

PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Darkley Primary School,
Co Armagh

Report of an Inspection
in January 2011

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%

In assessing the various features of the provision, the Inspectorate relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Darkley Primary School is situated in a rural setting approximately two miles from Keady in Co Armagh. The children attending the school come from the town and the surrounding rural area. The enrolment has remained steady in recent years and currently stands at 86. At the time of the inspection, approximately 28% of the children in the school were entitled to free school meals. The school has identified 15 children who require additional support with aspects of their learning. The Principal has been in post since September 2010.

FOCUS

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy;
- the quality of provision for learning; and
- the quality of leadership and management including the school's processes for self-evaluation leading to improvement.

OVERALL FINDING OF THE INSPECTION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this 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.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

Achievements and Standards

The quality of the children's achievements and standards is good.

- The **standards** achieved by the children in English and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2 range from satisfactory to very good. The Principal and the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) have made a very good start to the collation and analysis of a wide range of assessment data in order to track the progress of individual children and, specifically, to identify underachievement.
- As the children progress through the school they develop a wide range of social and interpersonal **skills**. By the end of year 7 almost all of the children are confident, articulate and enthusiastic learners and are well-prepared for the next stage of their education.
- The children who require **support with aspects of their learning** make very good progress across the curriculum; and almost all reach the standards of which they are capable by the end of year 7.

Provision for Learning

The provision for learning is very good.

- The quality of the relationships at all levels is outstanding. The **children's** behaviour, both in and out of the classroom, is exemplary; they are very well settled and engage happily and enthusiastically in all aspects of school life.
- The quality of the children's responses in class is excellent; they respond eagerly to the wide range of **learning** opportunities provided by the teachers.
- A strong sense of teamwork pervades the life and work of the school; all of the staff are fully committed to the education and care of the children. In the lessons observed, the classroom assistants provided valuable, and valued, support to the class teachers. This support is making a positive impact on the children's **learning**.
- The quality of the **learning and teaching** observed ranged from good to very good; it was very good in just over three-quarters of the lessons. The teachers work very hard; they have recently reviewed and improved the planning for learning and teaching across a range of subject areas. The quality of this updated planning is very good.
- The provision for **special educational needs** is very good. The SENCO has used assessment data effectively to identify at an early stage children who require additional support and challenge in their work. A programme of withdrawal support for children who require both short-term and long-term support in literacy and numeracy is having a positive impact on the children's achievements. The school is aware that this support may not be sustainable in the medium-term and the SENCO is taking appropriate steps to develop the capacity of the class teachers and classroom assistants in this area.
- The quality of the arrangements for **pastoral care** is outstanding. There is a strong family ethos evident throughout the school. The parents, the Board of Governors (governors), staff and the local community work together effectively in the best interests of all of the children.
- The school has very good and comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the **child protection** guidance issued by the Department of Education.

Leadership and Management

The quality of leadership and management is good.

- The **Principal** provides very good leadership. He has been in post since September 2010 and, in addition to his teaching duties, has worked very hard to identify the key strengths in the school's provision and the areas requiring further development, which include appropriately literacy and Information and Communication Technology (ICT); the inspection endorses these as key areas for further development. The Principal is enthusiastic and is committed fully to enhancing further the school's reputation in the community through a whole-school improvement agenda.

- A major focus for the Principal since his appointment has been the development of a more strategic approach to the **school development planning** (SDP) process; the interim SDP identifies appropriate key areas for improvement. The plan needs to have a stronger focus on the strategies to be used in order to improve further the standards achieved by the children particularly in literacy and numeracy. A very good start has been made to the establishment of a whole-school **self-evaluation** process.
- The **SENCO** provides very good leadership; she has made a good start to monitoring and evaluating the quality of the provision.

CONCLUSION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this 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. These include the need to:

- review the SDP to include a stronger focus on the strategies to be used in order to improve further the standards achieved by the children particularly in literacy and numeracy;
- improve aspects of the literacy provision including the systematic teaching of reading across the school; and
- develop further the children's use of ICT across the curriculum.

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

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.

BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School:** Darkley Primary School, Co Armagh
 ii. **School Reference Number:** 501-1119
 iii. **Date of Inspection:** 12 January 2011
 iv. **Nature of Inspection:** Short

B.

School Year	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Year 1 Intake	20	10	11	16	8
Enrolments					
Primary	85	85	81	85	86
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Unit	0	0	0	0	0
Special Unit	0	0	0	0	0
Irish Medium 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): 94% **NI Avg Att: 94.9%**
- | | Primary & Reception | Nursery Unit | Special Unit | Irish Medium Unit |
|--|---------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
|--|---------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
- D. i. **Number of Teachers**
 (including the principal and part-time teachers): 6 0 0 0
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. **PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio):** 14.3 NI PTR: 20.7
- iii. **Average Class Size:** 22
- iv. **Class Size (Range):** 18 to 24
- v. **Ancillary Support:**
- | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|----|
| Number of Hours Per Week: | i. Clerical support: | 22 |
| | ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support: | 25 |
| | iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 20 |
- vi. **Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs:** 0%
- vii. **Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register:** 22%
- viii. **Number of families in school:** 56
- ix. **Percentage of children entitled to free school meals:** 28
- x. **Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2009/10 who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics:** **English** 92% **Mathematics** 100%
- xi. **If there is a composite class with reception children in it, please indicate the numbers of children in the other year groups:**
- | | | |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 |

APPENDIX 2

THE VIEWS OF THE PARENTS, TEACHERS, SUPPORT STAFF AND CHILDREN

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents, the teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Of the 56 questionnaires issued to the parents, 14 (25%) were returned to Inspection Services Branch, including nine which contained additional written comments. All of the parents expressed high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In the written comments, they praised highly the excellent staff who are conscientious, approachable and caring, the child-centred approach to all aspects of school life to ensure that all of the children develop academically, socially and emotionally and the strong sense of family ethos in the school.

All of the teachers and the support staff responded extremely positively to the staff questionnaires and indicated very high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of school life particularly the excellent relationships at all levels, the happy and warm working environment and the pastoral and professional support provided for them.

The inspectors also met with a group of the year 6 and year 7 children; all of the children were very enthusiastic about their experiences at school. They talked about their enjoyment of learning in both curricular and extra-curricular activities, the warm and welcoming atmosphere throughout the school, their appreciation of the School Council and the meaningful friendships they have formed with both their peers and the staff. The children feel safe in school and are aware of what to do if they have worries about well-being.

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