



*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**

#### **Upper Ballyboley Primary School Ballyclare**

**Inspected: March 2009**

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## BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- |    |     |  |      |   |
|----|-----|--|------|---|
| A. | i.  | <b>School: Upper Ballyboley Primary Ballyclare</b> | iii. | <b>Date of Inspection: W/B 30.03.09</b>   |
|    | ii. | <b>School Reference Number: 301-0850</b>           | iv.  | <b>Nature of Inspection: FI/Ma/En/ICT</b> |

B.

School Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Year 1 Intake	3	7	6	4	3
<b>Enrolments</b>					
Primary	61	59	53	53	47
Reception	2	2	1	1	4
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): 97.1%

Primary & Reception	Nursery Unit	Special Unit
---------------------	--------------	--------------

- |    |    |   |      |   |   |
|----|----|---|------|---|---|
| D. | i. | Number of Teachers<br>(including the principal and part-time teachers):<br>(Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours) | 3.52 | 0 | 0 |
|----|----|---|------|---|---|

- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 13.35 NI PTR: 20.8

- iii. Average Class Size: 6.7

- iv. **Class Size (Range):** 3 to 13

- |    |  |      |   |    |
|----|--|------|---|----|
| v. | Ancillary Support:<br>Number of Hours <b>Per Week:</b> | i.   | Clerical support:   | 10 |
|    |  | ii.  | Official Making A Good<br>Start Support:                  | 20 |
|    |  | iii. | Additional hours of other<br>classroom assistant support: | 0  |

- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 0%

- |      |   |      |
|------|---|------|
| vii. | Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: | 2.1% |
|------|---|------|

- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 4

- |     |   |      |
|-----|---|------|
| ix. | Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: | 2.1% |
|-----|---|------|

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT**

Upper Ballyboley Primary School is situated on the Braepark Road just outside Ballyclare. The majority of the children come from the surrounding area. The school's enrolment has fallen steadily over the last five years and currently stands at 47 including four children who are under the statutory school age. At the time of the inspection, 2% of the children were entitled to free school meals and 2% of the children were on the special needs register.

### **1.2 FOCUS**

The focus of the inspection was on the quality of the children's experiences in English/literacy and mathematics/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 from the Board of Governors (governors) and a group of the children from year 6.

Thirty-three questionnaires were issued to the parents; approximately 88% of these were returned to the Department of Education of which 20 contained additional written comments. Nearly all of the responses indicated a high level of satisfaction with the school. In particular, the parents highlighted the caring, family atmosphere, the approachable, hard-working and dedicated staff, the regular information provided about the life and work of the school, and the additional opportunities provided for the children to develop their physical and musical skills.

The small number of concerns regarding a few school policies and procedures that were raised in the questionnaires have been discussed with the governors and the Principal.

Three teachers completed the online questionnaire and all were highly supportive of the work of the school.

The governors spoke very positively about the commitment of the teaching and non-teaching staff, whose continuous hard work brings many educational and social benefits to the children, their families and the local community.

The group of children which met with the inspection team spoke positively about their experiences in school. They talked enthusiastically about the support and care provided by the teachers and assistants and indicated that they feel safe and know whom to turn to in the event of a concern.

The views of the parents, the teachers and the children have been shared with the Principal and the governors.

## **1.4 PASTORAL CARE**

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is very good. Among the strengths are the positive working relationships at all levels which foster an inclusive and supportive ethos throughout the school, the creative ways being introduced in which the children's views are considered with regard to pastoral matters, the high priority given to the health and well-being of the staff, the use of praise and encouragement to motivate the children, and the high level of the children's participation in the wide range of extra-curricular activities. The classroom assistant contributes significantly to promoting and maintaining a pleasant, homely working environment for the children.

## **1.5 CHILD PROTECTION**

The school has very good comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department.

## **1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

The school gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example there are opportunities provided daily for the children to participate in energetic physical activity and a healthy break initiative 'Fruity Friday' has been introduced. The area for improvement identified includes the need to promote a more consistent approach to healthy eating at break and lunch time.

## **1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS**

The Principal has worked conscientiously to ensure that communication with parents is well established and maintained through a weekly news bulletin, Open Days and information evenings. There is a well established and active Parent Teacher Association. It meets regularly and through a number of well-organised social, educational and fund-raising events has made a significant contribution in terms of time, energy and finance to the life and work of the school. Valuable links have been established with the local feeder nursery school and the post-primary schools to which many of the children will transfer in addition to developing the children's experiences in ICT with one of the local post-primary schools.

# **2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS**

## **2.1 LEARNING**

The staff create a positive climate for learning; the children readily approach the adults to ask questions and seek support to further their learning. In the best practice, the children take responsibility for aspects of their learning; they co-operate well with one another, work effectively in pairs and groups and undertake independent tasks with confidence. The children settle quickly to the tasks set and generally display good levels of motivation and engagement in their work.

## 2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The quality and the effectiveness of the provision in English and literacy is good. Nearly all of the children are attaining standards in English that are broadly commensurate with their age and ability.

By the end of key stage (KS) 1 in 2008, all of the children achieved or surpassed the expected level of attainment in English for children of their age, while at KS2, in the same year, nearly all the children achieved the level expected.

There are many strengths in the school's literacy provision. The planning for English and literacy provides ample and appropriate opportunities for the children to explore and use language in a wide range of ways. The children experience a coherent English programme, which provides appropriate progression for the necessary acquisition and development of their literacy skills.

The children are encouraged and supported effectively by the teachers to listen closely to others and to give oral responses during lessons. In the foundation stage (FS) and KS1 the children have good opportunities to use language to explore and express their ideas through play-based learning. By the end of KS1, they are able to contribute their ideas confidently and can demonstrate effective communication skills.

There is a good range of opportunities for pupils to develop their talking and listening skills, such as: in paired discussions, small group activities, hot-seating and formal group presentations. It is important that the school continues to extend these opportunities across the curriculum and continues to encourage pupils to offer extended responses which can help them to develop their talking and listening skills further.

Most of the children expressed an enjoyment of reading. They are able to listen and respond to stories during shared, guided and modelled reading sessions. The school uses a commercially produced reading programme to underpin a systematic approach to the teaching of reading. Independent reading is encouraged through the use of class libraries, which are reasonably well stocked and contain a range of appropriate fiction and non-fiction texts and the teachers closely monitor the children's reading. The children's phonological awareness is being developed through the use of a phonics programme, more so at the FS and KS1, while at KS2, the children are encouraged to research, read and report on the media's coverage of news events.

By the end of both KS1 and KS2, the children are able to read with fluency and have an understanding of text that is commensurate with their age.

The children have opportunities to write for a range of audiences and purposes as they progress through the school. The standard of the children's written work is good and it is celebrated in neat displays on the walls of the classrooms. The range of the written work observed was good and included opportunities for the children to express themselves in personal, descriptive, functional and creative contexts.

Information and communication technology is not fully integrated into day-to-day classroom activities, but the school readily encourages children to use appropriate software programs to improve the quality and presentation of their written work.

Overall in English and literacy, better classroom practice was characterised by children engaging in activities which are imaginative, well matched to their ability and providing ample challenge. In these situations, the children are enabled to discuss, plan and present extended responses effectively of a very good standard. In the less effective practice, there was too much direction from the teacher and activities were not sufficiently imaginative or enabling.

### 2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The quality and effectiveness of the provision for mathematics is satisfactory. There are a number of strengths in the school's numeracy provision. The planning for mathematics provides broad and balanced coverage of number, shape, measure and data-handling and pupils are given opportunities to work individually, in pairs and in groups. The children's mathematical understanding is developed systematically throughout the school.

By the end of KS1 nearly all of the children achieve the expected level of attainment for children of their age; however, a minority of pupils are not achieving the expected level of attainment by the end of KS2.

In the FS, the children sort, order, make patterns and handle data through a combination of suitable oral and practical work which is well matched to their interests and needs. They consolidate their language, concepts and understanding through a variety of activities, experiences, practical mathematics sessions and regular sessions of play-based learning. The children are encouraged to take time to think, to ask questions and to talk about their learning. Effective plenary sessions and developing recorded observations ensure the monitoring of individual children's progress.

By the end of KS1 the majority of the children have acquired a sound understanding of basic shape, time, data-handling, weight, length and number. They have good opportunities during guided mathematical activities to problem solve, investigate and think mathematically.

In KS2, the children are able to work purposefully to complete a good range of mathematical activities. For example, they are able to construct and label a range of charts and graphs accurately and they are able to use mathematical vocabulary effectively in order to discuss and interpret aspects of measurement and data-handling, such as the estimation and classification of angles.

In the more effective practice, pupils are given opportunities to self-manage their work and to complete differentiated tasks, which reinforce their understanding of mathematical concepts. In particular, good use is made of the school environment for the children to complete number trails and investigations are framed in contexts that are real and relevant for the pupils.

In the less effective practice, there is a need to structure lessons more effectively to ensure that learning intentions are discussed with the children and that time is created to ensure a plenary session takes place in order to consolidate learning and provide opportunities for the children to self assess their work and that of the other children.

The school has appropriately begun to integrate ICT more consistently into the provision for mathematics in order to enhance and extend the children's learning experiences. The use of the interactive whiteboard is used imaginatively to deepen their understanding and stimulate their engagement and enjoyment of mathematics.

## **2.4 RECEPTION PROVISION**

There are four children, who have not attained the statutory school age, and are enrolled in a class with the children in years 1 and 2. The learning environment is characterised by a caring and supportive atmosphere; the children are settled and their behaviour is very good. The staff's interaction promotes appropriately the children's language, early mathematical understanding and extends their imaginative capabilities.

## **3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING**

### **3.1 PLANNING**

The teachers have composite classes with at least two year groups. This places demands on them in terms of planning, monitoring and evaluating the work across the different year groups. It is appropriate that the school development plan (SDP) has identified the need to update whole-school planning in order to focus more clearly on what the children will learn and ensure consistency and progression in the children's experiences throughout the school. The more recent teachers planning is providing more opportunities to involve the children themselves in the planning process, identify the intended learning outcomes, the resources and the assessment strategies to be used. In the best practice, the teachers have begun to complete detailed written evaluations of the quality of the children's learning, which are used to inform future planning and to meet the needs of the children. This good practice which clearly reflects the classroom practice needs to be shared consistently throughout the school.

### **3.2 TEACHING**

During the inspection, the quality of the teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to very good, with a majority being good or better. In the most effective practice the lessons were well paced, the learning outcomes were clearly identified and shared with the children who were clear on what they were expected to learn and the teachers used success criteria effectively throughout the lesson to focus the children's attention and to consolidate their learning. In addition, the planned activities met the needs of all the children and provided appropriate combinations of practical and problem-solving tasks; the children worked independently, in pairs or groups, and clear links were made to learning in other areas of the curriculum. During these lessons, the teachers used skilful questioning to reinforce and access the children's learning. During the plenary sessions the children had good opportunities to summarise and consolidate key learning points from the lesson. In the less effective practice the lessons were over-directed by the teacher, too much emphasis was placed on the completion of activities rather than on the quality of the learning and there was insufficient time given to highlighting key learning points or to consolidating the learning at the end of the lesson.



### 3.3 ASSESSMENT

The school is beginning to use a suitable range of standardised and non-standardised testing to assess the children's level of attainment in English and mathematics and to identify areas for development. The school has identified the need for more effective use of the analysis of this performance data to inform planning for learning and teaching, provide clear evidence of improvements and to raise further the standards of attainment in English and mathematics. The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) endorses this as a key priority to promote improvement.

The teachers mark the children's work regularly and provide written comments which are generally positive. Some further development is needed in agreeing success criteria with the children and taking more account of marking for improvement.

### 3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The school promotes a strong sense of inclusion in which each child is valued. A significant strength of the provision is the early identification policy which focuses on intervention strategies based on effective diagnostic analysis and teacher observations. The individual educational plans contain clear and measurable short-term objectives and the children's progress is tracked effectively by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO). The SENCO monitors the children's progress closely, targeting help where it is needed. There is evidence to show that the actions taken have resulted in improvements in the children's learning.

## 4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The Principal has been in post for 21 years. She is dedicated and committed to the life and work of the school and to the well-being of the children; she has a very good knowledge and understanding of the school context and knows the children and their families well. She has worked hard to establish good routines and communication systems for the organisation and the administration of the day-to-day running of the school. She has developed a strong team-spirit and builds well on the good working relationships established at all levels to promote the positive ethos in the school. She works hard to manage the school, combined with a full-time teaching role, ensuring that it is efficient and democratically run. It is timely that the school has identified the need to introduce a systematic approach to monitor and evaluate aspects of the school's provision in a rigorous and consistent manner both at class level and management level in order to develop a culture of self-evaluation leading to improvement. It is essential that the dissemination of best practice is an integral part of this process.

### 4.1 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The school has recently experienced a time of challenge, unease and uncertainty, with perceived changes in staffing and a steady reduction in enrolment. An SDP has been devised to guide the work of the school. Whilst it is compliant with the requirements of the Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005, it is appropriate for the Principal together with the staff to review the current SDP in the light of this report in

order to identify the key priority areas for further development and to begin the formal process of self-evaluation. Appropriate action plans should be prepared, success criteria identified, and clear strategies to monitor and evaluate progress agreed and implemented.

## **4.2 ACCOMMODATION**

The accommodation is well maintained and the standard of caretaking is excellent. The teaching staff have made good use of the accommodation both indoors and outdoors to create a welcoming, child-friendly environment.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

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

- the high quality of the pastoral care provision and the commitment of the staff to the welfare of the children;
- the polite, responsive and friendly children whose behaviour was very good at all times;
- the good progress made in the early years in encouraging the children's independence and active participation in their learning;
- the good quality of the teaching observed which was good or better in almost three quarters of the lessons observed;
- the effective links established with the parents and the many opportunities provided for them to become more involved in the life and work of the school; and
- the wide range of interesting and varied extra-curricular activities which enrich the children's experiences.

### **5.2 The areas for improvement include the need:**

- to introduce a more rigorous and systematic approach to the monitoring and evaluation of learning and teaching to raise further the standards achieved by all the children. This can be best achieved as the management introduces and leads a culture of self-evaluation leading to improvement; and
- to ensure ICT is used more effectively to enhance learning and teaching throughout the school.

**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.

5.4 It will be important that the employing authority, the governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision and school budget, in order to address the current and future needs of the children and the staff.

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

### **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

- There are no disabled toilet facilities.
- The heating system and dampness pose considerable difficulties in one of the mobiles.
- A section of the perimeter fence is not yet secured.

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