



*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 Mary's Primary School  
Derrymore**

**Inspected: September 2008**

## CONTENTS

Section		Page
	STATISTICAL INFORMATION	
1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS	2
3.	QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNERS	4
4.	LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	6
5.	CONCLUSION	6
	APPENDICES	

## BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: St Mary's Primary Derrymore** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 29.09.08**  
 ii. **School Reference Number: 503-6006** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Year 1 Intake	22	22	20	18	16
<b>Enrolments</b>					
Primary	108	118	128	124	131
Reception	0	0	0	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): 96.1%

<b>Primary &amp; Reception</b>	<b>Nursery Unit</b>	<b>Special Unit</b>
------------------------------------	-------------------------	-------------------------

- D. i. Number of Teachers  
 (including the principal and part-time teachers): 7 0 0  
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 18.57 NI PTR: 20.8
- iii. Average Class Size: 21.66
- iv. Class Size (Range): 16 to 29
- v. Ancillary Support:  
 Number of Hours **Per Week**:
- |   |    |
|---|----|
| i. Clerical support:  | 20 |
| ii. Official Making A Good Start Support:                   | 25 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 55 |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 2.3%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 5%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 5%

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT**

St Mary's Primary School is situated in a rural location on the south eastern shore of Lough Neagh. The enrolment currently stands at 131. Most of the children come from the surrounding area of Derrymore. At the time of the inspection, approximately 5% of the children were entitled to free school meals and 5% of the children were 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 for the Board of Governors (governors), a group of parents and a group of children from year 6.

Eighty-six questionnaires were issued to parents; approximately 56% of these were returned to the Department of Education (DE). Twenty returns contained additional written comments. Most of the responses indicated a high level of satisfaction with the provision in the school. In particular, the parents highlighted the caring, happy learning environment, the opportunities afforded to the children to recognise their talents and the hard-working Principal, teaching and non-teaching staff. In addition, they valued the school's involvement in the community. The small number of concerns that were raised by the parents are addressed in the body of the report and have been discussed with the governors and the Principal.

Six teachers completed the online questionnaire. Their responses were highly affirmative of the work of the school.

The governors spoke very positively about the welcoming atmosphere within the school, the good relationships which exist at all levels and the Principal's and staff's continuous hard work in the interests of the children and the wider community.

The children in year 6 reported that they feel happy and safe in the school, that they enjoy being in the playground and that they know who to speak to if they have any concerns.

## 1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is very good. The positive relationships at all levels foster an inclusive and supportive ethos throughout the school and within the local community. The children respond well to the staff's expectations; their behaviour is excellent. The introduction of equipment to support children's play during break and lunchtime enhances the children's playground experiences. The children in Key Stage (KS) 2 benefit from the opportunity to participate in extra curricular activities.

## 1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding the children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department but the following minor areas need to be addressed:

- the school should review and update the school's discipline policies and procedures into one coherent document; and
- a flow chart indicating who to contact in the event of a concern should be displayed more prominently for parents and children.

## 1.6 HEALTHY EATING/PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example through the "Boost Better Breaks" initiative and links with external agencies. The areas for improvement identified include the need to develop a health education policy and explore ways to encourage healthier lunchboxes.

# 2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

## 2.1 LEARNING

The children settle quickly to their work; they are highly co-operative and well motivated to learn. In the early years there is an appropriate emphasis on promoting independent thinking and learning; the children are actively engaged in the learning process, have opportunities to interact effectively with each other and to apply their learning in a variety of contexts. This good practice should be disseminated and further developed throughout the school.

The majority of the children make good progress in their learning. There is a small number of children, however, who would benefit from more challenging learning tasks and activities. There is also a small number who are experiencing difficulty with aspects of their learning and whose needs are not being met fully.

By the end of year 7 the majority of the children achieve an average or better standard in both English and mathematics. This is supported by the school's analysis of the internal and external performance data of the children's attainment.

## 2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

In the foundation stage (FS) and KS 1 the children are provided with a language rich environment which promotes effectively their interest in books and the written word. They have regular opportunities to explore books and to listen to stories; the children give good levels of oral response to the text. Effective use is made of big books as a tool to teach reading and as a stimulus for writing, talking and listening. The children are acquiring basic reading skills through the development of phonological awareness and exposure to modelled and shared reading; they are beginning to use these skills to assist them in reading unfamiliar text. By the end of KS1 most of the children read with a good level of fluency, understanding and enjoyment.

In KS2 the children have regular opportunities to develop their reading skills through guided reading, daily independent reading and the use of the school library. In the best practice, guided reading takes place in small groups where the children have the opportunity to discuss the text and are encouraged to use a range of strategies to decode unfamiliar words. A few children require a more explicitly structured programme to ensure that they acquire more systematically the necessary skills to improve their reading.

The school has identified appropriately the need to promote boys' interest and confidence in reading and has developed an action plan to address this issue. The reading partnership scheme to support the less competent readers shows early indications of success in boosting children's confidence and enjoyment of reading. The school reading scheme is supplemented by a good range of fiction and non fiction books which are banded to support the children's independent reading. By the end of KS2 the majority of the children read with fluency and understanding.

The quality of the presentation of the children's written work is very good. The samples of work retained within the children's profiles indicate that they have the opportunity to write for a variety of purposes and audiences. The current focus on assessment for learning within the context of writing provides a timely opportunity for monitoring and evaluating the quality of writing achieved by children throughout the school.

In the FS and KS1 the writing activities are well matched to the children's interests and experiences. Individual whiteboards are used effectively to promote confidence and support learning. As they move into KS2 most of the children continue to develop and improve the quality of their writing. There is a need for teachers to provide a wider range of more open ended contexts for writing in order to foster the children's creativity and to provide greater challenge. A few children also require better individual planning and support for extended and independent writing.

In the early years, the children are keen to talk about their work. They express their thoughts and ideas confidently and articulately. As they progress through KS2 the children's talking and listening continues to be supported through drama and the effective use of think, pair and share. In a significant minority of the lessons observed, the layout of the classroom impeded opportunities for small group discussion, the children were seated for long periods of time without opportunity to contribute and there were missed opportunities to build on the children's ideas in order to extend learning. There is a need for a more consistent approach to the whole school development of talking and listening.

## 2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The current mathematics programme is based upon the revised Lines of Development and outlines for teachers the content to be taught in each area of the mathematics curriculum. The school has identified, as a priority for next year, the need to review the policy and programme to take account of their revised teaching strategies.

In recent years the school has focused on planning for the development of processes and mental mathematics.

Each of the mathematics lessons observed during the inspection incorporated a mental mathematics activity. The most effective of these activities were appropriately challenging, well paced and provided the children with opportunities to estimate and make simple predictions; the children were encouraged to use mathematical language in both formulating and responding to questions and in articulating their thinking processes. In the less effective sessions, the activities were narrow in focus and were too long.

In the early years, the children are developing mathematical concepts, skills and language through a combination of well planned play-based activities, practical mathematics lessons, games, action songs and effective questioning by the teacher. They are encouraged to explore and investigate and to use their mathematical knowledge in meaningful contexts across the curriculum.

As the children progress through KS2 they continue to consolidate and extend their knowledge of shape, handling data, number and measures. However, much of their work is text book led with limited opportunity for them to apply this knowledge in practical, investigative or problem solving activities. The school has identified appropriately the need to develop a more practical approach to learning and teaching in KS2 and has developed an action plan to guide their practice.

Information and communication technology is increasingly used to support effectively learning and teaching across the curriculum; the teachers make good use of the interactive whiteboards, data projectors, beebots, educational websites and commercial programmes. The year 6 and 7 children have successfully participated in the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment Accreditation Scheme and have created a range of very interesting Powerpoint presentations which they have delivered to their peers. During the inspection the digital cameras were used very effectively by children and teachers to record aspects of the children's learning and as a stimulus for future lessons. The children have regular opportunities to develop their skills in word processing.

## 3. QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNERS

### 3.1 PLANNING

The teachers plan their work consistently and effectively in the medium and short term. The short term plans identify clearly the intended learning outcomes, the resources and the assessment strategies to be used. In nearly all cases the teachers complete effective evaluations of the quality of the children's learning. In the best practice these evaluations are used to inform future planning and to meet the needs of all of the children.

### 3.2 TEACHING

The teachers have worked hard to create stimulating, well organised classroom environments. There are many interesting displays in classrooms and corridors which record and celebrate the children's achievements across the curriculum.

The school is making very good progress in the implementation of the FS as part of the Revised Northern Ireland Curriculum. Under the effective leadership and direction of the co-ordinator the staff have developed a very comprehensive play based learning policy; they have willingly and skilfully embraced the underpinning principles of the revised curriculum and have created a rich and stimulating learning environment which promotes the children's autonomy. As a result the children display very high levels of motivation and engagement in their learning.

During the inspection, most of the teaching observed was good or better. In the best practice the lessons were well paced and the teachers used skilful questioning to stimulate and extend the children's thinking. In addition, the planned activities met the needs of all the learners; there were opportunities for independent, paired or group work and links were made to learning in other areas of the curriculum. In the less effective lessons the children were seated for long periods of time, there was limited opportunity for discussion or collaboration and differentiation was characterised by the quantity of work which the children were expected to complete.

The outdoor area is being used more fully to enhance the children's learning opportunities and is an area identified appropriately for further development.

### 3.3 ASSESSMENT

The teachers mark the children's written work regularly. In the majority of cases the marking is of a supportive nature. In a few classes, the teachers are beginning to implement assessment for learning strategies and to advise the children on how to improve the quality of their work. The school uses a variety of standardised and non-standardised tests to assess the children's levels of achievement, for benchmarking and for whole-school target-setting in literacy and numeracy. This information needs to be used more closely in conjunction with the teachers' professional judgement of the children's progress in order to inform planning for individual children. There is a need for further analysis of the school's internal data in order to identify appropriate priorities for whole school development.

### 3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The school promotes a strong sense of inclusion in which each child is valued. The policy for special educational needs (SEN) has been reviewed and amended to meet the special educational needs and disability order (SENDO) requirements.

The school has recently restructured the arrangements for SEN provision. The key responsibility for the identification and planning of support for children with additional needs currently rests with the individual class teachers supported by the SENCO. Five percent of the children are identified on the SEN register. These children have individual education plans (IEPs) which are reviewed with parents on a regular basis. The IEPs need to take more



account of all of the information available about the individual children's needs; the targets and support strategies need to be more specific in order to guide the day-to-day work of the teacher and classroom assistants and there needs to be more rigorous monitoring of the children's progress.

The SENCO has attended some relevant training and has disseminated to colleagues information on for example, the Code of Practice. There is a need to identify and plan for future training needs in order to ensure that the teachers are well placed to provide for children with a range of special educational needs. The SENCO should further develop the methods for identifying and providing for the children who require support and develop a comprehensive action plan to address these issues. The SENCO liaises with other professionals such as the educational psychologist, as appropriate.

#### **4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

##### **4.1 LEADERSHIP**

The Principal has been in post for ten years. He is dedicated and hard working with a sound knowledge and understanding of the needs of the school and the wider community. He has, within recent years, been instrumental in the establishment of pre-school education provision to meet the needs of the local community. He is ably supported by the Vice-principal, KS1 co-ordinator and very hard-working staff who demonstrate a high level of professionalism and willingness to adapt to new teaching approaches. The subject co-ordinators monitor the teachers' planning and have developed some useful action plans to guide development over the next year. There is a need for these action plans and the school development plan (SDP) to be more closely aligned and for the action plans to target more specifically the required improvements in the children's learning.

##### **4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT**

The SDP identifies a range of appropriate priorities for development. It should now be revised in order to meet more fully the requirements of the Department of Education School Development Plan Regulations/Schedule 2005/19 and to address the findings of this inspection report. The Management Team have identified appropriately the need to develop the self evaluation and monitoring procedures within the school in order to evaluate more strategically the quality of learning and teaching.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

##### **5.1 The strengths of the school include:**

- the caring and supportive ethos based on the very good working relationships between the teachers and children and the strong sense of community which permeates all aspects of the school life;
- the excellent behaviour, high levels of motivation and positive attitudes towards learning demonstrated by all of the children;
- the good or better quality of the teaching in most of the lessons observed;

- the very good progress being made in the implementation of the Northern Ireland Curriculum at the FS under the effective leadership of the co-ordinator and the effective pastoral and curricular links with the recently established playgroup which facilitate the children's smooth transitions into year 1; and
- the Principal's commitment to providing the best facilities and learning experiences for all of the children, his vision for the development of the school and the professional support provided by the very hard-working teaching and non teaching staff.

5.2 The areas for improvement include the need to:

- review the procedures for identifying and providing for children with special educational needs provision in order to meet more fully the needs of all of the children; and
- further develop the self evaluation and related SDP procedures in order to focus more specifically on key targets and to assist the management team to plan, monitor and evaluate improvement more effectively.

In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this school is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in teaching, leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the learners are to be met more effectively. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

- The classrooms do not have a viewing facility from the corridor area. In order to meet the requirements of DE Circular 1999/10 there is a need for a vision panel into each room.

**ACCOMODATION**

- The overall school accommodation is very cramped. In particular, the classroom in use for the composite year 6/7class does not provide sufficient space for necessary practical work.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2008

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the DE website: [www.deni.gov.uk](http://www.deni.gov.uk) or may be obtained from the Inspection Services Branch, Department of Education, Rathgael House, 43 Balloo Road, Bangor, Co Down BT19 7PR.