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Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Focused Inspection

**St Canice Primary School, Nursery Unit and
Bunscoil Naomh Cainneach
Dungiven**

Inspected: March 2008

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BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: St Canice Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 03.03.08**
Dungiven
 ii. **School Reference Number: 203-6045** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Year 1 Intake	49	55	45	53	38
Enrolments					
Primary	402	387	387	384	361
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Class/Classes	26	26	26	26	26
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):

94.3%

Primary & Reception	Nursery Unit	Special Unit
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- D. i. Number of Teachers
 (including the principal and part-time teachers): 19 1 0
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 19.35 NI PTR: 20.8
- iii. Average Class Size: 21.5
- iv. Class Size (Range): 13 to 28
- v. Ancillary Support:
 Number of Hours **Per Week**:
- | | |
|---|------|
| i. Clerical support: | 58.5 |
| ii. Official Making A Good Start Support: | 40 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 272 |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 1.8%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 24.3%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 18.35%

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 St Canice Primary School is situated in the market town of Dungiven in County Londonderry. The children come from the town and the surrounding rural area. The enrolment has shown a gradual fall in recent years reflecting local demographic trends. Approximately 18% of the children are entitled to free school meals, while 24% of the children are on the special needs register.

1.2 The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents and the teachers 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. Of the 120 questionnaires issued to the parents, 48 were returned to the Department of Education (DE), representing a 40% return: 15 parents adding written comments. The responses showed high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the school's provision. The parents commented on the caring and approachable staff, the welcoming ethos and the school's high reputation in the community. Twelve of the 21 teachers completed an on-line questionnaire. They were wholly positive about the life and work of the school, commenting in particular on the effective leadership of the Principal, the good support of colleagues, the curricular developments progressed in recent years and the strong pastoral care provision for the children. In addition to endorsing the views of the parents and the teachers, the governors commented favourably on the progress made by the children, the strong links developed between the teachers and the parents and the high quality of the leadership provided by the Principal.

1.3 The inspection focused on the quality of the work in mathematics, including the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in supporting numeracy and the effectiveness of the school's special educational needs provision. The inspection also evaluated the school's procedures in relation to pastoral care, including child protection.

2. THE QUALITY OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK

2.1 The teachers and the support staff provide a caring and welcoming environment for the children. They know the children well and are very aware of the community from which they come. The children are well-behaved, courteous and show good respect to their teachers and to other adults.

2.2 The school uses a range of strategies which value and acknowledge the children's efforts and serve to motivate and to enhance their feelings of self-worth. These include photographs depicting the range of activities in which the children have been engaged, certificates of achievement and reward charts for attainment, effort and behaviour. There are numerous displays of the children's work throughout the school, in the corridors and in the classrooms, which help to create a bright and stimulating learning environment.

2.3 The school has many strong links with neighbouring schools and the local community. It is part of a cross-community cluster of local primary schools, which has accessed funding to promote mutual understanding through a range of educational visits and joint activities. The school provides a wide range of after-school activities for the children including both sports and the arts. This year, the children from year 7 finished second overall

in a national technology competition in which they designed and built model racing cars. Contributing to charitable organisations is viewed as an integral part of the school's Christian ethos: last year, for example, the children raised £1000 to purchase a defibrillator for the local community's use.

2.4 The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection in the school is excellent. The school has procedures in place which implement fully the guidance outlined in the relevant DE circulars. The governors, staff, parents and children are fully aware of the school's procedures and have had an opportunity to contribute to a range of effective policies which guide the work of the school. The children in year 6 reported that they feel safe, enjoy school and know what to do in the event of a concern.

2.5 Among the strengths are:

- the caring, supportive and inclusive ethos;
- the high quality of the working relationships throughout the school;
- the high priority given to the well-being of the children and of the staff;
- the procedures in place to promote positive discipline and good behaviour;
- the effective leadership provided by the teacher with responsibility for pastoral care; and
- the opportunities given to help the children to enrich the lives of others – particularly through charity work, the School Council and the Playground Friends scheme.

2.6 The school's programme for the promotion of health and well-being has important strengths. Good attention is given to the development and promotion of healthy eating and physical activity programmes. A healthy breakfast club has been established, a smart snacks initiative has been adopted and good links have been developed with external agencies, all of which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles. The few areas for improvement identified include the need to:

- incorporate within the School Development Plan (SDP), a process that helps the staff to evaluate the nature and quality of the arrangements for health and well-being practices within the school; and
- review the policies and procedures in place for the children requiring special diets and for those with food allergies and to ensure that the catering staff are kept fully appraised.

2.7 At the time of inspection eight members of the permanent teaching complement were absent. The school has been largely successful in recruiting substitute teachers who give continuous service to ensure minimum interruption to the children's experiences and learning. The teachers are very hard-working and conscientious. The quality of teaching observed was mostly good or better, on occasions it was excellent. The impact of whole-school curricular initiatives is clearly evident in a consistent manner throughout the school.

These include the sharing of intended learning outcomes with the children at the outset of lessons, the provision of practical activities in which active learning is promoted and the reinforcement of the key learning points during plenary sessions. The teaching is enhanced through the use of skilful oral work, including questioning by the teachers which provides opportunities for the children to develop their spoken language and to consolidate their understanding. The school has invested significantly in the deployment of additional classroom assistants. They were observed to work very well under the direction of the teachers and they add considerably to the quality of learning and teaching throughout the school.

2.8 The teachers plan and review their work together in ways which promote consistency in provision and support during times when new curricular initiatives are introduced. Their medium-term planning is undertaken conscientiously and stems appropriately from the intended learning outcomes identified for the children. In the best practice seen, the teachers focus their evaluation on the quality and extent of the children's learning and use this to inform future planning.

2.9 The children are highly motivated and show positive attitudes to their work. They settle readily to the tasks they are given and engage in the activities enthusiastically and co-operatively. From the youngest children upwards, they are willing and able to talk knowledgeably about the work they are doing.

2.10 Over the past few years, the mathematics co-ordinator has led a major focus on the review of the whole-school mathematics programme. The current programme provides clear guidance for the teachers and outlines a broad range of mathematical experiences for the children. In the early years, the teachers place a strong emphasis on active, play-based learning; the children are developing early mathematical language, concepts and understanding appropriate to their age and ability. Through the use of games, rhymes, action songs, stories, well-chosen resources and effective questioning by the teacher, the children acquire a sound understanding of shape, length, number, time and sorting information. The teachers encourage the children to observe, explore, investigate and use their mathematical knowledge and skills in practical and meaningful contexts across the curriculum.

2.11 As the children progress through key stage (KS) 2 the vast majority of them continue to experience success in mathematics; increasingly they become confident in discussing, communicating and explaining their mathematical thinking. During discussion with the year 7 children, for example, they competently considered a range of possible processes to complete particular tasks. The children enjoy mathematics; they engage regularly in problem-solving activities and personal mathematical challenges. Many of the data-handling activities emerge from the children's interests, for example their participation in a national bird watch event. The children in all of the classes have opportunities to analyse data and to record and interpret their findings in a variety of forms.

2.12 The children's skills in mental and written calculation are generally good: they work co-operatively and purposefully in pairs and in small groups. Good use is made of an extensive variety of mathematical games to reinforce learning and to help the children apply their learning in other contexts. The school organises a successful Parents In Numeracy (PIN) programme.

2.13 The overall quality of the children's experiences in mathematics is good. Most of the children are making good progress across all areas of the mathematics programme. Some children, however, particularly the more able learners, would benefit from a greater degree of challenge in some of the learning tasks set and in the mathematical activities provided. The mathematics co-ordinator provides effective leadership; she is hard-working, informed and provides good support for her colleagues through, for example, professional development and advice. In addition, she disseminates effective practice, monitors the teachers' planning and on occasions, scrutinises the children's books; she also evaluates new whole-school developments in the mathematics curriculum. It will be important that the extensive school performance data and attainment information that the school holds already is used in a planned and focused way to identify under-achievement and low achievement, to inform the teachers' planning, to raise attainment and to set whole-school, class and individual targets.

2.14 Information and communication technology is used increasingly well to support learning and teaching in mathematics; the teachers make good use of the interactive whiteboards, computer programs and specific resources accessed from an agreed set of websites. The children use these resources competently to consolidate their learning and to explore particular mathematical ideas. Programmable devices such as Roamer and Beebot and simple Logo programs are used to help develop the children's understanding of number, direction, scale and control. The developments in ICT are led by a very effective and hard-working co-ordinator.

2.15 Some 24% of the children are identified as having additional educational needs and require support with aspects of their learning. Across all classes, the individual education plans to support the children with their learning include targets that are closely tailored to each child's needs. Provision to meet these targets is embedded in the daily classroom practice and is helped by the structure of the lessons and the focus on learning objectives in all lessons. As a consequence, all of the children participate well in lessons and contribute fully to the work within the class. The withdrawal provision for some children who require additional support with their learning is not effective; the lessons are not challenging enough or sufficiently focused on a diagnostic assessment of the children's needs. The findings indicate the need for a fundamental review of the special education withdrawal programme. This should include the development of a more rigorous system for evaluating the impact of the additional support on the children's learning.

2.16 The school maintains detailed information on the children's attainment, copies of annual reports and samples of their work in individual folders. A process is in operation to track the progress and attainment of the children over time in literacy and numeracy. The parents are kept informed of the children's progress through annual reports and meetings with the teacher during the year.

2.17 Bunscoil Naomh Cainneach, the Irish-medium (IM) primary unit, opened in 2002 with ten children in year 1 and four in year 2. Currently 51 children are enrolled in the unit with a teaching complement of three full-time teachers. The IM classes are located in a distinct area in temporary accommodation. The children in the IM unit experience a programme of immersion education. Appropriate attention is paid to local and national heritage through music and song, literature, folklore, history and sport. English is formally introduced to the children in year 3. The teachers in the IM unit all teach composite classes. They plan their work appropriately in close collaboration with their English-medium colleagues, thus ensuring that the children have the benefit of a balanced curricular coverage.

The work in the IM unit is guided effectively by the very committed co-ordinator who maintains a clear focus on the promotion of high standards in the children's learning. She has a clear vision for the further development of the unit and provides thoughtful leadership and management to the unit.

3. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

3.1 The Principal has been in post for five years. He has the strong support and loyalty of the teachers, the parents and the governors. He is hard-working and highly committed to all in the school community. His vision for the school is based upon a comprehensive understanding of the needs of the children and the educational programmes open to them. His leadership skills are strong and he has used these competently to ensure that, through self-evaluation, the teachers and the teaching have developed in ways which have had a beneficial impact on the children and their learning. Within the past 18 months the school has appointed a new Vice-principal. Her added contribution to both managing and teaching in that short time is clearly evident. The Principal and Vice-principal work well together and form an effective leadership team.

3.2 The School Development Plan (SDP) sets out clearly a number of prioritised issues for improvement. The accompanying action plans set realistic and achievable targets and the progress in meeting them is monitored closely by senior management. The SDP needs to be revised to meet fully the requirements of the statutory regulations; in particular it needs to show the progress made and the attainment levels reached by the children.

3.3 Approximately one-third of the children are taught in temporary accommodation. While the accommodation is maintained well and is generally in a good state of repair, the children often have to cope with inclement weather in crossing to these classrooms. The standard of caretaking and cleaning throughout the school is good. All members of the non-teaching staff make a valuable contribution to the life and work of the school.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the very positive ethos of the learning environment;
- the excellent quality of the pastoral care provision;
- the quality of the teaching observed which was mostly good or better and, on occasions, it was excellent;
- the overall good standards the children attain in their mathematics;
- the effective use of ICT to support the children's learning; and
- the very effective and committed leadership provided by the Principal.

4.2 The main area for improvement is:

- the need to review, develop and improve the provision made for the children withdrawn for additional support with their learning.

In the areas inspected, the school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified minor areas for improvement which the school has the capacity to address.

The school's progress on the areas for improvement will be monitored by the District Inspector.

5. THE NURSERY UNIT

5.1 The nursery unit opened in 2000 in purpose-built accommodation within the grounds of St Canice Primary School. The children have access to a recently developed outdoor play area and also share some of the facilities within the main school building.

5.2 The parents and the staff were given the opportunity to express their views about the nursery unit through questionnaires issued prior to the inspection. The responses have been taken into account as part of the inspection. Those parents who responded expressed very high levels of satisfaction with the work of the nursery.

5.3 The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection is very good. The nursery unit has appropriate policies and procedures for child protection that comply with DE circulars and guidance. The inspection evidence indicates that these policies and procedures are implemented effectively and consistently to safeguard the children.

5.4 The nursery unit gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity and has effective policies and programmes in place to encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

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

- The nursery unit has a warm, friendly atmosphere and a very positive ethos based on good working relationships at all levels. The staff are caring and supportive; the children show high levels of confidence, independence and self-esteem. They respond well to the staff's expectations and their behaviour is very good.
- The staff have created an attractive and stimulating learning environment, both indoors and in the outdoor play area. Good use is made of the space and resources available to stimulate and sustain the children's interest in the play activities.
- The daily timetable is organised effectively to provide a suitable balance of free play and adult-led group activities. Transitions are smooth and the routines help promote the children's independence and personal development.
- The staff provide the children with sustained support during play; their skilful and sensitive interactions with the children help to promote settled, co-operative and purposeful play. An effective programme of support is in place for those children with additional learning needs.
- Appropriate systems of planning have been developed which guide the staff in their day-to-day work with the children; there are good opportunities for learning across all areas of the pre-school curriculum.
- Good links have been established with the parents and a variety of methods is used to involve them in the work of the nursery unit. The staff liaise effectively with the teachers in the primary school to ensure continuity and progression as the children transfer to year 1.

5.6 While there are no major issues that require attention within the nursery unit, it will be important that the good work which has begun on profiling each child's achievements is developed further to include specific evidence of learning and progression in each area of the pre-school curriculum.

5.7 The teacher in charge of the nursery unit is a very good role-model in her work with the children. She manages the nursery effectively and has drafted a development plan which identifies appropriate areas for review and development. The staff work well together as a team and should now begin to evaluate regularly the improvements made in learning and teaching.

5.8 The nursery unit has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified minor areas for improvement which the unit has the capacity to address. The nursery unit's progress in the areas for improvement will be monitored by the District Inspector.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON THE NURSERY UNIT IN ST CANICE PRIMARY SCHOOL

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending full-time	26	0
Attending part-time	0	0
Under 3 years of age*	0	0
With a statement of special educational needs	1	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	1	0
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	1	0
With English as an additional language	0	0

* On 1 July.

** 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.	7.7%
Average attendance for the previous year.	88.8%

2. Duration of Sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
4½ hours	-	-

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-Time	Part-Time
Teachers	1	0
Nursery Assistants	0	0
Qualified Nursery Assistants	2	0

Number of: ***	
Students	
Trainees	

*** Total placements since September of current year

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued	26
Percentage returned	61%
Number of written comments	7

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