



*The Education and Training Inspectorate -  
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*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**

**Tonagh Primary School  
Lisburn**

**Inspected: September 2008**

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## BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School:** Tonagh Primary School                      iii. **Date of Inspection:** W/B 29.09.08  
       ii. **School Reference Number:** 4010885                iv. **Nature of Inspection:** Focused

B.

School Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Year 1 Intake	22	16	19	22	18
<b>Enrolments</b>					
Primary	153	149	151	145	129
Reception	5	4	4	7	10
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): 92.2%

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

- D. i. Number of Teachers  
 (including the principal and part-time teachers): 7.58                      0                      0  
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 18.34                      NI PTR: 20.7%
- iii. Average Class Size: 19.86
- iv. Class Size (Range): 10 to 29
- v. Ancillary Support:  
 Number of Hours **Per Week**:
- |   |  |      |
|---|--|------|
| i. Clerical support:  |  | 30   |
| ii. Official Making A Good Start Support:                   |  | 27.5 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: |  | 67.5 |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 4.32%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 33.09%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 33.09%

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **SCHOOL CONTEXT**

1.1 Tonagh Primary School is situated on Tonagh Avenue in Lisburn. The majority of the children come from the Lisburn area. The school's enrolment has fluctuated slightly over the last five years to its present figure of 139. Just over 33% of the children are currently entitled to free school meals. The school has identified approximately 33% of the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning.

### **FOCUS**

1.2 The inspection focused on the quality of the work in English/Literacy and mathematics/Numeracy. In addition, the inspection report makes reference to the contribution of information and communication technology (ICT) in promoting and supporting learning and teaching in English/Literacy and mathematics/Numeracy. The inspection also evaluated the school's procedures for pastoral care, including child protection.

### **THE VIEWS OF THE PARENTS, TEACHERS, GOVERNORS AND CHILDREN**

1.3 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 groups of children from years 6 and 7. One hundred and ten questionnaires were issued to parents; approximately 54 % were returned to the Department of Education (DE) of which 27 contained additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaires support strongly the work of the school, in particular the dedicated and caring staff, the wide range of extra-curricular activities available for the children and the high regard in which the school is held by the local community. Eight of the teachers completed the questionnaire and commented positively on the very good working relationships across the school. The governors and teachers expressed their confidence in the leadership of the Acting-Principal. The children in year 6 spoke very positively about their enjoyment of school life, the wide variety of methods by which they learn and the availability of a good range of extra-curricular activities. They reported that they feel safe, and know whom to turn to in the event of a concern. The Education and Training Inspectorate has reported to the Acting-Principal and representatives of the governors the main messages emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions.

### **PASTORAL CARE**

1.4 The quality of provision for pastoral care is very good. The children are well-mannered, friendly and courteous; their behaviour is exemplary. The teachers make good use of praise and encouragement to motivate the children; the appropriate balance between rewards and sanctions contributes well to the very positive ethos, which is evident throughout the school. The classroom assistants, office staff, cleaning staff and other ancillary personnel contribute significantly to promoting and maintaining a pleasant working environment for the children. The children's learning experiences are further enriched through the Extended Schools programme, and through their participation in a wide range of sporting and non-sporting extra-curricular activities.

## CHILD PROTECTION

1.5 The staff have created a safe and secure learning environment for the children in which they can feel at ease. The school has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by DE; however, the following minor area needs to be addressed: the school needs to update the code of conduct for staff by specifying the procedures for the toileting and changing of the younger children.

## HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

1.6 The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. The children have easy access to drinking water and the school has meaningful links with external organisations to reinforce healthy eating messages. All the school initiatives combine well to encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

## 2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

### LEARNING

2.1 The children display high levels of interest in their work. In almost all of the lessons, the teachers provide good opportunities for talking and listening across the curriculum. The children are responsive and settle down quickly to the set tasks and complete them to a satisfactory standard or better. Increasingly, the children are taking responsibility for aspects of their own learning; they co-operate well with one another, work effectively in groups and undertake independent tasks with confidence.

### ENGLISH AND LITERACY

2.2 The children's learning experiences in language and literacy are of a good quality in the evaluated lessons. A recent curriculum audit has provided a useful evaluation of the work in English. The staff have appropriately prioritised the development of shared reading as an impetus to extend the children's knowledge of the range of writing styles, to increase the children's opportunities to write independently across the areas of learning and to improve the standards in writing.

2.3 In the foundation stage (FS) and key stage (KS) 1, activities such as shared reading, play-based learning and the learning of songs and rhymes enhance the children's oral skills and help develop their confidence. As they progress through the school, sessions of circle time, and paired and group activities, provide increased opportunities for the children to express their views and opinions and to discuss their learning.

2.4 A significant strength of the school is the systematic teaching of reading to enable a considerable number of children, whom the school has identified as having difficulties with their learning, to enjoy reading and gain in self-esteem as readers. Throughout the FS and KS1, the children are introduced to an appropriate range of reading strategies which enable them to decipher unfamiliar text and they learn to read with increasing fluency and expression. The teachers' use of running records as a formative assessment tool ensures that the children are reading texts at an instructional level during the taught reading sessions. In KS2, the structured reading scheme is complemented by the use of group novels. During the

inspection, when the children were given the opportunity, they responded imaginatively and critically to the teacher's well-managed discussion in shared reading activities or guided reading sessions and purposeful written tasks matched to the children's ability. The older children develop appropriate study and research skills.

2.5 In the FS, the children become familiar with different forms of print and experiment with informal mark-making. The children's letter formation, word building skills and knowledge of the basic conventions such as simple sentence structure are developed through shared writing activities. As their skills develop, the children's independent writing is promoted appropriately; by the end of KS1, the majority of children can express their ideas with a length and quality of content appropriate to their ability. As they progress through KS2, the children extend their range of writing styles and have opportunities to write for a variety of purposes and audiences. The children's writing experiences would benefit from regular and consistent opportunities to write across the curriculum and engage more in revising and editing their own writing, using ICT where it is appropriate.

## MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

2.6 The overall quality of the provision for mathematics in the school is good. In the FS, the children experience a range of well-planned play-based activities through which they are developing early mathematical language, concepts and understanding appropriate to their age and ability. They are beginning to develop their skills in mental mathematics and have opportunities during guided mathematical activities to sort, match, count, compare and make patterns and sequences in a variety of contexts. They are also able to access an appropriate range of computer software packages to enhance their understanding of mathematics.

2.7 At KS1, the children have opportunities, on a regular basis, to develop their skills in mental mathematics and are engaged in a range of practical activities which help develop their understanding of number, measures, shape, and handling data. In the best practice observed, the children were encouraged to discover and talk about patterns and relationships in their exploration of number, and tasks were differentiated appropriately according to the ability and understanding of the children. Information and communication technology is used effectively to reinforce the children's understanding of basic mathematical operations.

2.8 At KS2, the children enjoy their mathematics and are encouraged to apply their mathematical skills across the learning areas. In the best practice evaluated, the children are given appropriate time and encouragement to communicate and explain their mathematical thinking. In addition, generic ICT software packages are used to enhance the children's mathematical understanding. The children's skills in written calculation are mostly good, although for some children, there is a need to ensure more effective use of practical resources to support their understanding. They maintain a good standard of presentation in their books, in response to the high expectations and the supportive marking of the teachers. On occasion, there is a need to provide greater challenge and extension to the children's mathematical experiences.

2.9 The performance data, held by the school, indicates that the children, by the end of KS1, achieve satisfactory or better standards generally in line with their ability in both English and mathematics. In spite of the best efforts and the interest and commitment of the teachers, by the end of KS2, a minority of children are not achieving at a standard consistent

with that of children of a similar age in similar schools in literacy and numeracy. It is appropriate that the school is working towards a more strategic overview and rigorous approach to analysing and using the performance data to inform the learning and teaching and to improve further the standards which the children attain.

## RECEPTION PROVISION

2.10 There are ten children, who have not attained the statutory school age, and are enrolled in a reception class in mobile accommodation in the school grounds. The learning environment is characterised by a caring and supportive atmosphere; the children are settled and their behaviour is very good. In the best practice observed, the staff's interaction promotes appropriately the children's language, early mathematical understanding and extends their imaginative capabilities. While the existing planning identifies a range of themes and topics to be covered throughout the year, there is the need to develop more focused short-term planning, which identifies clearly the learning to be developed in each area of play and which is informed more effectively by the staff's observations of the needs and interests of the children. It would be beneficial for the staff to continue working with colleagues in the FS to develop further the children's play-based learning to ensure continuity and progression in the early years provision.

## 3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

### PLANNING

3.1 The planning for English and mathematics provides clear guidance for the teachers and specifies a broad range of learning experiences for the children. The teachers identify a range of appropriate teaching strategies, including whole-class teaching and opportunities for group and individual work. In addition, opportunities for assessment are identified and the appropriate resources are included. The planning also records the teachers' evaluations which inform future planning and practice. There is a good match between the planning and classroom practice.

### TEACHING

3.2 In the majority of lessons observed during the inspection, the quality of the teaching was evaluated as consistently good or better; and in a minority of lessons, it was very good to outstanding. The best practice effectively involved and engaged the children, was appropriately matched to their needs, attractively resourced and well-structured, often with a strong focus on sharing and consolidating the learning intentions with the children. These lessons were also well-paced and a clear partnership in learning existed between the teachers and the children. Open-ended and often skilful questioning by the teachers extended the children's thinking, encouraging them to ask questions and to improve their answers. On the small number of occasions when the teaching was less effective, the children had too few opportunities to engage in practical work and the pace of the lesson was slow. To enhance further the teaching across the school, more attention should be given to differentiating further the tasks set to ensure even greater challenge for all children, including the more able.

## ASSESSMENT

3.3 The parents are kept well-informed of their children's progress through parental interviews and written reports. The school maintains information and performance data on the children's progress. The staff use the results from standardised tests and DE benchmarking data to assess the level of the children's achievement in literacy and numeracy. All of the teachers mark the children's work regularly. In most classes, the work is marked with supportive comments; in the most effective practice, the marking informs the children of how they have met the agreed success criteria and often indicates to them how to improve further aspects of their performance.

## SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

3.4 The school has identified approximately 33% of the children as being in need of additional learning support in English and mathematics. A significant strength of the provision is the early identification policy which focuses on intervention strategies based on effective diagnostic analysis and teacher observation. The individual education plans (IEPs) contain clear and measurable short-term goals and the children's progress is tracked effectively by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO). Importance is placed appropriately on parental involvement, and strategies are outlined for use with the children at home.

3.5 In the regular withdrawal sessions, the children receive intensive reading and phonics support through the Reading Partnership programme. In addition, the withdrawal classes include a range of activities to develop the children's practical and mental mathematics. The children learn in a very supportive environment and they respond positively to the encouragement given to them by their teachers. The SENCO monitors the children's progress closely, targeting help where it is most needed. The children who make satisfactory to good progress in the additional learning support classes are appropriately discontinued.

## 4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

### LEADERSHIP

4.1 The Acting-Principal is in her first month in post. She has a clear strategic vision for the school which she communicates well to the children, staff, parents, governors and the local community. She is fully committed to the life and work of the school and her concern and care for the children and the staff are evident. In addition to her leadership, management and administrative duties, she has responsibility for the pastoral care of the staff, teaching a class and co-ordinating literacy, numeracy and assessment. The governors have identified appropriately the need to re-define and clarify some of the roles and responsibilities of various post holders and other members of staff.

### PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

4.2 The school development plan (SDP) meets the requirements of The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005. In adjusting the SDP in response to the inspection, the challenge now facing the school's leadership team is to identify appropriate strategies to address the issue of underachievement and implement them

consistently across all of the classes. The school is well-placed, through the existing culture of self-evaluation, to facilitate the rigorous and systematic analysis of the performance data to develop approaches to increase the children's levels of achievement.

## STAFF DEVELOPMENT

4.3 The priorities for staff development have been clearly identified and are well-matched to the needs of the school. The staff have benefited from their involvement in the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and are beginning to disseminate and implement many aspects of the Northern Ireland Curriculum training. The teachers report that their involvement in the Raising Achievement in Numeracy (RAIN) project has created a more open and collaborative approach to the sharing of good practice throughout the school. They have commented favourably on the quality of the support received from the South Eastern Education and Library Board's Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS) teams.

## ACCOMMODATION

4.4 The school's governors and management team have worked hard to maintain the ageing building. Many of the classrooms are, however, too small and restrict the range of teaching strategies the teachers can employ. There is insufficient space for storage. A number of health and safety issues were identified during the inspection of the primary school and reception class; these are appended.

## 5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the very good quality of the pastoral care provision which fosters successfully the positive, caring and inclusive ethos;
- the very good working relationships at all levels;
- the quality of the teaching which was consistently good or better in the majority of lessons, and very good to outstanding in a minority of lessons;
- the Acting-Principal's strategic vision for leading and managing change in the school;
- the high quality provision for special educational needs; and
- the valuable contribution to the life and work of the school made by the learning support staff, the members of the Board of Governors and the parents.

5.2 The area for improvement includes:

- the need for more effective and rigorous evaluation of the performance data in order to identify more sharply focused targets for improvement in the children's learning and the standards they achieve.

5.3 In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the school's progress on the areas for improvement.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

1. The school needs to carry out immediately a comprehensive risk assessment of the access and security arrangements of the school buildings and school site to ensure the safety of the children and the staff.
2. All rooms in the school need to have clear visual access.
3. There is no secured access to the reception mobile.
4. The school needs to review urgently the arrangements for those children in the mobile accommodation accessing the toilets.

### **ACCOMMODATION**

1. The external fabric of the temporary mobile accommodation for the reception class is in poor condition. The internal playroom is cramped; this impacts negatively on the school's ability to develop further the quality of the children's learning experiences. In addition, the mobile does not have its own toilet facilities or hot water supply, and access to the playroom is not secure.
2. The size of the FS and KS1 classrooms falls short of current standards for activity-based learning.
3. There is a lack of sufficient storage space.

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