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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

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Short Inspection

**St Ciaran's Primary School
Cushendun**

Inspected: November 2009

**ST CIARAN'S PRIMARY SCHOOL, CUSHENDUN, BALLYMENA, CO ANTRIM, BT44 0NJ
(303-6268)**

SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Ciaran's Primary School is situated in a rural location in the village of Knocknacarry on the outskirts of Cushendun. The enrolment has declined over recent years and currently stands at 60. At the time of the inspection, just over 3% of the children were entitled to free school meals and approximately 17% of the children were identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning.

FOCUS

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy;
- the quality of the provision for learning; and
- the quality of the leadership and management.

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 confidential questionnaires prior to the inspection. Of the 35 questionnaires issued to the parents, 22 (63%) were returned to the Department of Education (DE) and three contained additional written comments. Almost all of the parental responses were highly affirmative, indicating very strong support for the work and life of the school and highlighting, in particular, the very good quality of the education provided, the friendly and approachable staff, and the caring ethos within the school. The teachers' responses were all very positive, commenting on the collegial working relationships between the staff and the school's value within the local community.

A group of the parents and representatives of the Board of Governors (governors) met with the inspection team on the first day of the inspection and expressed their appreciation for the dedication of the staff and the quality of the leadership provided by the Principal. The representatives of the governors reported that they are kept well-informed about the school development planning process.

The inspectors also met with a group of year 6 and 7 children; they talked positively about the care provided by the teachers and the support staff, and their involvement in a range of after-school activities. They reported that they are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being.

The Education and Training Inspectorate has reported to the Principal the very few other concerns emerging from the parents' questionnaires.

PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is very good. Among the strengths are: the behaviour of the children who engage well in their learning; the contribution made by all the staff to promote and maintain a well organised and supportive environment for the children; and the community ethos evident within the school.

CHILD PROTECTION

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

HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity; for example, there is a well-embedded healthy breaks scheme that has been developed following effective consultation with the children, which encourages them to adopt healthy lifestyles.

CONCLUSION

The strengths of the school include:

- the very good standards achieved by the children in numeracy and literacy;
- the quality of the teaching which was always good, and in a third of the lessons observed was very good;
- the effective links established with the parents to support the children's learning;
- the very good quality of the school development planning process;
- the well-embedded culture of self-evaluation throughout the school at all levels; and
- the very good quality of the leadership provided by the Principal, supported ably by the hard-working and committed staff.

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is very good. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

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

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- There is a need to review the access arrangements to the playground to ensure the safety of the children at all times, as identified appropriately by the school.

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, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

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