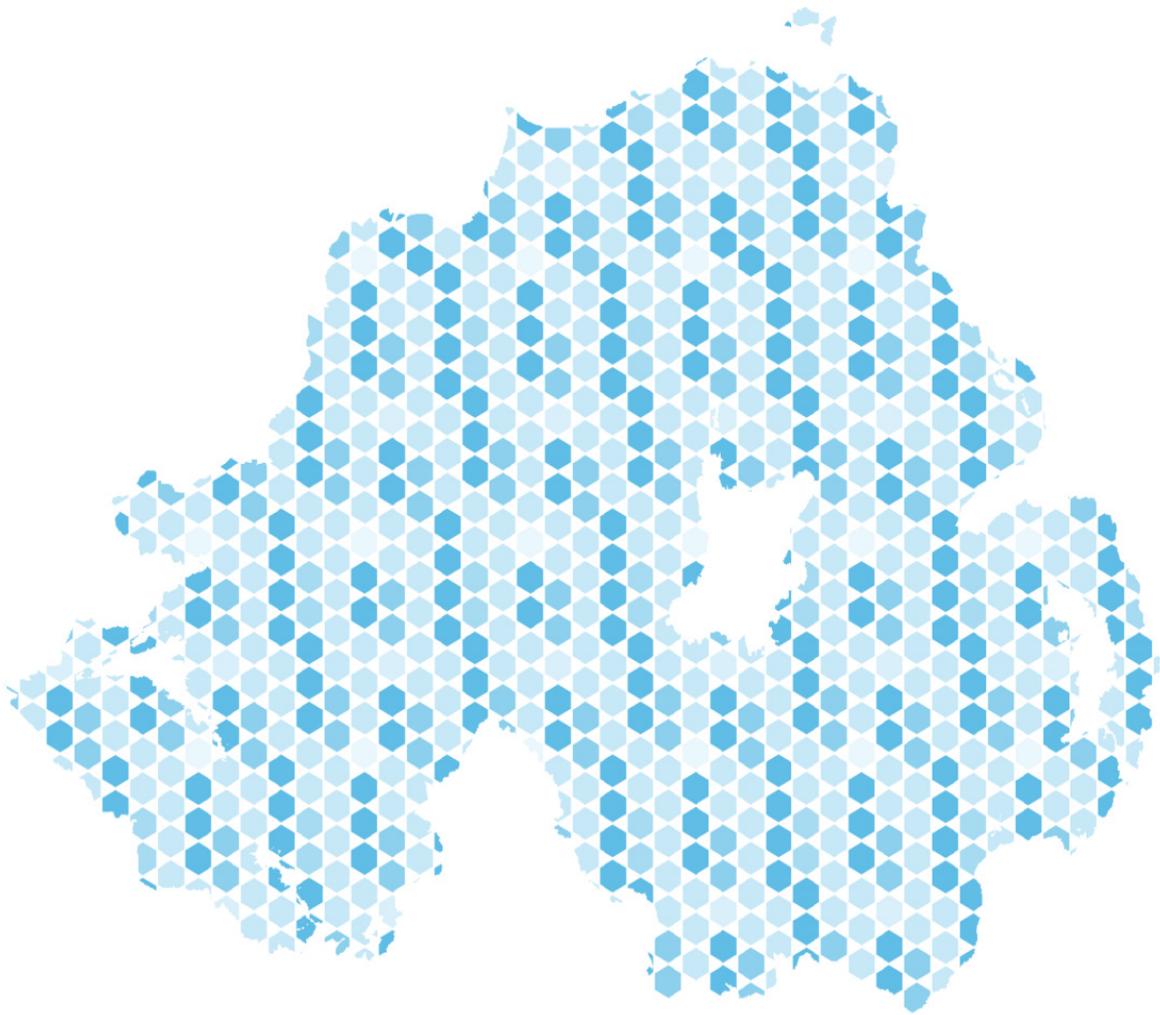


# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Randalstown Central Primary  
School, Co Antrim

Report of an Inspection  
in March 2011



## CONTENTS

<b>Section</b>		<b>Page</b>
	STATISTICAL INFORMATION	
1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS	2
3.	THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING	5
4.	LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	6
5.	CONCLUSION	7
	APPENDIX	

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

## BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Randalstown Central Primary**                      iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 21/03/11**  
 ii. **School Reference Number: 301-0816**                      iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

<b>School Year</b>	<b>2006/07</b>	<b>2007/08</b>	<b>2008/09</b>	<b>2009/10</b>	<b>2010/11</b>
Year 1 Intake	25	26	24	29	32
<b>Enrolments</b>					
Primary	219	208	191	186	192
Reception	3	4	5	6	16
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):                      95.3%                      **NI Avg Att: 94.9%**
- |   | <b>Primary &amp; Reception</b>                              | <b>Nursery Unit</b>       | <b>Special Unit</b> | <b>Irish Medium Unit</b> |
|---|---|---------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| D. i. Number of Teachers<br>(including the principal and part-time teachers):<br>(Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours) | 9.2   | 0                         | 0                   | 0                        |
| ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio):  | 22.6  | NI PTR: 20.7              |                     |                          |
| iii. Average Class Size:  | 27.4  |                           |                     |                          |
| iv. Class Size (Range):   | 24 to 31  |                           |                     |                          |
| v. Ancillary Support:<br>Number of Hours <b>Per Week</b> :  | i. Clerical support:  |                           | 33                  |                          |
|   | ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support:           |                           | 38                  |                          |
|   | iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: |                           | 36.25               |                          |
| vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs:  | 0.48%   |                           |                     |                          |
| vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register:  | 22%   |                           |                     |                          |
| viii. Number of children who are <b>not</b> of statutory school age:  | 16  |                           |                     |                          |
| ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals:   | 11%   |                           |                     |                          |
| x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2009/10 who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics:  | <b>English</b><br>70%                                       | <b>Mathematics</b><br>80% |                     |                          |

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Randalstown Central Primary School is situated in a small rural market town in south Antrim. Almost all of the children come from the local and surrounding area. The enrolment has decreased over the past five years, but has risen this year with the addition of 16 children in reception class and currently stands at 208. Approximately 11% of the children are entitled to free school meals (FSM) and the school has identified just over 22% of the children as needing additional support with aspects of their learning.

### 1.2 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.

In addition, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning, and the school's arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection were evaluated.

### 1.3 THE VIEWS OF THE PARENTS, TEACHERS, GOVERNORS, SUPPORT STAFF AND CHILDREN

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents and the teaching and support staff to complete confidential questionnaires prior to the inspection, as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and a group of children from year 6.

One hundred and ninety-two questionnaires were issued to the parents; approximately 46% were returned to Inspection Services Branch and 25 contained additional written comments. The responses indicated a high level of satisfaction with the educational and pastoral provision of the school. In particular, the parents acknowledged the hard work, enthusiasm and dedication of the staff, the overall quality of education provided by the school, the child-centred approach and the support for children with special educational needs (SEN).

All of the teachers and 14 of the support staff completed the confidential online questionnaires and one teacher made an additional written comment. While the teachers' responses were largely positive, a significant minority raised concerns about some aspects of school life such as communication. The support staff's responses indicated their contentment in working in the school.

In discussions held with a group of year 6 children, they talked enthusiastically about their experiences in school. The children highlighted in particular, the support they receive from their teachers, the subjects and extra-curricular activities they enjoy, and their involvement in the Eco Council and the School Council which gives them opportunities to discuss matters relating to the environment and the functioning of the school. The children indicated that they are happy and secure in school and that they know what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being.

The views of the parents, teachers, support staff and children, together with the concerns expressed by a small number of parents, and a significant minority of the teachers and the matters raised by the support staff questionnaires have been reported to the Principal and representatives of the governors.

The governors expressed strong pride in, and support for, the work of the school; in particular, they highlighted the good communication with the principal and praised the very positive atmosphere in the school, the sense of community and the hard work and commitment of the staff.

#### 1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is very good.

The school has a welcoming and inclusive ethos; the environment is maintained to a very high standard and this enhances the overall atmosphere and climate for learning. The school's approach to promoting positive behaviour works well; the children are polite and well-mannered, and their behaviour is exemplary. They have good opportunities to participate in a wide range of extra-curricular clubs, external competitions and community activities and the operation of the Eco Council and the School Council contribute to the children's personal and social development. The school places a high value on encouraging the children to make a positive difference to the lives of others through the extensive charitable activities with which it is involved.

#### 1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school has very good comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education (DE).

#### 1.6 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The school has worked hard to develop its links with the parents and with others in the community. The parents receive termly newsletters and information about school events and there are opportunities for parents to meet both formally and informally with the teachers to discuss their child's progress, and in addition, they receive a formal written annual report. There is a very active Parent Teacher Association, which raises funds to provide important additional learning resources. The school has long-standing and excellent links with a local maintained primary school and with a grammar school through the Sharing Education programme; these links benefit the school and the wider community.

### 2. **ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS**

#### 2.1 LEARNING

The children are highly motivated and most enjoy learning. They have good opportunities for collaborative learning and communicate effectively with adults and with each other. The school is currently involved in the North-Eastern Education and Library Board's 'Thinking Schools' pilot and this is impacting positively on the children's acquisition of creative and critical thinking skills.

The provision for the 16 children in the reception class is very good. The majority of the children have good levels of concentration and engage in purposeful and productive play. The organisation of the daily timetable provides a good balance of lengthy periods of free play and activities organised by the teacher. The necessary routines such as snack,

physical play, and story and song time develop the children's independence, social and self-management skills. The secure environment outdoors provides good, regular opportunities for the children to share the wider range of play activities and to socialise with the children from year 1.

Under the effective leadership of the ICT coordinator, ICT is integrated well into classroom practice. All of the classrooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards; these are used well by the teachers to support and enhance the learning. There is good use of ICT resources including the mobile laptop computers to provide extension and challenge for the children. In key stage (KS) 2, the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) KS2 Accreditation Scheme is used effectively to improve the children's ICT skills and experiences.

An analysis of the KS2 assessment data over the past four years shows that in English and mathematics, the school's performance was above the Northern Ireland (NI) average. When compared with schools in the same FSM category, over the past four years, the children's levels of attainment in English were just below the average, and in mathematics, the levels of attainment were in line with the average.

## 2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The overall quality of provision for English and literacy is very good.

The school places an important focus on the development of the children's talking and listening skills. The teachers use a wide variety of well-planned strategies to encourage talking and listening and to develop language across the curriculum. Within the reception and year one class, the planned programme, both indoors and outdoors, provides excellent opportunities to enrich the children's vocabulary. The children have good listening and conversational skills. As they progress through the school, the children have more opportunities to ask and respond to questions with their peers and with teachers. In most of the lessons observed, the children reported on their learning through well-structured plenary sessions.

Reading is promoted and developed well throughout the school; the children display a keen interest in reading and they enjoy books. Within the reception and year one classes, the teachers display reference and story books to stimulate the children's interests. In KS1 the teachers make good use of a range of reading resources and phonological awareness strategies to promote the recognition of unfamiliar words, understanding and engagement with text. In KS2, the children experience a variety of approaches, including shared, guided and independent reading. By the end of KS2, most of the children are reading with fluency, understanding and pleasure. In the best practice, guided reading takes place in small groups where the children have the opportunity to discuss texts and they work collaboratively on challenging and interesting tasks including the use of ICT; the school is currently participating in an online collaborative book review project with other local primary schools. In addition to the vibrant and well-resourced school library, the classrooms are equipped well with a range of fiction and non-fiction books to support the children's independent reading.

The school monitors and tracks the children's standards in reading through the administration of standardised tests which indicate that by the end of KS2, most of the children are reading at a level at least equivalent to their age and there is clear evidence of year on year improvement.

Writing is well integrated with other aspects of literacy and developed progressively throughout the school. The children in the reception class enjoy experimental mark making as part of their play activities and many of the year one children are beginning to show signs of emergent writing. As they move through KS1, the children become increasingly competent and prepare short pieces of personal writing that are neat and grammatically correct. Throughout KS2, the children have opportunities to write in a variety of genre for a range of audiences. Much of this work supports learning in other curricular areas and includes letter writing, book reviews, instructional and creative writing and poetry. The development of the children's writing has been enriched through the use of innovative approaches to develop and organise their ideas and give structure to their extended writing activities. The teachers are making good use of ICT, including the interactive whiteboards and digital media to support and enhance the learning of the children in literacy.

By the end of KS2, most of the children achieve a very good standard in their work and can write in a range of contexts and styles.

The co-ordinator for literacy, who is also the acting vice-principal, provides very effective curricular leadership. Under her direction, the teachers are currently reviewing the school's literacy programme to ensure greater coherence and progression in order to improve further the standards in literacy throughout the school; the findings of this inspection endorse this development.

### 2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The quality of provision for mathematics and numeracy is very good.

Overall, the children experience a well-planned mathematics programme which covers a range of mathematical concepts and skills. The teachers use a wide range of strategies and resources to support the development of the children's skills in mental calculations and their understanding of the number system. In most classes, the children experience a wide range of mathematical activities and, in the best practice, the work in number is integrated well with other key aspects of mathematics including estimation, shape and space and data handling. In most of the lessons observed, the children's access to a variety of mathematical resources helped develop their investigative and problem-solving skills. In the majority of classes, teachers make good use of computer software, websites and programmable devices to support learning and teaching in mathematics. The school now needs to disseminate the very good and outstanding practice observed in order to improve the consistency of the children's experiences across the key stages.

The reception and year 1 classes use appropriate mathematical language well, when participating in play activities; as a result, the children show a great interest in, and a good ability to count, match and make comparisons. In most of the foundation and KS1 classes, the teachers provide a wide range of mathematical experiences and there is a good balance between written and appropriate practical work. In the best practice, the recorded and oral work provides many opportunities for the children to develop a very good understanding of number and number operations, measures and shape and space.

In KS2, the lessons often include problem-solving activities which add relevance and challenge to the learning. The children respond well to these approaches, displaying very good motivation, and frequently reach very good standards in all aspects of their mathematics work. In the best practice, oral work was managed very well and the children had frequent opportunities to talk to, and learn from each other during group work.

By the end of KS2, most of the children reach very good standards, and a minority reach excellent standards, in line with their abilities.

The numeracy co-ordinator has led effectively the work in mathematics and has enhanced the provision through links with other local schools. Under her direction, the school is using a range of quantitative data including, standardised tests and key stage benchmarked data to inform the future planning for teaching and learning. The inspection findings endorse the areas already identified by the school for development in mathematics as appropriate, including, the updating of the schemes of work to include the full range of ICT software and commercial and teacher-produced materials that the children will use across the school.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING**

#### **3.1 PLANNING**

The quality of curriculum planning is very good.

Across the school, the teachers prepare thoroughly for lessons through effective short-term and medium-term plans. In almost all of the lessons observed, the planning was matched closely to the learning needs of the children. The reception and foundation stage (FS) teachers have developed a three year cycle of topics for their classes. They meet regularly to ensure that the outdoor and indoor areas provide a range of age-appropriate activities for the daily collaborative play sessions. The school now needs to review the disparity in timetabled provision for activity based learning and other aspects of the FS curriculum which currently exists between the year 1 groups.

#### **3.2 TEACHING**

The quality of the teaching observed during the inspection ranged from satisfactory to outstanding; most was very good or outstanding.

Throughout the school the teachers work hard to create a stimulating learning environment. They have high expectations and place a good focus on developing the children's thinking skills and personal capabilities. In the most effective practice observed, the lessons were well structured, resourced appropriately and were sufficiently differentiated to meet the individual learning needs of all of the children. A clear focus was placed on the learning intentions and the plenary sessions were used well to summarise and consolidate learning. The teachers provided challenging learning activities and their skilful questioning stimulated the children's thinking and encouraged extended oral responses. In the small number of less effective lessons, the learning activities were not sufficiently focused on the individual learning needs of the children.

The school demonstrates a strong commitment to meeting the needs of all of the children and the quality of the provision for children with SEN is very good. The school identifies at an early stage, the children who need additional support with aspects of their learning. Additional support for literacy is provided through withdrawal sessions for individual children and for small groups. These sessions are very good and most of the children make significant progress as a result of this intensive work. For those children who require individual educational plans (IEPs), there are personalised and very good IEPs and the children are involved appropriately in creating and reviewing the targets. Appropriate strategies inform the learning and teaching activities and there is useful guidance for parents. The targets are monitored closely and reviewed regularly by the staff. A noteworthy feature of the provision for children with SEN is the excellent work of the Classroom Assistants in supporting the children's learning.

### 3.3 ASSESSMENT

The teachers mark the children's work regularly and, in the best practice, annotate the work with positive comments detailing how they can make improvements. In the best practice, it is evident from the children's written work that marking for improvement has resulted in the production of better quality of work by the children.

The school has made a sound start with regard to arrangements for self-evaluation leading to improvement. For example, the school uses data on the children's performance in a range of standardised tests and DE benchmarking information, to review and inform its provision. The teachers have recently received training in the use of an electronic management information system; this has developed their capacity to track the children's individual progress and to identify and target underachievement. This work now needs to proceed at a faster pace, together with more regular monitoring of samples of the children's work.

## 4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

### 4.1 LEADERSHIP

The overall quality of leadership and management in this school is good.

The Principal has a clear vision for the work and development of the school and provides effective leadership. Since taking up his post seven years ago, the Principal has led the school through a period of significant change, including those pertaining to the staffing and the curriculum and with the support of the governors, has reduced the budget deficit. He works very closely with the acting vice-principal who in addition to her many responsibilities, has led effectively a number of initiatives within the school including the work on the Northern Ireland Curriculum and the provision for children with SEN. To ensure that the very good school improvement to date is maintained and built upon, it will be important to develop further the skills and capabilities of the hard working staff in order to build capacity within the school to support better the work of the senior management team.

### 4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The school development plan (SDP) complies with the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005 and sets out a range of targets for the medium and long term. These need to be reduced and prioritised, taking into account the findings of this inspection.

### 4.3 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The school governors have a very clear understanding of their role and make a very positive contribution to the life and work of the school. They are involved fully in the strategic planning and policy development and support effectively the Principal and the staff in the implementation of the SDP.

The school's current policy of enrolling individual children who are already in receipt of a funded place at another pre-school setting in the reception class, on or immediately after their fourth birthday, provides the children with a potentially disruptive pre-school experience and has financial implications both for the school and for the original pre-school setting; at the time of the inspection this was over one-third of the children in the reception class.

The reception class does not have a classroom assistant. The school needs to review, as a matter of urgency, the arrangements for maintaining the required teacher-pupil ratio in the reception class.

## 5. **CONCLUSION**

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the exemplary behaviour of the children, their positive dispositions and their readiness to engage in their learning;
- the very good quality of the pastoral care provided for the children;
- the very good provision for the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning;
- the very good standards achieved by most of the children by the end of KS2;
- the quality of the teaching observed, most of which was very good or outstanding; and
- the clear vision and good leadership of the Principal, and the support provided by the SMT and the governors.

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.

**HEALTH AND SAFETY**

- There are no vision panels in most of the classroom doors.

**ACCOMMODATION**

- There is no disability access to the school.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2011

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the ETI website: [www.etini.gov.uk](http://www.etini.gov.uk)

