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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
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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

**Derrygonnelly Primary School
Enniskillen**

Inspected: April 2007

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Derrygonnelly Primary School is situated in the village of Derrygonnelly, approximately ten miles from Enniskillen, County Fermanagh. Most of the children come from the surrounding rural area. The enrolment has declined slightly from 58 in 2002-2003 to its present level of 45. The school staffing has recently reduced from three teachers to two teachers.

1.2 The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the completion of confidential questionnaires by the parents as well as a meeting with the children in year 6. Fifty-five per cent of the questionnaires that were issued to all parents were completed and returned to the Department of Education (DE); half of the responses contained written comments. The responses were almost totally positive in their praise of the school; they identified particularly the caring and supportive climate for learning, the children's attainments, the commitment of the teachers and the opportunities for sport and music. The few issues raised have been discussed with the Principal.

1.3 The inspection focused on the quality of work in English, including, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in supporting learning and teaching in English, the effectiveness of the school's special educational needs (SEN) provision and the school's procedures for pastoral care, including child protection.

2. THE QUALITY OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK

2.1 The quality of pastoral care is good. The children report that they are keen to come to school and are cared for by supportive and friendly teachers. In addition, they talked about the enjoyable range of activities available and they know whom to turn to if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being. The school has procedures in place which implement the guidance outlined in the relevant DE Circulars and has identified already minor areas for improvement, including the updating of child protection training for the staff and the governors.

2.2 The school's programme for the promotion of health and well-being has many sound features. Attention is given to the development and implementation of programmes that encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles, such as water provision in class and a stronger focus on having days when the eating of fruit is encouraged. There is a developing commitment to promoting healthy eating. The children demonstrate a good understanding of the importance of making healthy life choices and there are opportunities for all children to participate in a range of physical activities. It would be appropriate that an assessment of the nature and quality of the arrangements for health and well-being practices within the school is included in the School Development Plan (SDP) to comply with statutory regulations.

2.3 The staff work well together and provide an attractive and secure learning environment for the children. A strong sense of school community is apparent, working relationships throughout the school are good and the behaviour of the children is exemplary. The children are responsive and well motivated; lessons are conducted in an atmosphere of order and mutual respect. The teachers create a caring and supportive environment for the children; in their teaching they consciously employ strategies that promote the children's confidence and self-esteem. The internal and external environments of the school are pleasant and well maintained and the standard of caretaking is good.

2.4 The teachers know the children well and they are committed to their education and social development. The children are courteous and keen to talk about their work. The teachers place a strong emphasis on creating a bright and attractive learning environment, with displays of children's art, written and topic work, and evidence of their achievements celebrated throughout the school. The children's personal development and creativity are enhanced through their participation in a variety of extra-curricular activities, educational visits and community events that include sport and music.

2.5 The school is well supported by its parents who generously assist in raising funds for additional learning resources. The school is committed to maintaining and extending these links, for example, in providing more regular information about the life and work of the school and in involving parents in supporting their children's learning.

2.6 The quality of teaching observed ranged from good to excellent. In the lessons observed, the intended learning was clear and shared with the children and re-visited during the course of the activity. Further, the teachers made very effective use of well-chosen and attractive resources and questioning strategies to extend the children's learning. In the best practice, the work not only took account of the different year groups, but also provided sufficient challenge for the children within those groups. The children engaged very effectively in their learning, the pace of the work was good and the learning was consolidated at the conclusion of the lesson.

2.7 The teaching and support staff are conscientious, work hard and co-operate effectively to support the life and work of the school. Each teacher has a composite class of three or four year groups and they cope well with the many demands of addressing the learning needs of the children, the range of ages and abilities within each class, together with the respective planning, monitoring and evaluation.

2.8 In the areas under focus the whole-school guidance for teaching is sound. The teachers' written planning identifies increasingly, the intended learning outcomes for the children and takes account of the range of ages, and abilities in each composite class. The classroom assistant provides very effective support for the teachers and the children.

2.9 The school is reviewing its provision for play-based learning to take account of current curricular developments and thinking and to ensure progression in the children's learning experiences. At present, there are regular sessions of play for all children in key stage 1; the good range of free and creative activities is used to support literacy and numeracy. In all of the learning activities, the children benefit from working collaboratively and through engaging in discussions with the adults present. Resources available for learning and teaching are good and are used effectively.

2.10 In English, the best teaching observed was characterised by good integration of reading, writing and talking and listening. A careful emphasis is placed on language development and on extending the children's vocabulary and on stimulating and supporting personal writing.

2.11 The children contribute readily during class discussion and when they have opportunities to share their learning with one another and with their teachers. The children are encouraged to listen attentively to others and skilful questioning ensures that they have opportunities to justify and explain their comments and opinions. The majority of the children are confident and articulate communicators and are capable of presenting sound opinions and thoughtful responses.

2.12 In the early years, the children's oral language is used appropriately as a basis for writing. In addition, in play-based learning activities, the children's interests and their home-life are used successfully to promote and use their writing skills. In the best practice, they are helped to plan and sequence their work. As they progress, they have opportunities to write for different purposes and audiences. There are many good examples of the children's personal writing that include debating current environmental issues, poetry, imaginative and factual writing. The children take pride in their work and standards of presentation and neatness are high. In the senior year groups, in particular, the children are encouraged to reflect on what they have written and in both classes the teachers provide written comments and encouragement to help them to improve their work.

2.13 The school places considerable emphasis on the children becoming competent and confident readers. Reading is taught and developed systematically in both classes and many of the children show good interest and enjoyment in books. They have access to a range of individual, class and group novels and there is a good selection of fiction and non-fiction texts. Most of the children use reference books, dictionaries and the Internet appropriately for research across the curriculum. The teachers provide excellent individual support to promote and use reading. Opportunities are used well to develop strategies for identifying unfamiliar words and there is an appropriate emphasis on phonic approaches, meaning, contextual cues, word and letter patterns and the use of word banks.

2.14 Information and Communication Technology is effectively used to support the development of the children's literacy; for example, in reinforcing grammar, developing and extending vocabulary and in introducing different styles of writing. In a number of lessons, ICT helped to promote the children's motivation and engagement. The children interacted well with the teacher and their peers and the use of the word-processor and Internet provided appropriate scope for them to develop their skills in communication, in researching for relevant information, for example, on key historical themes, and in preparing work for display and presentation.

2.15 The current programme of in-class support for a small number of children who experience difficulty with aspects of their learning is effective. There is early identification and intervention, regular review, effective links with the parents and good external support and liaison with other agencies.

2.16 The Principal has been in post for 19 years; she has a full-time teaching commitment and does not avail of the principal release programme; the funding made available is used to support the overall school budget. This adds very significantly to her workload in the context of her full-time teaching commitment. She is supported very effectively by the other teacher and by the classroom assistant. The Principal demonstrates a very strong commitment to the children, the school, the staff and to the community. There is a collegial approach to the

organisation and management of the life and work of the school that has a central focus on providing quality educational experiences for the children. The SDP has been agreed by the staff and the Board of Governors and outlines appropriate areas for ongoing development. The school self-evaluation work to date has enabled the staff to take account of aspects of current provision and to plan for further improvement.

2.17 Both teachers give freely of their time beyond the school day. They contribute very significantly to the positive ethos of the school and the standards that the children attain. The staff co-operate very effectively and share responsibilities for most areas of the curriculum.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the attractive and secure learning environment for the children;
- the mutual respect and good working relationships throughout the school;
- the children who are caring of one another, keen to learn, enjoy school and demonstrate exemplary behaviour;
- the positive sense of order established and maintained both in school and in the school grounds;
- the support provided by the parents through their interest in the life and work of the school and through their fundraising for additional resources to support learning and teaching;
- the consistently good standard of teaching;
- the children's personal development and creativity that are enhanced through their participation in a variety of extra-curricular activities, educational visits and community events which include sport and music;
- the good standards being attained by the majority of children in English; and
- the leadership of the Principal and the dedication and hard work of all of the school staff.

3.2 In the areas inspected, the school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified minor areas for improvement that the school has the capacity to address.

3.3 It will be important that the employing authority, the school governors and the 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.

3.4 The school's progress on the areas for improvement will be monitored by the District Inspector.

ACCOMMODATION

- The significant potential that the removal of the adjoining wall in the vacant adjacent classroom would present in enhancing the storage facilities and learning environment of the younger children, particularly in supporting play-based learning.

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