

Report of a Primary Inspection
Brookeborough Primary School

January 2025

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Throughout the report the use of an asterisk * denotes further information included at Appendix 3.

1. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Brookeborough Primary School is a controlled school with an enrolment of 59 children, almost all of whom come from the village and the rural outskirts of Brookeborough. Twenty-nine percent (17) of the children attending the school have free school meal entitlement. School attendance for the current year is 97.8%. Forty-four percent (26) of the children attending the school have been identified as having special educational needs (SEN), six of whom have a statement of SEN.

The teaching staff comprises a teaching principal appointed in April 2023, two full-time teachers and one part-time teacher. The teachers are supported in their work by the team of seven classroom assistants.

The school has a well-established shared education* link with a local Catholic maintained primary school.

The staff are working towards achieving the 'Autism Northern Ireland Impact Award'* and renewing their 'Eco-School Green Flag'* award.

B. VIEWS OF PARENTS, LEARNERS AND STAFF

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) issued online confidential questionnaires to year 7 children and all staff and parents/carers in advance of the inspection.

All of the year 7 children responded to the questionnaire and their responses were wholly positive. The children all expressed their pride in being members of their school community. They also reported benefiting from meeting and learning with children from another school in their community through their shared education partnership.

The Inspectors met with groups of children from years 3, 5, 6 and 7. The children spoke positively and articulately about all aspects of school life. They have a very clear understanding of how to keep healthy and explained in detail how the produce from farms in their local community can contribute to healthy eating, their personal growth development and a healthy lifestyle. They spoke knowledgeably about how the school's communication systems take account of their views and opinions about school through, for example, the school council and the eco-school council. The children who have recently taken on roles as digital leaders explained their roles with great confidence and all of the children are clear on how to keep safe online.

Forty-eight percent (28) of the parents/carers responded to the questionnaire and their responses were wholly positive. Half of those who responded provided written comments highlighting how their child benefits from the school's strong community links through, for example, shared education, which is assisting the children to get to know other children in the community. Parents/carers also expressed their satisfaction with the "upbeat school" in which the dedicated and supportive staff are approachable and always willing to help the children and parents.

All staff responded to the questionnaires and their responses were wholly positive. They are clear on the school's vision and feel their ideas and views are valued, respected and acted upon. A small number of them provided written comments in which they emphasised the emerging growth of a strong, happy and cohesive staff team who enjoy planning and working together and with the wider school community to support children in their learning.

A summary of all the questionnaire responses was shared with the principal and a representative from the board of governors.

C. THE PROCESS OF INSPECTION

ETI worked alongside Brookeborough Primary School to consider how well the school:

- has identified and articulates its vision;
- prioritises actions to achieve the vision;
- overcomes the main challenges it faces;
- monitors and reviews progression to identify, celebrate and embed success; and
- grows and develops an inclusive community of learning.

2. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- Brookeborough Primary School's whole school community is fully committed to realising their shared vision which aspires to, "put children first, work together as a school family and empower everyone to be the best they can be."
- The children are proud and responsible members of their school community. They live out the school values of "respect, kindness and responsibility" in their friendly, polite and respectful interactions with their peers and with all adults in the school.
- The well-paced strategic review of key roles and responsibilities and the re-establishment of self-evaluation processes have resulted in a shared understanding of planning for improvement among the teachers.
- Appropriate key priorities for development have been identified and agreed by all staff in line with the school's vision, including the plan to review and evaluate the approaches to whole-school planning for learning to ensure progression across the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

- Across the school, the teachers use skilfully a range of effective questioning techniques to capture and maintain the children’s interest and attention, extend their thinking and vocabulary, and monitor their understanding.
- Well-considered and stimulating resources, including a range of digital technologies, are used well in each class to enhance the children’s learning experiences and improve their outcomes across the curriculum.
- The children respond very well to their teachers’ expectations of them. They are attentive, engage well in their learning and speak confidently with each other, with the teachers and with visitors about their learning.
- Strategic whole-staff capacity building has led to the creation of an inclusive environment in which all staff use consistent, sensitive and effective approaches to support children with special educational needs (SEN). The school is appropriately reviewing planning for SEN to ensure consistency in the quality and appropriateness of the target setting and strategies for individual children across each key stage (KS).
- The encouraging, respectful and empowering relationships at all levels within the school, and the well-established partnerships with other local schools and with the local community, place Brookeborough Primary School at the heart of their community and provide a wealth of learning opportunities for the children.
- At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by the school demonstrates that the arrangements for child protection align to the current statutory guidance.

Areas for action:

- to complete the planned review and evaluation of whole-school long- and medium- term planning for learning to ensure progression across all areas of learning of the Northern Ireland Primary Curriculum; and
- to continue to review the planning for children identified as having SEN to ensure consistency in the quality and appropriateness of the target setting and strategies for individual children across all key stages.

3. MAIN REPORT

A. SETTING THE VISION

Brookeborough Primary School’s new shared vision to “put children first, work together as a school family and empower everyone to be the best they can be” is realised through the whole-school community’s creation of a positive and inclusive learning atmosphere underpinned by the school’s core values of “respect, kindness and responsibility’. Owing to the significant staff changes, including at leadership level, staff and leaders proactively embarked on a process of review and reflection to

agree a new school vision that would reflect the current context and aspirations of the school community. The whole staff engaged in appropriate professional learning relating to the development of a school's vision, ethos, mission and values which informed them well in their strategic planning towards setting the vision. In addition, detailed evidence from consultations with governors, staff, parents and children has also informed the new school vision.

The well-paced strategic review of key roles and responsibilities and the re-establishment of self-evaluation processes have resulted in a shared understanding of effective planning for improvement. Appropriate key priorities for development, aligned with achieving the school's vision, have been identified and agreed by all staff. The one-year transitional school development plan is detailed and guides the staff well towards achieving the school's key priorities. The staff have an effective review process in place and are effectively monitoring and evaluating the ongoing impact of the improvement actions to inform the upcoming three-year school development plan.

The longstanding board of governors have a clear understanding of the school's vision. They have a range of expertise and use them well to support and challenge the principal and staff in their work towards achieving the school vision.

B. IMPLEMENTING AND IMPROVING TO ACHIEVE THE VISION

There is a welcoming, pastoral, 'family' atmosphere in each class, which is characterised by the nurturing and respectful relationships between the children and the adults. The 'fun, firm and fair' approach to positive classroom management is implemented consistently throughout the school. During all lessons, the teachers use skilfully a range of questioning techniques to engage the children's interest, monitor their understanding and extend their thinking and vocabulary. Where the learning is most effective, lesson plenaries are used to very good effect to consolidate learning, evaluate progress and understanding, and allow the children to present to their peers and pose meaningful questions of each other. The teachers integrate a range of active teaching and learning methodologies into the lessons, including for example, think-pair-share* and a range of stimulating drama techniques, which motivate the children to learn and promote the development of their thinking skills and independence. The staff have identified the need to review current whole-school approaches to marking for improvement in the children's books to agree a shared rationale and consistent approach going forward.

Across the school, the teachers use a range of well-considered and interesting resources, including digital resources such as the interactive whiteboard, iPads and immersive readers, to support their teaching and enhance the children's skills and learning experiences.

The planning that is in place for all areas of the Northern Ireland Primary Curriculum guides appropriately the learning and teaching across the school. The most effective planning is characterised by: intended learning which is clear, realistic, manageable and well-connected learning across the curriculum; meaningful differentiation and planning for the needs of individual children; and evaluations of the children's learning which are child-centred, inform future planning and demonstrate clearly the

progress the children are making. It is appropriate that the staff have planned to review and evaluate whole-school planning for learning to monitor more effectively the provision and progression in learning across the breadth of the curriculum. The inspection endorses this as an appropriate priority.

The priority given to ensuring the children's physical and emotional health and wellbeing is characterised by the importance placed on the provision of daily, energetic outdoor play sessions for all of the children. The older children spoke positively about how much they enjoy the termly block of swimming lessons for all KS2 children and knew the importance of water safety. The staff value the importance of providing the children with opportunities to engage in enjoyable music and drama experiences in class, during the whole-school weekly assembly, and through their participation in events and performances in the local community, all of which contribute well to building the children's confidence and self-esteem.

C. BUILDING EQUITY

Strategic whole-staff capacity building ensures that the staff are consistent, sensitive and effective in their approaches to supporting the children identified as having special educational needs (SEN) in an inclusive environment. The staff have engaged in robust self-evaluation processes and have a clear oversight of the barriers faced by the children and the support they need. There has been a notable increase in the number of children with SEN attending the school over the last three years, and in particular children identified as having Autistic Spectrum Disorder. The well-considered programme of professional learning for all staff and the range of well-established external partnerships, including for example with RISENI* and the EA Special Educational Needs Inclusion Services* (SENIS), all support the staff very well in meeting effectively the needs of children with SEN.

Small group withdrawal support is impacting positively on the children who have been identified as requiring additional support with aspects of language and literacy and they are making progress in their learning from their individual starting points. The learning support assistants are well deployed. They use the knowledge, skills and strategies, accessed through appropriate professional development opportunities, to support the children competently and discreetly. These include the incorporation of brain, movement and sensory breaks in lessons, use of choice boards and differentiated oral language and communication cues. The strategies are impacting positively on the children's motivation to learn and are building their independence and resilience in all aspects of their learning. The parents who spoke with us shared how the valuable, ongoing and knowledgeable support they receive from the staff is helping them well to support their children's learning at home.

The staff use the analysis of a range of quantitative and qualitative assessment meticulously to identify children who require additional support. All of the children identified with SEN have individual educational plans* (IEPs) which are informed appropriately through collaboration with the child, parent and staff. Where the IEPs are most effective, they are well constructed, identify clear measurable targets and associated strategies, and guide very well the provision for individual children. The staff are appropriately reviewing planning for SEN to ensure greater consistency in the quality and appropriateness of the target setting and strategies for individual children across each key stage.

D. DEFINING, CELEBRATING AND EMBEDDING SUCCESS

There are excellent working relationships at all levels in the school. The children are friendly, polite and interact respectfully with their peers, adults and visitors to the school. They respond very well to their teachers' high expectations of them. The staff provide praise and constructive verbal feedback to the children during lessons. Mistakes are handled pastorally as learning opportunities and the teachers maximise these opportunities consistently to develop and consolidate the children's learning and understanding in a positive and encouraging manner. As a result, the children's confidence, self-esteem and oracy are progressing well across the school. They are attentive, engage well in their learning and speak confidently about their learning with each other, the teachers and visitors.

The staff use a wide range of assessments, standardised data and teacher professional judgement to baseline the children's individual starting points and monitor their progress in learning at different points throughout the year and across their primary school journey. The school's well-established links with parents, local pre-schools and feeder post-primary schools is supporting successfully smooth transitions for the children. Visits to the local pre-schools by the year one teacher and school invitations to the children and their parents to engage in stay and play sessions, contribute well to the formation of successful parent and child relationships within the school. The year seven children's participation transition programmes with local post primary programmes promotes readiness for the next stage of the children's learning and supports transition to year 8. In addition, the school's SENCO meets with pre-school and feeder post-primary staff to ensure the successes of children with SEN are built upon and progression in learning is optimised for all children.

The staff create a positive atmosphere conducive to joyful learning, where the recognition of the children's talents and achievements is encouraged and celebrated through weekly assemblies along with individual, group and whole class award systems which motivate the children to learn. School displays inside and outside the classroom are informative and celebrate the children's work, talents and school leadership roles. Through positions on the Eco-school council, the school council and the newly developed digital leader team, the children in key stage (KS) 1 and 2 have regular opportunities to develop their leadership skills and express their views on aspects of school life.

The children are provided with the opportunity to celebrate their talents in public speaking, drama and music during assemblies or in school performances in the local community. At a whole-school assembly, inspectors observed all of the children perform proudly and confidently a song cowritten by the whole-school community to articulate the new school vision.

E. GROWING A COMMUNITY OF LEARNING

The staff fully embrace the importance of building and nurturing effective internal and external partnerships in the best interests of the whole school community. A successful, well-paced, sensitive and strategic approach to rebuilding relationships has resulted in a cohesive and confident staff who feel valued, supported and encouraged in the work they do in the best interest of the children.

The school is proud of the well-established Shared Education partnership with a local maintained primary school which has: impacted positively on a wide range of curricular and pastoral aspects over the years; provided valuable professional learning opportunities for staff in both schools; and created meaningful shared learning experiences for the children. In line with the school's own identified priorities for development during 2023-24, an Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) focus was agreed with the partner school and a whole-school shared programme was created and delivered, resulting in improved staff confidence and competence in the use of a range of digital technologies and applications, and improved learning experiences and outcomes in aspects of computational thinking and coding for the children in foundation stage and KS1 and digital audio for the children in KS2.

Extensive partnerships exist with the local community, including with local churches, emergency services, Brookeborough Development Association, Brookeborough Women's Group and local businesses. These partnerships strengthen the role and standing of the school within the village, support the local community, and provide the children with a wealth of learning opportunities and experiences.

Parents and families are valued members of the school community. The parents acknowledge and appreciate the approachable and visible leader and staff and the regular and effective communication they receive, through a digital app, the informative website, and during curriculum days and parent-teacher meetings. The work of the committed and successful Parent Teacher and Families Association (PTFA) is very much appreciated by the school. As a result of their dedication at sourcing and applying for various grants and the organisation of a range of fun family events, such as the Harvest Hooley and Beetle Drive, much needed funds have been raised. These have been used by the school to purchase, for example, ICT resources and musical instruments to support the children's learning.

F. CHILD PROTECTION

At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by Brookeborough Primary School demonstrates that the arrangements for child protection align to the current statutory guidance.

4. GOING FORWARD

Brookeborough Primary School's whole school community is fully committed to living out its vision which is to "put children first, work together as a school family and empower everyone to the best they can be" through the creation of a welcoming, joyous and inclusive school.

The inspection has highlighted areas for action to enable Brookeborough Primary School to achieve its vision more fully which the leaders and staff are well placed to address. Through the engagement of the District Inspector, ETI will continue to work with the school on its continual journey of improvement.

5. APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: QUANTITATIVE TERMS

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75% - 90%
A majority	-	50% - 74%
A significant minority	-	30% - 49%
A minority	-	10% - 29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

APPENDIX 2: SMALL SCHOOLS

In all schools where the enrolment number is below the minimum number of 105 in a rural setting, as set out in the Department of Education's [Sustainable Schools Policy](#), it will be important that the employing authority, school 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.

APPENDIX 3: NOTES

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Shared Education

Shared Education delivers opportunities for children and young people from different communities, as well as social and economic backgrounds, to learn together on a regular and sustained basis, for both social and educational benefits.

Autism Northern Ireland Impact Award

The Autism NI Impact Award for Education is a professional learning training package through the Autism Northern Ireland charity which aims to support schools of all sizes to provide an inclusive and welcoming environment for autistic pupils and staff.

Eco-Schools Green Flag

The Eco-Schools Green Flag is an internationally recognised award for excellence in environmental action and learning.

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Think-Pair-Share is a simple, collaborative learning strategy with three steps:

1. **Think.** Children consider a question individually.
2. **Pair.** Children discuss their ideas with a partner to refine their thinking and seek peer support.
3. **Share.** Selected pairs present their answers to the class.

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Regional Early Intervention Service (RISE NI)

RISE NI is a regional early intervention service which supports children in pre-school educational and mainstream primary school settings by working closely with parents and education staff to help children develop the foundation skills for learning i.e. speech, language, communication, sensory-motor, visual perception, social, emotional and behaviour skills.

SEN Inclusion Service (SENIS)

The Education Authority SEN Inclusion Service supports the effective inclusion of children and young people with learning and medical needs.

Individual Education Plans (IEPs)

An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is a document for children identified as having special educational needs and outlines the children's learning goals and the support they need to achieve them.

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