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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 Davog's Primary School
Scraghey, Castlederg

Inspected: January 2007

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BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: St Davog's Primary Scraghey, Castledearg** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 15.01.07**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 2032664** iv. **Nature of Inspection: FI/En/ICT**

B.

School Year	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Year 1 Intake	1	6	0	3	1
Enrolments					
Primary	23	21	20	18	21
Reception	2	1	1	0	0
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):

95%

	Primary & Unit	Nursery Unit	Special
Reception			

- | | | | |
|---|--------|--------------|---|
| D. i. Number of Teachers
(including the principal and part-time teachers):
(Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours) | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): | 10.5 | NI PTR: 20.5 | |
| iii. Average Class Size: | 3 | | |
| iv. Class Size (Range): | 1 to 7 | | |
| v. Ancillary Support:
Number of Hours Per Week : | | | |
| i. Clerical support: | | 6.25 | |
| ii. Official Making A Good Start Support: | | 10 | |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | | 10 | |
| vi. Number of children with statements of special educational needs: | | 1 | |
| vii. Number of children who are not of statutory school age: | | 0 | |
| viii. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: | | 43% | |

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 St Davog's Primary School is situated in a rural location on the main Castlederg to Ederney road. The children come from the surrounding area. The enrolment has declined over the past seven years to its current level of 21. Forty-three per cent of the children are entitled to free school meals.

1.2 Prior to the inspection, the parents received a confidential questionnaire seeking their views about the life and work of the school; 47% of the questionnaires were completed and returned to the Department of Education (DE). Meetings were also held with representatives of the school Board of Governors (BoG) and a group of children in key stage (KS) 2. Nearly all of the parents who responded expressed total satisfaction with the school's provision. In their written comments, they highlighted the dedication shown by the teachers for the educational and social development of their children, the methods used to keep the parents informed of their children's progress and the school's contribution to the community. The written comments were shared with the BoG and the Principal and are addressed in the body of the report.

1.3 The BoG expressed their appreciation of the range of opportunities available for the children, the quality of learning and teaching in the school, the support of the parents and the commitment of the Principal and the staff. They raised concerns about the challenges facing the sustainability of the school.

1.4 The children talked enthusiastically about their enjoyment of school, the help of the teachers and the wide range of school trips. They are aware of how to seek help if they have any concerns about their safety and well-being.

1.5 The inspection focused on English, including information and communication technology (ICT), the provision for Special Educational Needs, and on the school's arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection.

2. THE QUALITY OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK

2.1 The staff have established a happy, supportive atmosphere, which promotes a caring ethos, based on mutual respect and good working relationships at all levels. The children are confident and courteous; the standard of their behaviour in class is excellent. The learning environment is bright and stimulating; examples of the children's art, written and topic work, photographs and evidence of their achievements are displayed and celebrated throughout the school.

2.2 The Principal and the staff know the children well. Their sensitive and inclusive approach in lessons and around the school help to promote the children's self-esteem and confidence. The staff encourage the children to value themselves and to respect others; these values impinge very positively on the children's motivation and attitude to learning.

2.3 There are many strengths in the quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection. The school has procedures in place which implement the guidance outlined in the relevant DE Circulars and has identified already, a few minor areas for improvement, which are being addressed currently. Among the strengths are the effective means of encouraging good working relationships and the high priority given to the health and well-being of the

children. The few minor areas for improvement identified include the need to ensure that all parents clearly understand the school's arrangements for pastoral care and child protection and the updating of training for the designated teacher for child protection.

2.4 The school's programme for the promotion of health and well-being has many strengths. Attention is given to the development and implementation of programmes which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles. There is a developing commitment to promoting healthy eating, and opportunities are provided for all the children to participate in a range of physical activities.

2.5 The children participate in a range of extra-curricular activities including sport, art and music. They are encouraged to be involved in their local community through shared events with schools and businesses and through contributing to parish publications. A wider European dimension is addressed through the school's link with a primary school in St Johnston, County Donegal and through a recent visit from a Swiss teacher. Through these varied experiences the children have the opportunity to develop their personal and social skills and their awareness of different cultures.

2.6 The parents are encouraged to be involved with the work of their children and to contribute to the life of the school. Communications between school and home give clear information on the wide variety of pastoral and curriculum issues through a monthly newsletter. Parents are informed regularly about their children's progress and have opportunities to learn how they might help them, for example, through information evenings. The views of the parents are sought systematically and taken into account when the school reviews its curriculum, organisation and provision, for example, by way of an evaluative questionnaire.

2.7 The planning for English is broad and balanced. The diligent preparation of schemes of work and topics to meet the needs of the children is effectively supporting progression in their learning. The short-term planning for lessons identifies clearly the intended learning outcomes and is used effectively to guide the teachers in their day-to-day work with the children. With the small numbers in each year group, there are significant challenges in planning for individual year groups; however, the teachers work hard to ensure that the children's all round development is considered. At times, the opportunities to plan for peer interaction, as a year group, is restricted due to the small size of many of the year groups. As a result, the teachers have devised personalised learning programmes.

2.8 Each teacher has a composite class that include three or four year groups and, in addition, is responsible for the work of a whole key stage. This places considerable demands on them in terms of planning, monitoring and evaluation of the work across a number of different year groups. The teachers are extremely hard-working and conscientious and have high expectations of what the children can achieve. During the inspection, the lessons observed were well-organised, stimulating and enjoyable. The quality of the teaching was always good and sometimes excellent. In the best practice observed, the teachers had taken account of the varying abilities and interests within the class. They employed effective teaching strategies, including the regular use of ICT that both challenged and motivated the children to learn.

2.9 The children settle quickly to work; they display a positive attitude to their learning. Often they show good problem-solving skills and concentrate well to complete tasks set. In the best practice, they are encouraged to make choices and when possible, to work co-operatively with others. Their thinking skills and personal capabilities are being nurtured effectively.

2.10 The school creates a stimulating environment for English and makes effective use of the central and class libraries. Information and communication technology resources, including the digital camera are used to good effect to improve the teaching and learning of English across the school. The English co-ordinator promotes effectively a high expectation for the development of literacy skills across the curriculum. The staff implement the literacy policy holistically, incorporating the talking and listening, the reading and writing elements across the curriculum. By the end of KS2, the overall attainment of the children is in line with their varying abilities.

2.11 All the children talk confidently about their work and are able to sustain their concentration when involved in listening activities. In the best practice, the children responded positively to questioning that helped them to consider and organise their ideas and to clarify their understanding. The children display confidence and enjoy making presentations for others and in public. By the end of KS2 the children can contribute effectively in pairs and in small groups; they listen attentively, take turns and value each other's contributions.

2.12 The children benefit from the well-structured and balanced reading programme. They are given a sound start with enjoyable and contextualised opportunities for shared and guided reading. They demonstrate confidence in the use of a range of strategies for reading unfamiliar words; for example, phonetic, pictorial and contextual clues. Good use is made of ICT to create personalised reading activities for the children. The children connect effectively the reading and play experiences and they create stories through the use of ICT. By the end of KS1, most children demonstrate positive attitudes towards reading and are able to read at a level appropriate to their abilities. During the inspection, the KS2 children enjoyed reading poetry and were able to respond to the mood created by the poetic language. In addition, they make effective use of non-fiction material for locating and gathering information, including that from the Internet. By the end of KS2 most of the children are reading and comprehending at a level matched to their ability.

2.13 The children make consistent progress in writing. They are encouraged to write in a variety of forms for a good range of purposes, including the local community and other audiences. Spelling, grammar and punctuation are taught systematically and, from an early age, the children are encouraged to become independent writers. Good habits in the use of dictionaries and thesauri support the improving quality of the children's writing.

2.14 Information and communication technology is being effectively led by the co-ordinator. The detailed planning for the integration of ICT across the curriculum provides opportunity for the children to develop a wide variety of skill; their achievements are continually assessed as they take part in a KS2 ICT accreditation. Currently, the school does not have access to broadband and this restricts the children's potential ICT experiences and complicates the educational networking process for the teachers. During the recent pilot of the Pupil Profile materials, for example, the school experienced difficulties with access to the online assessment and reports.

2.15 The children in KS1 have regular opportunities to learn through well-organised play sessions. The sessions are often planned around themes, which enable the children to explore and consolidate aspects of their learning through a range of practical activities. The teacher is closely involved in the children's play and promotes effectively the children's communication skills. The children appear inquisitive and show a high level of investigative and problem-solving skills. During the inspection, the year 4 children developed a board game and demonstrated good co-operation and creativity in designing rules. There is a need, however, to develop an assessment for learning through the play process in order to identify and record more rigorously the children's needs, progress and development.

2.16 The school has identified four children who require additional support with aspects of their learning. Effective links are established with outside support agencies to advise, guide and support the staff in their work. A series of diagnostic tests is used on a regular basis to assess the needs of individual children. The special education needs co-ordinator and the class teacher collaborate to prepare useful education plans to address the children's needs. The teachers and classroom assistant support the children in class; work is differentiated and matched to the children's abilities. The progress of the children is kept under review and adjustments are made on the special needs register to take account of the children's progress and development.

2.17 The teachers assess routinely the children's work in class and they use standardised tests to record their progress in English. The children's books are marked regularly, mainly to identify and correct errors. In the best practice, the teachers add positive comments that affirm the children's work and provide some guidance on how the learning can improve further. The parents receive an annual written report on their children's progress. In addition, the children maintain samples of their best work and record their involvement in school activities.

2.18 The Principal is hard-working and is fully committed to ongoing school improvement in the interests of the learners. She combines effectively teaching, leadership and management roles as well as taking a personal interest in the progress and development of individual children. The Principal communicates effectively a clear vision for the school and she is well supported by the assistant teacher and the BoG. There are effective links established with the local primary and post-primary schools. More needs to be done in order to develop links with the local pre-schools.

2.19 The school development plan (SDP) clearly identifies priorities for staff development which are matched to the needs of the school. These are met effectively through selected school-based in-service training, and support from the external support services. The school encourages staff to acquire further qualifications and expertise; there is evidence that the additional training is benefiting the children's learning and the management of the school.

2.20 There is a collegial approach to the development and improvement of learning and teaching and a comprehensive policy guides this work. The staff support one another well; they discuss and share information on the children's progress in order to identify effective practice and develop whole-school approaches. It is appropriate that priorities have been

indicated in the SDP, however, the school needs to re-consider the number of priorities and make systematic use of school performance data to inform the BoG and to plan for further learning. More rigorous school development planning and decisions at school and BoG levels need to be made in relation to the significant budget deficit and the future sustainability of the school.

2.21 The Principal avails infrequently of the principal release days and the funding made available is used to support the overall school budget. This adds very significantly to her workload, her teaching commitment and her administrative duties. In addition the teachers give freely of their time to ensure that the children benefit beyond the school day to enrich their learning experiences.

2.22 The accommodation is maintained well. The standard of caretaking, school meals and clerical support is very good.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the caring supportive ethos and the close links with the local community;
- the very good working relationships at all levels;
- the excellent behaviour of the children and their positive attitude to learning;
- the quality of the teaching that was always good and at times excellent;
- the quality of the work and the range of experiences provided through English;
- the good use of ICT to enhance the children's learning;
- the vision of the Principal for child-centred learning and the support provided by the dedicated assistant teacher; and
- the support of the parents and the BoG for the life and work of the school.

3.2 The areas for improvement include the need to:

- ensure that the governance of the school manage effectively the issues centred on the sustainability of the school provision and the school budget in order to address the current and future educational and pastoral needs of all the children and the staff; and
- make more effective use of performance data to set targets for future learning and to update the SDP in line with the requirements of The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005.

3.3 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.

APPENDIX

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- There is limited parking at the school which is situated on a busy main road.

ACCOMMODATION MATTERS

- There is a lack of storage space within the school.

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