S PRIMARY SCHOOL, GLENGORMLEY**

## **1. Details of Children**

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

\* 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.	5.8%
Average attendance for the previous year.	95.9%

## **2. Duration of Sessions**

<b>Full-time</b>	<b>Part-time: am</b>	<b>Part-time: pm</b>
-	2½ hrs	2½ hrs

## **3. DETAILS OF STAFF**

<b>Number of:</b>	<b>Full-Time</b>	<b>Part-Time</b>
Teachers	1	0
Nursery Assistants	1	0
Qualified Nursery Assistants	1	0

<b>Number of: ****</b>	
Students	0
Trainees	5

\*\*\*\* Total placements since September of current year

## **4. Parental Questionnaires (to be completed by Inspection Services Branch)**

Number issued	52
Percentage returned	32.7%
Number of written comments	4

**HEALTH AND SAFETY (PRIMARY SCHOOL)**

- The playground surfaces are rough and uneven.
- Some of the toilets need refurbished.
- There is insufficient storage for physical education equipment.
- There is no disabled access to the school building.
- The building which accommodates the year 1 classes is in a poor state of repair. The external fascias and window frames are badly deteriorated and some of the windows are loose and unsafe. Water is leaking from some skylights.



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