



*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 Patrick's Primary School
Moneymore**

Inspected: February 2008

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BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: St Patrick's Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 04.02.08**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 503-6120** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Year 1 Intake	19	12	8	15	12
Enrolments					
Primary	88	85	83	87	92
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): 95.6%

Primary & Reception	Nursery Unit	Special Unit
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- D. i. Number of Teachers
 (including the principal and part-time teachers): 4 0 0
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 23% NI PTR: 20.8
- iii. Average Class Size: 23
- iv. Class Size (Range): 18 to 28
- 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: | 20 |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 6.5%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 19.5%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 21.7%

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 St Patrick's Primary School is situated on the outskirts of Moneymore. Almost all of the children come from the local town and the surrounding rural area. The enrolment has increased over the past five years to its current level of 92. Approximately 22% of the children are entitled to free school meals; 19 children receive additional support with aspects of their learning.

1.2 The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents and 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 children from year 6. Fifty-seven families were issued with questionnaires; approximately 49% were returned to the Department of Education (DE) of which three contained additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaires highlighted the warm and friendly atmosphere, the hard-working and dedicated teachers, and the sense of community within the school. All of the teachers completed an online questionnaire and provided additional written comments; their responses were wholly positive. The governors commented favourably on the hard-working and dedicated staff, the leadership provided by the Principal, the inclusive nature and the strong support for cultural diversity and in particular, the high regard with which the school is held in the community. The children spoke very positively about their school and reported that they feel very happy and secure in school and know where to seek help if they have a concern. The few issues raised by the questionnaires and parental responses were discussed with the Principal and the governors.

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 (SEN) 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 A very caring, supportive and inclusive ethos pervades throughout the school. The children are friendly and welcoming to visitors and a strong sense of community is evident; the overall standard of behaviour both in and out of class is excellent. The children take pleasure from their time in school; they show motivation and enjoyment in their learning and are keen to talk about their work. The learning environment is bright and stimulating; examples of the children's art, written and mathematical topic work, photographs and evidence of their achievements are displayed and celebrated in the corridors and classrooms. The quality of the classroom displays is of a very high standard.

2.2 The Principal and staff know the children well. Working relationships at all levels throughout the school are excellent. The school secretary, caretaker, classroom assistants and all other support staff contribute significantly to the life and work of the school. The school is well-maintained to high standards of cleanliness.

2.3 A wide range of strategies are used to promote the children's self-esteem and confidence. These include the Star Awards system which recognises and celebrates children's achievements, the rewarding of children's efforts with additional computer time and fun activities and the display of children's work on the Board of Excellence. Within the curriculum, approaches such as Circle Time, Reading Partnerships and Catch-up are used effectively to help and support the children.

2.4 The children have opportunities to participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities including sport, drama, music and art. Sports activities include, Gaelic football and hurling, cross-country running, swimming, basketball and cycling. The children take part in competitions, tournaments, cross-community programmes and participate in fund-raising activities for the school and for various charities. Close cross-community links have been established with a local controlled primary school through the 'Speedwell Project'. These experiences, which include a programme of school visits to places of educational interest, increase the children's awareness and understanding of the local and wider community. There is strong support across the entire school community for respect for diversity and the promotion of an inclusive culture.

2.5 The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection in the school is very good. 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 effective policies which guide the work of the school. Among the strengths are:

- the quality of the working relationships throughout the school;
- the contribution made by the support staff to the children's well-being and their learning experiences;
- the strong and effective leadership of the designated and deputy designated teachers for pastoral care; and
- the contribution of governors, staff and parents to the range of effective policies which guide the work of the school.

2.6 The school gives very good attention to promoting health and well-being, including opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity. There are effective programmes in place, for example the promotion of healthy breaks, communication with parents and effective links with catering staff, which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

2.7 Three of the four teachers have a composite class, with two different year groups. This places additional demands on them in terms of planning, monitoring and evaluation of the work across the different year groups. The teachers give freely of their time beyond the school day and they are extremely hard-working and conscientious. The quality of the teaching observed during the inspection was always good, with a majority of the lessons evaluated as being excellent. The teachers used a variety of teaching strategies, including effective group and paired work, individual activities and active learning approaches to engage and motivate the children.

2.8 The teachers plan thoroughly for their teaching. The diligent preparation of schemes of work and topics to meet the needs of the children is effectively supporting progression in the children's 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. The teachers monitor the effectiveness of their teaching and use their evaluations to inform future planning.

2.9 The children's experiences in play-based learning, in the foundation stage and key stage (KS) 1, contribute well to their personal and social development. The children are developing and using a range of skills through regular sessions of play. The teachers, skilfully supported by the classroom assistants, create good opportunities for language and number development and encourage the children's social skills as they work with one another. During the learning activities the children are enabled to make choices, share ideas and participate in role play planned around themes, which allow the children to explore and consolidate their learning. Effective plenary sessions and recorded observations ensure the monitoring of individual children's progress and development through play.

2.10 Mathematics is a major area of development within the school. The school has been participating in the Northern Ireland Numeracy Strategy with the support of the Southern Education and Library Board. Under the direction of the very conscientious numeracy co-ordinator, a detailed programme of improvement is being implemented; initiatives include a whole-school emphasis on developing the children's mathematical thinking skills, and participation in the 'Catch up' programme for children requiring additional support with numeracy.

2.11 The children's mathematical understanding is developed systematically across the school. In all classes, mathematics lessons are planned well and incorporate a range of teaching approaches, including group and paired work, practical activities and discussion sessions; a range of appropriate resources is used effectively to support the learning. In the early years classes, the children gain a good understanding of number and basic number operations, simple measurement, common two and three-dimensional shapes and they are given good opportunities to present their work in pictorial and graphical form. By the end of KS1, the children have a good level of understanding of number, shape and space. As they progress through KS2, the children's learning is develop further, and by year 7 they have gained a broad range of mathematical knowledge and skills; most have an understanding of number, fractions and place value, are able to calculate accurately, recognise and know the properties of two and three-dimensional shapes, estimate and measure in different units, and interpret and present data in a variety of forms. Regular sessions of mental mathematics help to promote the children's reasoning and flexibility; all of the teachers use skilful questioning techniques that allow the children to think and talk critically and confidently about their mathematical learning.

2.12 A significant feature of the children's mathematical experiences is the extent to which opportunities are provided for the children to apply their mathematical thinking in other areas of the curriculum. In the year 3-4 class, for example, as part of a topic on Toys, the children made simple time lines charting the evolution of toy design during the 20th century, while the children in the year 5 class engaged in a measuring and recording activity based on charting their physical growth from birth to the present day, as part of a Personal Development and Mutual Understanding lesson.

2.13 By the end of KS2, the children achieve standards commensurate with their abilities and for the majority of them the standards are good.

2.14 The development of ICT to support learning and teaching is identified appropriately in the School Development Plan (SDP) as a whole-school priority. A detailed action plan prioritises key areas for development. The school is currently focusing on enhancing learning and teaching through the use of a recently acquired interactive whiteboard and each class has the opportunity to use this resource on a timetabled basis. The school is also developing and updating its website which is currently being used effectively as a source of school information for parents and to showcase the children's work.

2.15 All classrooms are equipped with several computers which have appropriate software, including simulation games to enable the children to practise skills in mathematics and to consolidate their learning. Information and communication technology is used well to enhance displays of children's work in classrooms and around the school, and good use is made of the digital camera to record the children's work and key events in the life of the school. Excellent advice and guidance has been provided for children and parents in the safe use of the internet.

2.16 The ICT co-ordinator monitors provision across the school and plays a valuable role in training and updating colleagues. The teachers use ICT to assist planning; they are effectively integrating ICT into lessons to support the children's learning across the curriculum. Particular emphasis is currently placed on communication and information handling. In the best practice observed, ICT activities were built upon the children's previous learning and appropriate support and guidance were provided to enable the children to make progress, according to their particular needs and abilities.

2.17 The children benefit from a range of activities which enables them to make progress across all ICT strands. Good use is made of the resources available through Learning Northern Ireland. At the end of KS2, the children display competence in the use of ICT and are afforded the opportunity to have their skills formally recognised through participation in the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment IT Accreditation scheme.

2.18 The school has identified approximately 20% of the children as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning and behaviour. The school is committed to meeting the needs of these children and the inclusive approach emphasises the education of children with SEN alongside their peers in the classroom.

2.19 The arrangements for SEN, under the competent guidance of the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO), are systematic and effective. A comprehensive range of documentation to guide the work in SEN is in place. The school has good links with various external support agencies and these provide valuable assistance to individual children. The school efficiently deploys and utilises the very effective support provided by the classroom assistants.

2.20 Appropriate Individual Educational Plans which outline targets for improvement and the support strategies to be used, have been drawn up for all children with special educational needs. The Principal, SENCO and teachers monitor and review the children's progress on a regular basis. They liaise closely with, and involve, the parents at the review stages. The introduction of individual home-school liaison books has improved communication with parents and further involved them in monitoring and reviewing the progress of their children.

2.21 A number of children are benefiting from a well-structured Reading Recovery Programme and the introduction of the Catch-Up programme for Numeracy.

2.22 The school has a useful assessment policy which is implemented effectively. The teachers mark the children's work regularly, often with positive and supportive comments. The parents have regular opportunities to meet with the teachers to discuss their children's progress; written reports, detailing each child's achievements are sent home annually. Results from standardised tests are used to track the children's progress as they move through the school; this information and the professional judgement of the teachers is used appropriately to inform future planning and to promote improvement. The school has identified the further development of its assessment procedures by making greater use of the quantifiable data from formal and informal tests: this is an appropriate development which will allow the school to evaluate more fully the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

3. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

3.1 The Principal has been in post for five years; she is caring, hard-working and provides excellent leadership. She combines effectively teaching, leadership and management roles and under her direction the school has worked through a number of important pastoral and curricular initiatives. She sets a positive tone throughout the school and her consultative approach to school development work promotes a strong sense of collegiality amongst the staff. Roles and responsibilities within the school are clearly defined and there is a high level of skill and commitment among the staff which enables them to lead and manage their areas of responsibility well.

3.2 Effective policies are in place to guide and inform the work of the teachers. Much work has gone into an agreed SDP which is comprehensive and sets out appropriate areas for improvement, including aspects of numeracy and ICT. In order to identify improvement more clearly, and to conform with statutory requirements more fully, the school needs to further develop the targets set in order to be able to demonstrate, in a measurable way, ongoing school improvement.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 The strengths of the school are:

- the caring, supportive and inclusive ethos and the effective arrangements for pastoral care;
- the excellent leadership provided by the Principal and the support given by the teachers and the governors;

- the excellent behaviour exhibited by the children and their very positive attitudes to learning;
- the quality of the teaching which was consistently good and in the majority of lessons observed, was excellent;
- the good quality provision in mathematics and in particular, the strong focus on mental processes and developing the children's numerical competences; and
- the support for, and commitment to, meeting the needs of the children who have difficulties with their learning.

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

No follow-inspection is required.

ACCOMMODATION

- The playroom annex to the year1/2 room falls short of modern standards and restricts opportunities to deliver aspects of the curriculum effectively.
- There is a serious lack of appropriate administration space.

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