



*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

**St Bronagh's Primary School
Rostrevor**

Inspected: March 2009

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BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: St Bronagh's Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 02.03.09**
ii. **School Reference Number: 503-6673** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Year 1 Intake	0	0	26	25	20
Enrolments					
Primary	0	0	202	198	182
Reception	0	0	11	6	10
Nursery Class/Classes	0	0	0	0	0
Special 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): 94.2%

Primary & Reception	Nursery Unit	Special Unit
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- | | | | | | |
|----|----|---|---|---|---|
| D. | i. | Number of Teachers
(including the principal and part-time teachers):
(Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours) | 9 | 0 | 0 |
|----|----|---|---|---|---|

- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 21.3% NI PTR: 20.8

- iii. Average Class Size: 24

- iv. Class Size (Range): 12 to 34

- | | | | |
|----|----------------------------------|------|---|
| v. | Ancillary Support: | | |
| | Number of Hours Per Week: | i. | Clerical support: 37 |
| | | ii. | Official Making A Good Start Support: 35 |
| | | iii. | Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: 52.5 |

- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 1%

- | | | |
|------|---|-----|
| vii. | Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: | 14% |
|------|---|-----|

- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 12

- | | | |
|-----|---|-----|
| ix. | Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: | 18% |
|-----|---|-----|

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Bronagh's Primary School is situated in Rostrevor, Co Down. It was established in September 2006 as the result of the amalgamation of the Convent of Mercy Girls' Primary School and St Mary's Boys' Primary School. The enrolment is declining and currently stands at 182. The school has a reception class which, at the time of the inspection, had 13 children enrolled. Most of the children come from the immediate locality; approximately 18% of the children are entitled to free school meals and 14% of the children are on the special educational needs register.

1.2 FOCUS

The inspection focused on the quality of the children's experiences in literacy and numeracy and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in promoting and supporting learning and teaching. 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 years 6 and 7.

One hundred and seven questionnaires were issued to the parents; approximately 45% of these were returned to the Department of Education (DE). Twenty-seven contained additional written comments.

A small number of parents acknowledged the hard working staff and indicated that their children had settled well in the school. However, a significant number of parents raised serious concerns about the quality of the working relationships, communication, and leadership and management within the school. All of the concerns raised were discussed with the Principal and the governors; where relevant, some of these concerns are addressed within this report.

Five of the nine teachers responded to the confidential questionnaire; they expressed concerns about the leadership and management of the Principal.

The governors acknowledged the hard work of the staff. They expressed concerns about the difficulties associated with the recent amalgamation and outlined their commitment to resolving current issues.

The children said they are happy in the school and know what to do if they have worries about their safety and well-being.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

Following the amalgamation, the children have integrated well into the life and work of the new school. During the inspection, they engaged enthusiastically with members of the inspection team.

However, there are important aspects of pastoral care provision which are inadequate. These include: the poor working relationships between the Principal and the teachers in the school which are having a detrimental effect on the quality of education being provided for the children; the lack of an agreed pastoral care policy; and the reward system which operates throughout the school, but which does not acknowledge fully nor build upon adequately, the good behaviour of the children.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children; these arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by DE. However, there is a need to ensure that the parents are fully informed of all of the school's procedures to safeguard the children when arriving at or leaving the school.

1.6 HEALTHY EATING

The school gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example the whole-school fruit-tasting day and healthy break rule are used to encourage the children to eat healthily. As the whole-school healthy eating programme develops, the school will need to develop further, the arrangements to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the programme.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

In class the children work well with one another and are cooperative with their teachers; many of the children display enthusiasm for their work and for learning. They often participate well in lessons, contribute well to discussions and can speak with enjoyment about the various activities in which they have been engaged.

At the time of the inspection there were a few interesting displays to celebrate the children's efforts, this approach of recognising and rewarding the children for their work needs to be developed more consistently throughout the school. Overall, the school environment is uninviting and some areas need to be more attractively and imaginatively laid out to support the children's learning.

The analysis of the school's performance data, for the two years since opening, indicates that by the end of key stage (KS) 2 almost 80% of the children attain standards in English and mathematics that are consistent with those of children of a similar age in similar schools. However, the comparison of the data for these two years, indicates that there has been a decline in standards, particularly in the numbers of children attaining the higher levels. The school needs to recognise this situation and develop approaches which will ensure that this decline is reversed.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The quality and effectiveness of the provision for English and literacy is satisfactory. The English co-ordinator has only recently been appointed and has drawn up a range of appropriate action points, including the need to redraft and agree with the staff a school literacy policy to guide learning and teaching.

The programme for talking and listening lacks structure. Consequently, the children's skills in talking and listening do not develop in a progressive and consistent manner across the school. During the inspection, there were a few good examples observed, when the children had the opportunity to discuss their learning and to participate in paired and collaborative group work. In the less effective practice, there was a lack of appropriate stimulus to promote discussion and the teachers missed opportunities to build upon the children's ideas.

In the early years the children's early reading skills are developed through a combination of songs, rhymes and the introduction to phonics. In KS2 the children continue to develop their reading skills through regular reading sessions. In the best practice, effective use is made of guided reading activities to reinforce and extend the children's thinking and to develop their vocabulary. By the end of year 7, almost all of the children can read with fluency and understanding at a level appropriate to their age.

In the foundation stage (FS) the children have opportunities for early writing as part of their play experiences; many of the children engage appropriately with print and are beginning to form letters accurately. As they progress through the key stages, the children's writing skills are developed further and applied to a broader range of purposes. In a few classes, the children engage effectively in re-drafting and peer editing to improve the quality of their work. In the majority of classes the children have insufficient opportunities to write independently and creatively.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The quality and effectiveness of the provision for mathematics is satisfactory. There are appropriate action plans to guide the school's development in mathematics. As a result, there is appropriate long-term planning to guide learning and teaching across each area of the mathematics curriculum. However, in planning for mathematics lessons, the teachers need to: ensure that the children have opportunities for challenging investigative work; implement agreed strategies and activities which promote more fully the children's capacity for mental mathematics, and greater flexibility in their mathematical thinking generally; and provide increased challenge in their work.

In the early years the children are provided with appropriate opportunities to develop mathematical language and basic number concepts through imaginative class activities. The classroom assistants work effectively with small groups of children to support and develop their learning.

As the children progress to KS2 they consolidate and extend their mathematical learning. In the best practice, learning in mathematics is connected well with other areas of the curriculum, particularly through topics relating to healthy lifestyles and the 'World Around Us'. By the end of year 7, most of the children have a sound understanding of place value, number, measures, shape and space and the handling of data. However, they have too few experiences of challenging investigative type work to enable them to reach the standards of which they are capable.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The teachers' planning outlines the intended learning outcomes, teaching approaches, resources and the assessment procedures to be used. A few of the teachers complete regular evaluations which focus on the extent of the children's learning and these are used to inform future planning; this process needs to be applied more consistently throughout the school.

3.2 TEACHING

The quality of the teaching observed ranged from unsatisfactory, in the case of one teacher, to good, with the majority being satisfactory. In order to improve further the quality of teaching, it will be important that the teachers develop a shared understanding of what constitutes effective learning and teaching, differentiation and progression in the children's learning.

The use of ICT to support learning and teaching is under-developed and its resourcing is inadequate.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

The teachers mark the children's written work regularly. In a very small number of classes, the teachers are beginning to implement assessment for learning strategies effectively to promote improvement in the children's learning; the good practice identified, needs to be disseminated across the school.

The school uses a range of standardised and non-standardised testing to assess the children's level of attainment in English and mathematics. The outcomes from these assessments are used to identify those children who require additional support with aspects of their learning. However, the teachers place insufficient emphasis on the analysis of performance data to help identify whole-school areas for improvement.

3.4 RECEPTION

Since the amalgamation in 2006, the school has provided a reception class. Currently, 13 children attend the reception class; most of these children transfer from the local pre-school playgroup after their fourth birthday. The funding provided for these children through the pre-school expansion programme does not transfer to the school; as a result, the funding for the reception class is financed from the primary school budget. The current range of resources provided for the play programme is inadequate and the opportunities for learning and teaching are limited. In addition, the teacher in the reception class has not been allocated

the time necessary to plan and prepare an appropriate pre-school programme; she has not received any training to support and guide her in her work and the classroom assistant support is limited due to other duties within the primary school. Overall, provision within the reception class is inadequate.

3.5 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Approximately 14% of the children are on the special educational needs (SEN) register and 1% of the children have a statement of special educational need. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) has been in post for approximately 18 months and has responsibility for teaching the reception class as well as for providing additional support for the children who are experiencing difficulties with aspects of their learning. The SENCO uses the school's internal data to identify those children who will receive support, maintains the SEN register, supports the class teachers in the development of education plans (EPs) and provides withdrawal support for groups and individual children.

In the withdrawal sessions observed the children were well motivated, were encouraged to develop and use appropriate strategies to tackle new words in their reading, to apply their knowledge of phonics and to develop their fluency and understanding.

Under the current arrangements the SENCO is not allocated appropriate time and resources in order for her to identify, plan for, monitor and meet effectively the needs of all of the children who have SEN.

In addition, EPs do not identify precisely the key targets and support strategies necessary to guide the day-to-day work of the class teachers; a collective whole staff responsibility for SEN is required. The children's progress in literacy and numeracy needs to be monitored, to measure progress and development against agreed targets which have been shared, where appropriate, with the children.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The Principal was appointed in April 2006, prior to the amalgamation of the boys' and girls' schools. The governors reported that the arrangements for the amalgamation were inadequate. This poor start was further compounded by a lack of strategic leadership, by the staff's unwillingness to assume individual and collective responsibility for the development of the school and the deteriorating working relationships between the Principal and the staff. As a result there has been very limited progress in the school's development over the past two and a half years.

At the time of the inspection, the staff were engaged in industrial action. Morale is very poor and this is having a detrimental effect on the school community. The staff report that following the announcement of the inspection, there was an improved approach to planning and cooperation; this good progress must now be built upon and sustained in the time ahead.

In building on this progress it will be important that the governors, working with the Principal and staff, develop improved communication at all levels, collective decision-making, team building and greater consistency across key areas of the school's life and work. In addition, a review of the structure of the senior management team is necessary to ensure the future development of the school.

The governors need to oversee the full implementation of the school's Performance Review and Staff Development (PRSD) programme and ensure that appropriate attention is given to developing approaches to self-evaluation leading to improvement.

The governors, Principal and staff will require external and well-focused support from the Southern Education and Library Board's Curriculum Advisory and Support Service and from the employing authority, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools to help them take forward the necessary areas for improvement.

4.1 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The school's development planning process is unsatisfactory. There are important areas which need to be addressed promptly in order to meet fully the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005. These include the need for effective consultation with parents, children, staff and governors in the preparation of the plan and appropriate arrangements for the governors, in consultation with the Principal, to monitor and evaluate progress against the School Development Plan (SDP).

5. CONCLUSION

The strengths of the school include:

- the well behaved children who, since the amalgamation, have integrated well together into the life and work of the new school;
- the promotion of healthy eating and physical activity; and
- the satisfactory provision in aspects of both English and mathematics.

The areas for improvement include the need for:

- the governors, together with the Principal and staff, to ensure collective decision making, team working and greater consistency across key areas of the school's life and work;
- the development of a more effective senior management team to effect the improvements necessary in the standards which the children achieve; and
- improvement in internal and external communication and working relationships throughout the school.

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

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