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*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 Short Inspection

Ballydown Primary School
Banbridge

Inspected: February 2007

SHORT INSPECTION BALLYDOWN PRIMARY SCHOOL, BANBRIDGE (501-1617)

1.1 Ballydown Primary School is situated in a rural area just outside Banbridge on the Castlewellan Road, Co Down. Most of the children come from the Banbridge area and the surrounding countryside. At present, there are 298 children attending the school and the enrolment has been increasing steadily since the new school building was opened in 2003. Approximately 4% of the children are entitled to free school meals. The school identifies 13.4% of children as requiring additional learning support.

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 a group of children from year 6. One hundred and eight questionnaires were issued to the parents; 37% were returned to the Department of Education (DE) and 17 contained additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaires indicated that the parents support strongly the work of the school and appreciate the dedication and commitment of the staff to the education and well being of their children. The year 6 children spoke enthusiastically about the many aspects of school that they enjoy and reported that they feel safe and secure in the school. The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) has reported the key findings of the questionnaires and discussions to the acting Principal and a representative of the Board of Governors.

1.3 At the time of the inspection the principal was on a career break; over time, he had demonstrated considerable commitment to promoting high standards in the work of the school and in developing the monitoring role of coordinators. Further, the positive evidence from the inspection is a testimony to his effective work.

1.4 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 a few areas for improvement which it is currently implementing. Among the strengths is the dedication of the teachers to the children's welfare and development and the well-balanced reward systems to acknowledge the children's efforts; the areas for improvement identified include the need to:

- ensure that the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection are made known directly to parents at least once every two years; and
- develop further the school's policy and guidelines for volunteers in line with DE Circulars 2006/07/08 and 09

1.5 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, such as healthy break, water provision and cookery, all of which encourage the children to adopt healthy life-styles. The children demonstrate a very good understanding of the importance of making healthy life choices. There is commitment within the school to promoting healthy eating, through projects, competitions and a lunch club within the nursery. Opportunities are provided for all the children to participate in a range of physical activities both during and after school.

1.6 The strengths of the school include the:

- hard-working and committed staff, the good morale and the strong sense of a school community and effective teamwork at all levels;
- excellent curricular and pastoral links which are being developed with the parents and the value given to the contribution made by the parents to the life and work of the school;
- excellent ethos which pervades all of the life and work of the school;
- the school is a welcoming, orderly and secure environment;
- attractive displays of the children's work, which celebrate their creativity and achievements;
- enthusiasm, motivation and exemplary behaviour of the children and their positive attitudes to learning and school;
- quality of the pastoral provision which promotes the children's confidence and self-esteem;
- good range of extra curricular activities provided and the effective links with other schools which enhance the children's learning experiences;
- effective efforts made by the school to support the children who have specific difficulties with their learning and the good support provided by the non-teaching staff;
- provision for special educational needs which is very good;
- quality of teaching, most of which is consistently good and, in a minority of lessons, is outstanding;
- strong commitment to the promotion of independent, collaborative and active forms of learning in keeping with the requirements of the revised curriculum;
- good use of information and communication technology to enhance and consolidate the children's learning;
- effective analysis, sharing and use of quantitative data as an integral part of the school's ongoing development of its self-evaluation processes;
- quality of the school's self-evaluation conducted as part of this inspection process and the developing culture of self-evaluation evident across the school; and

- quality of the leadership and management of the acting Principal who is very supportive of the staff and does much to foster a strong collegial atmosphere in decision making; in addition, he has been both innovative and creative in developing key pastoral and curricular areas. In all of this work, he has been well supported by the staff, the senior management team and the acting vice-Principal.

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

A number of quantitative terms are used in the report. In percentages, the terms correspond as follows:-

More than 90%	- almost/nearly all
75%-90%	- most
50%-74%	- a majority
30%-49%	- a significant minority
10%-29%	- a minority
Less than 10%	- very few/a small number.

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