

# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

St Brigid's Primary School and  
Nursery Unit, Derry

Report of an Inspection  
in May 2011



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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 Brigid's Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 09/05/11**  
 ii. **School Reference Number: 203-6142** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

<b>School Year</b>	<b>2006/07</b>	<b>2007/08</b>	<b>2008/09</b>	<b>2009/10</b>	<b>2010/11</b>
Year 1 Intake	41	36	27	33	45
<b>Enrolments</b>					
Primary	317	313	293	278	289
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Unit	26	26	26	26	27
Special Unit	0	0	4	6	10
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):

91.5%

**NI Avg Att: 94.9%**

Primary & Reception	Nursery Unit	Special Unit	Irish Medium Unit
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- D. i. Number of Teachers  
 (including the principal and part-time teachers): 13 1 2 0  
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 20.15 NI PTR: 20.7
- iii. Average Class Size: 21.8
- iv. Class Size (Range): 18 to 29
- v. Ancillary Support:  
 Number of Hours **Per Week**:
- |   |    |
|---|----|
| i. Clerical support:  | 36 |
| ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support:           | 55 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 37 |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 5.5%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 21%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 27
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 61%
- x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2009/10 who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics: **English** 85.7% **Mathematics** 83.7%

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Brigid's Primary School is situated in the Carnhill estate in Derry. Almost all of the children who attend the school come from the local and surrounding area. The enrolment of the school has decreased slightly over the past five years and currently stands at 289 children with an additional 27 in the nursery unit. At the time of the inspection, approximately 61% of the children were entitled to receive free school meals and 21% were identified by the school as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning; almost six percent have statements of educational need. The school maintains two specialist and highly structured classes for ten children who have specific social and learning needs related to autism and behaviour.

### 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 use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning, and the school's arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection were evaluated.

### 1.3 THE VIEWS OF THE PARENTS, TEACHERS, GOVERNORS, SUPPORT STAFF 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 the children from year 6.

Almost 37% of parental questionnaires from the primary school were returned to Inspection Services Branch. Eleven returns included additional written comments. The parents expressed a high level of satisfaction with the educational and pastoral provision provided by the school. In particular, they acknowledged the caring and supportive staff, and the wide range of extra-curricular activities available for the children; they indicated strongly that their children were happy and enjoyed school.

Thirty-five percent of the parents from the nursery unit responded to the questionnaires, two of whom wrote additional comments. The parents expressed a very high level of satisfaction with the provision in the nursery unit.

Seven of the teachers and eleven members of the support staff responded to the online questionnaires. Nearly all of these responses were very positive and highly affirmative of the work of the school.

The very few issues raised through the questionnaires were shared with the Principal and the governors.

The governors expressed strong support for the school. In particular, they commented on the hard work and dedication of the Principal, and on how well the staff work together to promote the children's welfare and learning.

The children from year 6 said that they are aware of what to do if they have concerns about their safety or well-being. They talked enthusiastically about many aspects of school life, including the friendships made and the supportive teachers who make the lessons enjoyable and interesting.

#### 1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school and nursery unit is very good. The school has a supportive and inclusive ethos. The teaching and non-teaching staff develop the children's self-esteem and celebrate their achievements, including their recent success in winning the Northern Ireland Football Championship. During the inspection, the quality of the working relationships observed between the children and the staff were mutually respectful, caring and supportive. The children's behaviour was excellent. Their work and achievements are recognised through a whole school reward system, assemblies and in displays of photographs of sporting and drama events. There are appropriate and effective arrangements in the nurture unit to support the children's well-being. The Principal and staff have identified appropriately the need to consult more effectively with the children about school life, for example, through the planned development of a school council.

#### 1.5 SAFEGUARDING

The school has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department.

#### 1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school and nursery unit give very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity; for example, through the promotion of healthy lunches, fruit breaks and the involvement of the children in sport which encourages the children to adopt a healthy lifestyle. In addition, the children in the nurture unit have excellent opportunities to grow vegetables and to cook healthy food.

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

The school and the nursery unit encourage the parents to become involved in the education of their children. Effective communication with parents is maintained through regular newsletters and meetings. An active parent-teacher association raises funds to support charitable causes and to contribute to resources for the school's literacy and numeracy programmes. Valuable links have been established with a range of external educational agencies to support the children identified with additional needs. In addition, the nursery unit has established effective links with the local SureStart group.

### 2. **ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS**

#### 2.1 LEARNING

The children are highly motivated and demonstrate excellent levels of engagement and enjoyment in their learning. They interact confidently with their teachers and demonstrate interest and skill in learning collaboratively through group and paired work. In a majority of classes, particularly in key stage (KS) 2, the children experience a range of appropriately

challenging tasks and activities, which provide them with opportunities to display their very good levels of independence and self-management skills. The children who receive additional literacy support make very good progress. The school maintains good records of these children's achievements which tracks effectively their progress so that appropriate intervention strategies are introduced where necessary. The school's assessment data illustrates clearly that most of the children make very good progress because of these interventions and that their positive attitudes to learning are sustained once the additional support has been discontinued.

An analysis of the KS2 assessment data over the past four years shows that in English and mathematics the school's performance has improved from being below the Northern Ireland (NI) average to being in line with the NI average. When compared with schools in the same free school meals category, the levels of attainment in English and mathematics have improved from being in line with the average to being well above the average. The school participates in the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) ICT Accreditation scheme and by the end of KS2, the majority of the children achieve good standards.

## 2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

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

The literacy co-ordinator provides effective leadership and has a clear vision for the development of English in the school. The long-term planning for literacy provides helpful guidance on progression in the children's learning. The staff evaluate appropriately the effectiveness of the literacy programme through the analysis of internal performance data and qualitative evidence; consequently, they develop successfully the children's inferential comprehension skills.

The teachers plan appropriately for the talking and listening sessions across all year groups. In a majority of classes, the effective learning involves the children in a wide range of activities that integrate well the talking and listening, reading and writing. In the foundation stage (FS), shared reading and play-based learning provide the children with good opportunities to share their ideas with their teachers and peers. In KS1 and KS2, a variety of well-planned opportunities for the children to engage and interact with others promotes very good thinking, talking and listening skills.

The children acquire core reading skills through the development of phonological awareness and, in the majority of classes, by experiencing high quality shared, modelled and guided reading practices used by the teachers. Commercial reading schemes and reading records underpin the development of the children's reading. The use of purposeful reading tasks matched to the children's ability and the additional withdrawal support are having a positive influence in helping the children become competent readers. From year 4, the children extend their reading experiences through novels and other texts that are appropriately matched to class, group and individual needs. During the inspection, there were many very good examples of the teachers using the reading material effectively to develop the children's understanding of characterisation, to explore language and grammar in context, and to draw out how they might improve their own writing. In a minority of classes, the teachers need to develop systematically and progressively more effective strategies for teaching reading, such as reading sessions which focus on the development of key reading skills, and to provide opportunities for the children to engage in a greater variety of associated reading activities. By the end of KS2, the majority of the children read with very good levels of understanding and fluency.

The school has adopted a coherent approach to the teaching of writing. In the FS, the teachers need to provide more frequent opportunities for the children to extend their independent writing skills. In KS1, the children's core writing skills and opportunities for independent writing are developed appropriately through the use of individual whiteboards and writing frames; the best writing relates to the children's own interests and draws well on their own ideas and images. By the end of KS1, the majority of children express their ideas to a good standard. In KS2, the children are provided with very good opportunities to write for a variety of purposes and audiences and the majority of children are confident writers. In the effective practice the children edit and redraft their work and develop their independent writing skills through work in other areas of learning.

## **2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY**

The overall quality of provision in mathematics and numeracy is very good.

The numeracy co-ordinator provides effective curricular leadership. The current action plan outlines a number of appropriate areas for development, including the further development of the mental mathematics programme. He promotes actively enthusiasm for, and enjoyment of, mathematics throughout the school. He provides excellent support for the teachers through, for example, the creation of a portfolio of mathematical investigations set in meaningful contexts for each year group, and the provision of useful workshops for teachers on developing children's reasoning skills and mental mathematics skills.

In the FS, the teachers are developing the children's mathematical concepts, skills and language through a variety of games, activities and practical mathematics lessons. Sessions of mental mathematics are a feature at the start of the lessons and are used well. In KS1, the children have very good opportunities to consolidate and extend their learning through an appropriate range of activities such as paired and group work, practical tasks, discussion, investigation and problem-solving. In the best practice observed, the teachers had high expectations of what the children could achieve, focused appropriately on the development of mathematical processes, and engaged in purposeful discussion with the children, using appropriate mathematical language. In KS2, the teachers give a high priority to developing the children's flexibility with number and their reasoning skills. The work is regularly linked to other areas of the curriculum and there are many well-planned opportunities for the children to apply mathematics to real-life contexts. In most classes, the teachers match the work appropriately to the abilities and understanding of the children.

During the inspection, the most able children in year 4 demonstrated good knowledge of number and very good knowledge of shape and space, data-handling and measures. The most able children in year 7 demonstrated high levels of competence in all areas of the mathematics curriculum, and excellent use of mathematical language. By the end of KS2, almost all of the children achieve excellent standards in mathematics.

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

### **3.1 PLANNING**

The teachers are dedicated and plan their work conscientiously. In a majority of classes, the medium term planning identifies appropriately the learning outcomes for the children and the range of teaching approaches and resources to be used; the teachers evaluate the written plans effectively in order to inform future planning, teaching and learning for their children. In a minority of classes, the plans need to focus more effectively on building upon the children's experiences and current competences to raise further the standards they attain.



### 3.2 TEACHING

During the inspection, the quality of the teaching observed ranged from outstanding to satisfactory; over nine-tenths of the lessons evaluated were good or better, with three-fifths being very good or outstanding. In a majority of classes, the teachers understand the children's learning needs and use a suitable range of teaching strategies to engage their interests and ensure high levels of motivation and involvement. They set appropriately high expectations for all of the children; the lessons are very well paced and challenging. The teachers use skilful questioning approaches to stimulate the children's thinking and to develop their extended oral responses. The senior management needs to share and disseminate across the school, the key aspects of the very good and outstanding practice observed during the inspection, in order to ensure consistently high-quality learning experiences for the children as they progress through the key stages.

Information and communication technology is used creatively and effectively in nearly all of the classes, with teachers making good use of computer programs, programmable devices and websites to support learning and teaching in literacy and numeracy.

The school is committed fully to meeting the needs of the children who require support with aspects of their learning. A significant feature of the provision is the extent to which the school caters for the development of the children's social, emotional and behavioural skills. This is enhanced by the nurture unit that provides a very good programme for a small number of children who present with specific developmental issues in these areas. The children who require additional support in literacy are identified through appropriate assessment methods and a range of effective strategies are employed to address their needs; this very good provision needs to include the children who are having difficulty with aspects of their learning in numeracy.

### 3.3 ASSESSMENT

The school has designed and implements very effective processes for the continual assessment of all the children. Through a comprehensive analysis of standardised and non-standardised tests, the teachers identify appropriate whole-school targets for improvement in aspects of literacy and numeracy. They make good use of the data to identify groups of children who are having difficulty with aspects of their learning. The very good practice in the majority of the classes, where the teachers set well-focused individual targets and action plans to meet the learning needs of these children, needs to be disseminated across the school.

The teachers mark the children's work diligently; they add supportive, appreciative comments and, in the majority of classes, indicate to the children how their work can be improved. In a significant minority of classes, the children are encouraged through effective self and peer assessment to reflect upon and improve the quality of their work and to evaluate the work of others.

There are effective procedures in place to keep parents well informed about their children's progress; these include written reports and formal parent-teacher consultations. The annual reports on the children are detailed, informative and indicate clearly to parents how they can reinforce and contribute to the education of their child. In addition, opportunities are provided throughout the year for parents to meet with teachers as the need arises.

### 3.4 AUTISM AND LEARNING SUPPORT CLASSES

The quality of the provision in the autism and learning support classes is very good. All of the children demonstrate improvement over their previous learning and their baseline assessment. They respond well to the visually structured classroom environment, the practical approach to the lessons and above all to the skill of the teachers and assistants who are patient, caring and confident. The teachers now need to set long-term targets for the children's achievement in order to provide a better benchmark for monitoring and evaluating the impact of their work with the children. They should develop further the integration of the children from the specialist classes into the mainstream classes through more collaborative planning of lessons and joint discussion of the benefits of these sessions to the children's learning and social interaction.

## 4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

### 4.1 LEADERSHIP

The quality of leadership and management in the school is very good. The Principal has been in post for 12 years. She has high expectations for all members of the school community and is dedicated to providing the highest standard of education for all of the children. She is very well supported by the Vice-principal, senior management team (SMT) and co-ordinators who provide very effective leadership within their management roles and curricular areas of responsibility.

The special educational needs co-ordinator, who has been in post for 18 months, is extremely hard-working and committed to meeting the learning needs of all of the children. She has developed the expertise of the staff, particularly with regard to literacy, and she has promoted the parents' understanding of the issues associated with special educational needs.

### 4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

An effective culture of self-evaluation has been established throughout the school, and a collegial approach to school development planning involves parents, governors and all members of staff in identifying the strengths within the existing provision, and setting priorities for further improvement. The school gives very good attention to, and meets fully, the requirements of the School Development Plans (SDP) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005. The Principal and SMT give a high priority to developing the skills and expertise of the teaching staff; this development programme is improving the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school.

### 4.3 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The school governors make very positive contributions to the life and work of the school and support effectively the Principal and the staff in the implementation of the SDP. They ensure that all aspects of the life and work of the school are kept under review.

## 5. CONCLUSION

### 5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the excellent behaviour of the children and their positive attitudes to learning;
- the very good quality of the provision in the nursery unit, the autism and learning support classes, and the nurture unit;

- the very good standards achieved by most of the children in literacy and numeracy by the end of KS2;
- the effective use of ICT to enhance and to enrich the children's learning experiences;
- the high quality of the teaching observed, which was very good or outstanding in three-fifths of the lessons; and
- the effective leadership of the Principal, Vice-principal and co-ordinators in establishing a culture of self-evaluation throughout the school, and the resulting action to promote improvement in the best interests of all of the children.

5.2 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.

## 6. THE NURSERY UNIT

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

- the well-settled, highly independent children whose behaviour is exemplary and who engage very effectively in sustained play activities;
- the broad and balanced pre-school curriculum and, in particular, the very good development of the children's literacy and numeracy skills;
- the consistently good and, at times, the very good quality of the staff's interactions with the children which develop effectively the children's learning;
- the thorough planning which is reviewed rigorously and regularly by the staff to reflect the observations and assessment of the children's learning in order to meet the needs of all of the children;
- the effective leadership of the nursery teacher; and
- the reflective and collaborative approach of the nursery staff and their commitment to continuous improvement in the interests of the children.

6.2 In the areas inspected the quality of education provided by this nursery unit is very good. The nursery unit is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

**STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON ST BRIGID'S PRIMARY SCHOOL NURSERY UNIT, DERRY**

**1. Details of Children**

<b>Number of children:</b>	<b>Class 1</b>	<b>Class 2</b>
Attending full-time	27	0
Attending part-time	0	0
Under 3 years of age*	0	0
With statement of SEN**	0	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4***	1	0
At CoP stages 1 or 2***	2	0
With English as an additional language	0	0

\* 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.	58%
Average attendance for the previous year.	89%

**2. Duration of Sessions**

<b>Full-time</b>	<b>Part-time: am</b>	<b>Part-time: pm</b>
4 ½ hours	-	-

**3. Details of Staff**

<b>Number of:</b>	<b>Full-Time</b>	<b>Part-Time</b>
Teachers	1	0
Nursery Assistants	2	0
Qualified Nursery Assistants	2	0

<b>Number of: ****</b>	
Students	0
Trainees	2

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

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

Number issued	26
Percentage returned	35%
Number of written comments	2

**HEALTH AND SAFETY**

- There is no controlled access at the door between the nursery unit and the FS.

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