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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -  
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**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 Peter's and St Paul's Primary School  
Dungiven**

**Inspected: January 2007**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 St Peter's and St Paul's Primary School is situated on a pleasant elevated site in the parish of Banagher between Dungiven and Claudy. The school serves the community of Foreglen. Approximately 28% of the children are entitled to free school meals.

1.2 The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (BoG) and with all of the children from year 7. Of the 34 questionnaires issued to the parents, 50% were returned to the Department of Education (DE) and ten contained additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaires indicated that the parents were very satisfied with most aspects of the work of the school. In their written comments they praised the helpfulness of the teachers and the school's encouragement to the children. A small number of the parents raised concerns relating to the promotion of the children's personal and social qualities, the school's capacity to address bullying and the reputation of the school in the community. In addition, a few parents availed of the opportunity to come to the school during the inspection to speak with members of the inspection team. They raised concerns which concurred with those already made in the parental questionnaires. The BoG expressed their appreciation of the quality of education and care provided for the children in the school.

1.3 In discussions held with the children, they talked openly about what they enjoyed in the school and the range of extra-curricular activities available to them. They indicated that they are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety and well-being.

1.4 The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) reported to the Principal and to the representatives of the BoG the main issues emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions.

1.5 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 appropriately areas for improvement which it is currently addressing through the pastoral care action plan. Among the strengths are the caring ethos throughout the school and the celebration of the children's achievements through the various reward schemes. The areas for improvement identified already within the school development plan (SDP) include:

- the involvement of all the children in an anti-bullying programme during the present school year;
- feedback from the parents on the effectiveness of the school policies relating to child protection, safe internet use, anti-bullying and promoting positive behaviour; and
- further training for the staff and the BoG in child protection.

1.6 The inspection team endorses the need to address these areas for improvement.

1.7 The inspection focused on the quality of work in English and the effectiveness of the school's special educational needs (SEN) provision. In addition, the report makes reference to the contribution of information and communication technology (ICT) in promoting and supporting learning and teaching in English.

## **2. THE QUALITY OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK**

2.1 The learning environment in the school is enhanced with numerous examples of the children's work across the curriculum displayed in the classrooms and the circulation areas. The children are friendly, respectful to visitors and well-behaved.

2.2 There is evidence of parental involvement in supporting the children's work throughout the school. Most notably, the parents have contributed significantly to the creation of 'story sacks' to enhance the provision in literacy. They are involved in the school's paired reading programme and have regular opportunities, through parent-teacher interviews, to discuss their children's progress. There is an active Parents' Association which helps to organise functions and to raise funds for the school. A small number of the parents expressed concern that issues they raised with the school were not adequately addressed. It is essential that the school works to develop and improve its working relationship with the parents in the interests of all the children.

2.3 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, such as free fresh fruit, water, healthy break and packed lunch policies. There is a developing commitment to promoting healthy eating. Opportunities are provided for all the children to participate in a wide range of physical activities, both during and after school.

2.4 The children's personal and cultural development are enhanced through their participation in a variety of extra-curricular activities, including sports and music. They also have opportunities to study Irish.

2.5 In the majority of instances, the teachers' short-term planning is undertaken conscientiously. It is focused on the intended learning outcomes for the children and identifies the content to be covered. In developing further the quality of planning, specific reference should be made to the teaching approaches and activities to be used, and how the range of abilities within classes is to be provided for. The teachers have begun to evaluate the quality of learning and teaching at the conclusion of planning periods. They need to ensure the reviews reflect more directly on the extent of the children's learning.

2.6 The teachers are hard-working and show a high level of commitment to the education and care of the children. The quality of teaching observed was mostly satisfactory ranging to good. In the case of one teacher, the quality and effectiveness of teaching observed was unsatisfactory. In the best practice, the teachers share the learning outcomes with the children, use a range of teaching approaches and provide activities for the children which captivate their interest and maintain their enthusiasm. There is good questioning which stimulates the children's thinking and encourages them to make extended responses. Where the teaching is less effective, there is no clear identification of what the children will know, understand and be able to do; the teaching is over-directed providing insufficient opportunities for the children to learn through active, practical or relevant activities.

2.7 The work of each class is supported by a classroom assistant. In the majority of instances the assistant is used very effectively to help the children with their learning; the children benefit from their involvement and from the contribution they make.

2.8 In general, the children are well-motivated and show good levels of interest and perseverance in completing tasks set. When given the opportunity, they work well in pairs and in groups and are able to share and discuss their views and opinions with others. These opportunities are not, however, afforded consistently to all the children throughout the school.

2.9 The marking of the children's work is variable. In the best practice, the teachers acknowledge well the contribution the children make and indicate to them how their work could be further improved. Where it is ineffective, it does not discriminate sufficiently between work which is acceptable and that which is not of a good enough standard.

2.10 The children enjoy the sessions of play-based learning provided in the early years. They settle readily to a range of well-organised activities and they participate with enthusiasm and concentration. The activities provide the children with good opportunities to be creative in their use of materials, to develop language and writing skills and to support their social and personal development.

2.11 The organisation for SEN provision is undertaken conscientiously by the special needs co-ordinator (SENCO). The eleven children on the special needs register have education plans and these are reviewed regularly with the parents. In the best practice, targets for improvement are specified clearly and provision within the classroom is tailored to address the children's needs. In addition, a few of the children receive peripatetic help.

2.12 In English, the school's policy and programme provide a broad outline of the work to be covered in each year group. In all of the lessons observed, the children were given opportunities to participate orally through question and answer sessions. The younger children develop their talking and listening skills through a programme, which encourages active participation and group work. The teachers indicate clearly the learning outcomes in lessons and they share these with the children. Audio visual aids, such as listening centres and well-chosen computer software are used well to develop the children's listening. Effective questioning is often employed to gauge the extent of the children's learning. The older children, however, have too few opportunities to develop their talking and listening skills. The narrow range of teaching approaches deployed constrains extended answers. There is little evidence of well-planned extended discussion in which the children present their opinions and ideas and hone or refine them through, for example, sharing and building on the contributions of one another.

2.13 Generally, the children's reading skills are developed regularly and systematically. The majority of the teachers use a good range of teaching strategies and resources to support and meet the interests and needs of individual children, and to address the wide range of reading ability in the classes. A wide variety of novels is used effectively to stimulate the children's interest in reading. The school monitors the children's standards in reading though

regularly administered standardised tests. These tests show that a significant minority of the children do not reach a standard of reading competence comparable to children of a similar age. There is a need to review the provision for reading development to ensure that for many of the children the standards they attain are higher.

2.14 The youngest children experience useful contexts to assist and encourage their growing independence in writing. Play-based activities provide imaginative opportunities for them to write about their interests. As the children progress through the school, they have increased opportunities to develop their writing skills in meaningful contexts, often from personal experience. They are shown useful processes which encourage them to access new vocabulary for themselves. The older children's writing is too narrowly conceived; there is an over-emphasis on decontextualised grammar exercises at the expense of learning to express ideas through personal writing across the curriculum. They have insufficient opportunities to compose text for themselves, using language in different ways and for different purposes. By the end of year 7, the standard of writing for many of the children is not as good as it could be.

2.15 The use of ICT as a teaching tool to develop the children's language and literacy skills is under developed. The younger children use simple word-processing software to support their writing. The older children make some use of word-processing packages but they have too few opportunities to develop their communication skills through the wide range of computer software available. There is limited evaluation of the totality of the children's experiences and progress in English through regular monitoring.

2.16 The Principal has been in post for a long period of time and has overseen a number of developments in the curriculum and other areas of school life. He needs, however, to provide strategic leadership and management in which the competence of the teaching staff, together with the enthusiasm of the parents to support the school, are best utilised in order to ensure more purposeful experiences for the children and promote higher standards in their attainment.

2.17 The current SDP identifies curricular and other priorities for development over a three-year period. It does not conform fully to the requirements set out in the DE guidance on school development planning. There is a need to review the plan in the light of the inspection findings.

2.18 The school's accommodation is good and recent refurbishments have added to the quality of the overall provision. It is appropriate that arrangements are presently being pursued to equip the school with a secure door access system. Overall, the school is cleaned and maintained to a good standard.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

3.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the friendly, caring ethos;
- the range of extra-curricular activities provided for the children;
- the good behaviour of the children;

- the sound work and commitment of most of the teaching staff;
- the enthusiasm and responses of the children;
- the involvement of the parents in the curriculum initiative relating to reading;
- the organisation of the SEN programme; and
- the developments in assessment for learning.

3.2 The areas for improvement include the need:

- to target developments, specifically in reading and in writing, to raise the standards the children attain;
- to address the instance of unsatisfactory teaching; and
- to harness more effectively the willingness of the parents to be more involved in the life and work of the school and in the shared education of their children.

3.3 In the areas inspected, the school has strengths in its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified substantial areas for improvement, which need to be addressed promptly if the school is to meet effectively the needs of all the learners.

The Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing these areas for improvement.



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