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*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 Colmcille's Primary School
Omagh**

Inspected: May 2007

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BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: St Colmcille's Primary Omagh** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 21.05.07**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 203-6053** iv. **Nature of Inspection: FI/En/ICT/SEN**

B.

School Year	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Year 1 Intake	26	28	25	32	19
Enrolments					
Primary	205	210	191	198	183
Reception	9	6	0	0	0
Nursery Class/Classes	0	0	0	0	0
Special Unit	2	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):

92.7%

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	-	-
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- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio):

20.1

NI PTR: 20.5

- iii. Average Class Size:

26

- iv. Class Size (Range):

19 to 29

- v. Ancillary Support:

Number of Hours **Per Week**:

- | | |
|---|--------|
| i. Clerical support: | 36 |
| ii. Official Making A Good Start Support: | 10 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 111.25 |

- vi. Number of children with statements of special educational needs:

6

- vii. Number of children who are not of statutory school age:

0

- viii. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals:

25%

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 St Colmcille's is an all-boys primary school situated in Brook Street, near the centre of the town of Omagh, Co Tyrone. Almost all of the children come from the town and the surrounding urban areas. The children travel mainly to school by public and private transport, including taxis; a small number of children walk to school. In recent years, the enrolment has varied around 200. Twenty five percent of the children are entitled to receive free school meals.

1.2 The inspection focused on the work in English, including information and communication technology (ICT) and the provision for special educational needs (SEN). The inspection also evaluated the school's procedures for pastoral care, including the arrangements for child protection.

1.3 The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the completion of a confidential questionnaire by the parents, as well as meetings with the governors and with the year 6 children. Thirty-six per cent of the parents responded to the questionnaire; just over 40% of those responding availed of the opportunity to write additional comments. Almost all of the responses were very positive and supportive of the work of the school.

1.4 The Board of Governors (governors) expressed their support for the school, and commented particularly on the high quality of the leadership of the Principal, the hard-working and dedicated staff and the very positive ethos of the school. There is clear evidence that the governors are fully informed of relevant policies and that they make a strong contribution to the work of the school.

1.5 The year 6 children spoke very confidently and positively of their experiences at school, including the educational trips, the extra-curricular activities and the friendly and helpful staff. They were aware of how they should behave and the reward schemes in operation, and they knew where to seek help if they had a concern.

2. THE QUALITY OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK

2.1 A strong caring ethos permeates the life of the school; relationships at all levels are excellent. The teachers and non-teaching staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the children's development and well-being, and opportunities are sought regularly to promote the children's confidence and self-esteem. The children demonstrate a great pride in the school; they co-operate willingly and respectfully with their teachers and are welcoming and courteous to visitors. The behaviour of the children around the school and in the classes is very good. The school has in place very effective procedures to promote good behaviour; the school assemblies are used effectively to celebrate this and the other achievements of the children.

2.2 The teachers have created a bright and stimulating learning environment. Displays in the corridors show examples of the children's work and aspects of the pastoral care provision; a notice board for parents provides important information about the school. Displays in the classrooms celebrate the children's achievements and are frequently used effectively to improve their understanding and learning.

2.3 The school has developed strong links with its parents. They are encouraged to become involved in their child's education through attendance at appropriate information meetings. The Parents' Association has successfully raised funds to enhance the school's ICT provision. A weekly newsletter provides information and highlights the particular achievements of the children.

2.4 The school offers numerous extra-curricular activities, ranging from sports, such as basketball and football, to drama and chess. In addition, the school prefects have organised successfully a lunch time football league for children in years 6 and 7.

2.5 There are effective links with other schools in the area, including those that promote Education for Mutual Understanding. The school has recently been recognised for its long-term involvement in a cross-border programme that promotes peace and reconciliation.

2.6 The school gives very good attention to promoting health and well-being. It has appropriate policies and initiatives in place which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles, including healthy breaks, water provision and two after school cookery clubs. The school has been awarded the Smart Snacks Award since 2001. There is evidence of the commitment of the staff to promoting healthy eating and to improving children's eating habits, by means of competitions, displays, theme days, and a weekly healthy eating award. Healthy eating messages are reinforced to parents through the weekly newsletter and parents' evenings. The children demonstrate an excellent understanding of the importance of making healthy life choices and there are opportunities for all of the children to participate in a wide range of physical activities. An assessment of the nature and quality of the arrangements for health and well-being practices should be included in the school development plan (SDP) to comply with Department of Education (DE) regulations.

2.7 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 the opportunity to contribute to a range of helpful policies which guide the work of the school. Among the strengths are:

- the effective ways of communicating with parents;
- the 'Spirit of St Colmcille Award Scheme'; and
- the effective procedures which promote positive behaviour.

2.8 All of the teachers prepare well for their lessons. They undertake their four-weekly planning conscientiously, highlighting appropriate activities for the children to attain the identified intended learning. The teachers regularly evaluate their lessons and record the outcomes in their planning; in the best practice, these are sufficiently focused to enable the teachers to plan effectively for future learning.

2.9 The teachers are hard-working and fully committed to the children's learning and development. The quality of teaching was always satisfactory; in most lessons observed it had many good features and in a majority observed it ranged from good to excellent. In the best practice, the intended learning was shared with the children, there was a good range of teaching approaches, the work matched the children's abilities and, at the end of the lessons,

there was review and consolidation of the learning. In addition, regular opportunities were provided for the children to discuss their learning. In a very few instances, the teaching was overly directed by the teacher and insufficient account was taken of the individual needs within the class.

2.10 The children settle well to their work; they are keen and interested learners and enjoy their lessons. They interact effectively with one another in whole class and group activities; they share resources and respect one another's contributions. By the end of key stage (KS) 2, most of the children have a mature attitude to their work and can work confidently and independently.

2.11 The children in the early years have regular sessions of interesting and motivating activities through 'play-based learning'. The activities are linked to suitable themes and are used effectively to promote the children's learning in language, mathematics and other areas of the curriculum. The children enjoy their play sessions and are fully engaged; they are imaginative, creative and confident in their work. The timely intervention of the teachers and classroom assistants frequently enhances the children's language, development and understanding. The teachers have developed an appropriate policy and a good start has been made to the co-ordination of the planning. There is a need to develop suitable assessment and recording procedures to ensure that the children's learning through play is progressively built upon.

2.12 Teaching and learning in English is effectively co-ordinated throughout the school; a scheme of work sets out an appropriate programme for the development of talking and listening, reading and writing, and a detailed procedure is in place to monitor the children's progress. A number of supporting initiatives have been introduced, including the recent restocking of the school library, the ongoing paired reading programme and information sessions for parents on how to promote language development at home. In addition, an interesting and stimulating literacy environment has been created in many of the classrooms: word banks, displays and collections of topic-related books support the children's learning.

2.13 The very caring and supportive ethos of the school helps to promote the children's oral skills; the teachers consistently encourage the children to express themselves and to listen to, and respect, the opinions and responses of others. In the early years classes, activities, such as play-based learning, 'show and tell', and story, singing and rhyme sessions, help promote the children's skills and confidence. As they progress, the children are given regular opportunities to work in pairs and small groups; in these instances, the children work effectively and discuss their work and explain their ideas confidently. Skilful questioning and prompting from the teachers help to extend the children's thinking and responses. The children's skills are developed further throughout KS2 and, by the end of year 7, most listen well and are capable of mature and confident contributions in class and at school events, such as assemblies and drama productions.

2.14 Reading is developed systematically across the school: the children make early connections between print and meaning, build up an appreciation of story-telling and books, and develop progressively the ability and confidence to draw understanding and enjoyment from a broad range of texts. In the lessons observed in the early years classes, the children's decoding and word-building skills were appropriately developed through phonic awareness and syllable and word recognition activities. Much of this work is carried out in shared reading sessions where the children are encouraged to talk about the characters and settings

of the story and to re-tell parts of it in their own words. As they progress, they become increasingly fluent and accurate in their reading and are able to read lengthier texts, including class novels. The children's reading often supports their learning in other subject areas. Computer-based texts, including Internet sources, are used to support the children's learning. Information is accessed to support class topics and individual projects; at its most effective, this work involves note-making or making a summary of the text rather than copying or printing-off the original source. By the end of year 7, most of the children can read with expression, accuracy and good comprehension and achieve standards well in line with their ability.

2.15 From early in year 1, the children are made familiar with different forms of print, both in books and throughout their classroom, and are encouraged to experiment with random mark-making and informal writing. The children's pencil control and letter formation skills are developed progressively and, through modelled and shared writing sessions and regular practice activities, they begin to write words and simple sentences. As their competence develops, the children's writing becomes increasingly proficient, and by the end of KS1 most are able to write sentences and short passages neatly and accurately. Much of this writing is in the children's own words and is supported appropriately by frameworks to help develop structure, and by word banks, word walls, and the effective use of simple dictionaries. Throughout KS2, the children write for an increasing range of purposes, including story, letter and poetry writing, book reviews, and instructional and report writing. Generally, this writing is of a good quality and is structured appropriately: the children show a good understanding of punctuation, paragraphing and dialogue. Appropriately, the children have opportunities to re-draft their writing. The overall standard of handwriting and general presentation is good. While the children write for a range purposes, there are insufficient opportunities for them to apply their learning to work in other areas of the curriculum: too often tasks in geography, history and science comprise note copying or the completion of worksheets that require single word or short responses. ICT applications such as word-processing, graphics packages and presentation software are used effectively to support aspects of the children's literacy. The school has identified the need to develop further this aspect of the children's learning; the inspection supports this view.

2.16 The school has identified some 30% of the children as requiring additional support with their learning. The teachers use an appropriate range of tests and observations to establish early identification of those children who require help. The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) provides a programme of effective withdrawal support, including sessions of Reading Recovery. Individual education plans (EPs) have been drawn up in consultation between the class teachers and the SENCO and, in the best practice, these outline suitably well-focused targets and success criteria. Appropriately, these are shared with parents and reviewed regularly. In addition, a number of the children receive additional help from outreach and peripatetic services. At all stages, the children's progress is monitored carefully, and, where appropriate, support is discontinued when the needs of individual children have been successfully addressed.

2.17 A detailed action plan has been drawn up and the SEN provision is managed effectively by the SENCO. The school values the contribution made by the classroom assistants and, appropriately, the SENCO ensures they are well-informed and suitably trained; for example, all teachers and classroom assistants have successfully completed the training provided by the Autistic Spectrum Advisory Service. Overall, the school's arrangements for SEN provide effective support for children who experience difficulties with aspects of their learning.

2.18 The teachers mark the children's work regularly and demonstrate, through their comments, that they value the efforts that the children make. In the best practice, the teachers indicate to the children the strengths and weaknesses in their work and highlight the steps they need to take to improve the quality of what they have done.

2.19 An annual report is issued to the parents and opportunities are provided for them to meet with the teachers to discuss the progress made by their children. The school maintains a folder for each child in which copies of the reports and samples of work are retained. The school has effective procedures in place to ensure that the range of work retained is representative and comprehensive. It is appropriate that the school is reviewing the recording and analysis of standardised test scores in order that the progress of the children can be monitored more effectively.

2.20 The Principal is extremely hard-working, fully committed to the school and has a clear vision for its ongoing development. He provides strategic and inspirational leadership. His concern and care for the children and all of the staff underpin all his administrative and management work and he engenders a strong sense of team-work amongst all members of the school community.

2.21 The Principal is ably supported by the Vice-principal in promoting continuous improvement in the school. There is a well-developed process of target-setting within the areas of literacy and numeracy, and there is effective ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the important areas of work in the school. In addition, the Principal has been instrumental in promoting a culture of self-evaluation: the process of gaining accreditation under the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Model is well underway.

2.22 The SDP outlines the areas under consideration by the staff during the current three-year period. There are two accompanying action plans that provide further detail for the development work being undertaken this year. Appropriately, these outline the baseline positions, targets and success criteria, and are costed and time-bound. The school is aware that the SDP is in need of review in order that it complies fully with DE regulations.

2.23 The classroom assistants provide helpful support for the class teacher; they contribute significantly to the children's learning. The school and grounds are kept well; the standards of caretaking, ground maintenance and cleaning are very good. The ancillary staff make a valued contribution to the life and work of the school.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the very strong caring ethos;
- the excellent quality of pastoral care;
- the behaviour of the children and their mature attitude to learning;
- the hard-working, conscientious and committed teachers;
- the commitment and support of the governors, non-teaching staff and parents;
- the high quality of most of the teaching;
- the development of the children's language and literacy;
- the effective support provided for children who experience difficulties with aspects of their learning;
- the good experiences for the early years children during play-based learning;
- the effective links with other schools and the wider community;
- the effective monitoring and evaluation of provision, and the well developed culture of self-evaluation throughout the school; and
- the inspirational and strategic leadership of the Principal, and the support of the Vice-principal.

3.2 In the areas inspected, the school has major strengths in its educational and pastoral provision. The educational and pastoral provision needs of the learners are being well met. The parents can have confidence in the school's capacity for sustained self-improvement.

No follow-up inspection is required.

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