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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
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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

Alexander Dickson Primary School
Ballygowan

Inspected: October 2006

**ALEXANDER DICKSON PRIMARY SCHOOL, BALLYGOWAN, CO DOWN,
BT23 5TN (401-3046)**

As part of the Education and Training Inspectorate's (Inspectorate) programme of inspection for 2006/07, the above school was inspected in October 2006. The inspection was carried out using the procedures of the Short Inspection.

The school has received an oral report-back from the Reporting Inspector, Mr Peter Hollywood, and the points noted below provide a written record of the key findings which were identified during the inspection.

The Department of Education (DE) will publish the inspection reports; copies of the reports will issue to the school to forward to the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the children.

Alexander Dickson Primary School is situated on the outskirts of Ballygowan, County Down. The children come from the immediate area; approximately 3% of the children are entitled to free school meals. Enrolment in the school has decreased gradually over the last five years and currently stands at 153.

The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care included meeting with a random selection of children from year 6, as well as the completion of confidential questionnaires by the parents. Approximately 20% of the parents responded to the questionnaire, with seven parents taking the opportunity to write additional comments. Nearly all of the parents expressed strong support for the school and value its caring ethos. They praised particularly the dedication of the Principal and teachers to the welfare of all of the children. The few matters raised were discussed with the Principal. The children spoke very positively about the school; they said that they were happy and secure and knew where to seek help if they had a concern.

The school has procedures in place which enable the staff to implement the main guidelines outlined in the DE Circular 1999/10, 'Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection' and in Circular 2003/13, 'Welfare and Protection of Pupils Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order', and is working towards implementing fully circulars 2006/06 'Child Protection: Recruitment of People to Work with Children and Young People in Educational Settings', 2006/07 'Child Protection: Employment of Substitute Teachers', 2006/08 'Child Protection: Training Requirements for School Governors on Staff Recruitment and Selection Panels', 2006/09 'Child Protection: Criminal Background Checking for Staff in Schools'.

The strengths of the school include:

- the bright, stimulating learning environment;
- the caring ethos that exists within the school;
- the quality of the provision for those children requiring additional support with their learning; and
- in the lessons observed, the quality of the teaching which was always satisfactory and some times good.

Areas for improvement include the need to put in place strategies:

- to disseminate across the school the good practice that exists such as teaching strategies that encourage extended responses from the children;
- to promote and improve standards in all areas of the curriculum for the children; and
- to ensure that roles and responsibilities are matched to the needs and priorities of the school.

In the areas inspected, the school has strengths in some aspects of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified a few areas for improvement in important areas which need to be addressed to meet effectively the needs of all the learners.

The Inspectorate will monitor and evaluate the progress made in addressing the issues raised in the report and a follow-up inspection will be carried out in due course.

Throughout the report a number of quantitative terms are used which may be interpreted as indicated opposite:

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%

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