



*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



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Focused Inspection

**Cairnshill Primary School and Nursery Unit
Belfast**

Inspected: February 2009

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BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Cairnshill Primary Belfast** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 23.02.09**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 401-3024** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Year 1 Intake	50	66	52	66	54
Enrolments					
Primary	520	494	462	458	450
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Class/Classes	52	51	53	49	52
Special 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):

96.6%

Primary & Reception	Nursery Unit	Special Unit
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- D. i. Number of Teachers
 (including the principal and part-time teachers):
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)

19	2	0
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- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 21.05 NI PTR: 20.8

- iii. Average Class Size: 24.4

- iv. Class Size (Range): 21 to 29

- v. Ancillary Support:

Number of Hours **Per Week**:

- | | |
|---|------|
| i. Clerical support: | 38.5 |
| ii. Official Making A Good Start Support: | 65 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 50 |

- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 0.9%

- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 13.9%

- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0

- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 3.4%

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Cairnshill Primary School is situated between Beechill Park North and Cairnshill Drive in the Upper Saintfield Road area in South Belfast. The enrolment currently stands at 450. The majority of the children come from the immediate locality. At the time of the inspection, almost 3% of the children were entitled to free school meals and approximately 19% of the children were on the special educational needs register.

1.2 FOCUS

The inspection focused on the quality of the children's experiences in literacy and numeracy and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in promoting and supporting learning and teaching. The school's arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection, were also evaluated.

1.3 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 a confidential questionnaire 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 ten questionnaires were issued to parents; approximately 46% of these were returned to the Department of Education (DE). Twenty-six returns contained additional written comments. The majority of the responses indicated a high level of satisfaction with the provision in the school. In particular, the parents highlighted the caring, happy learning environment, the professionalism and approachability of the Principal and teaching staff, and the hard work of both teaching and non-teaching staff. For the nursery unit, the responses from the parents indicate good levels of satisfaction with the quality of the provision and they appreciate the approachable, caring and attentive staff, the interesting programme provided for the children, and the opportunities for the children to learn to share, co-operate with one another, to grow in confidence and to learn new things. The small number of concerns that was raised in the questionnaires has been discussed with the governors and the Principal.

Twenty teachers completed the online questionnaire. The majority of the responses were highly supportive of the work of the school. The governors spoke very positively about the caring, inclusive ethos of the school and the industry of all the staff. In particular, they expressed their appreciation of the Principal and of her commitment and continuous hard work in the interests of the children and their families.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is very good. A clear sense of order and a strong family ethos permeate the life of the school. The teachers use a range of effective reward systems which encourages the children to produce their best efforts both in their work and in their behaviour. The positive relationships at all levels evident during the inspection reinforce well the supportive ethos throughout the school. There are well-conceived and excellent links with the parents, local schools and the surrounding community. The children are highly motivated and respond well to their teachers; their behaviour is exemplary. The many opportunities provided to engage in a range of extra-curricular activities including

musical and sporting activities, and to perform in public, build well the self-esteem of many children. The participation of a large number of the older children in the school orchestra provides a valuable dimension to building their creative skills. The teachers and children create a bright and attractive learning environment with, for example, a range of work in English, mathematics and art, displayed and celebrated throughout the school. The school is well supported by the Parent Staff Association, which is active in raising funds which have enabled the purchase of resources such as interactive whiteboards. The school was awarded a permanent Green Flag from the Environmental Conservation Organisation in 2007.

The nursery unit has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department but the following minor areas need to be addressed:- review and update the procedures for child protection around the intimate care of young children, the anti-bullying policy and procedures and extend the training in child protection for the newly appointed deputy designated teacher.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by DE and it is appropriate that the school has made arrangements for a representative from the governors to avail of updated Child Protection training as soon as possible.

1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. Links with, for example sports personnel, reinforce the benefits of healthy eating. Incentives for healthy breaks encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

The children settled quickly to work; during the inspection, they were always attentive and, when given the opportunity, they responded in a confident and articulate manner. In the foundation stage (FS), the teachers have begun to place increasing emphasis on play-based learning; the children are developing appropriate mathematical concepts, skills and language through a variety of games and activities. In the most effective practice they are encouraged to take time to think, to ask questions and to talk about their learning.

The staff have begun to review the school's policy on learning and teaching through play in the early years; this is an appropriate development in order to ensure that the play experiences are of a high quality and provide adequate challenge and progress appropriately from pre-school throughout the FS and key stage (KS) 1.

In KS1 and 2, the majority of the children make good progress in their learning. There is a number of children, however, who would benefit from more challenging learning activities in order to raise further their levels of attainment.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The quality of provision for English and literacy is good. This area has been identified appropriately by the school as a priority for development and action to effect improvement is currently underway. A good start has been made to this process and the formation of detailed action plans with effective targets provide a clear structure to guide this work.

As the children progress through the school, there are planned opportunities for developing their talking and listening skills through the use of circle time, drama, discussions and other activities. In many of the classes observed, effective questioning was used to develop the children's oral responses and when given the opportunity, the children express their thoughts and ideas confidently and articulately.

The children enjoy reading and show a keen interest in books; for example, the children in the FS respond positively to the use of Big Books and the older pupils engage readily in silent reading. The school has introduced a systematic approach to the acquisition of reading skills, and phonological awareness is developed through a phonics and spelling system. Throughout the school, the children experience a variety of approaches including shared, guided and independent reading. In the best practice, guided reading takes place in small groups where the children have the opportunity to discuss texts at varying levels and the activities promote both reading and thinking skills. During the inspection, the recently acquired interactive whiteboards were used effectively as a teaching tool to promote language and literacy.

Interest in reading is supported through involvement in a Book Club, links with the local library and workshops with local children's authors. While the school library has been reorganised and classrooms are equipped with a range of fiction and non-fiction books, some of the stock is outdated.

The school monitors the children's standards in reading through standardised tests. These tests indicate that most of the children reach a standard of reading competence comparable to children of a similar age. By the end of KS2, the majority of the children are reading with fluency, understanding and pleasure.

The school places great importance on handwriting and the presentation of the children's written work is very good. Individual whiteboards and writing frames are used to support early writing and by the end of KS1, the majority of children can express their ideas appropriately. As they progress through the school, the children have opportunities to write for a variety of purposes and across the different areas of learning. The quality of the children's writing is generally good; however, at times, it is limited by the use of restrictive worksheets and mechanistic approaches. Where they are used, more open-ended writing activities provide greater challenge and more creative results; this good practice needs to be disseminated more across the year groups.

Appropriately, the school has recognised the need to adopt a systematic and coherent approach to developing children's writing. With the support of South-Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) personnel, the school is trialling a new approach which it plans to monitor, evaluate and implement in KS2. The Inspectorate endorses the school's actions to develop provision in this area.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The overall quality of the provision for mathematics in the school is good. There is a suitably broad programme which provides the children with appropriate experiences across each area of the mathematics curriculum. The development of mental maths is particularly strong; in the most effective practice the pace of the lessons was good, activities were motivational and the teacher used good questioning techniques to challenge children's thinking and encourage them to explain their strategies. Children engaged in a variety of problem-solving and investigative mathematics and, in the best practice, are given opportunities to work collaboratively with their peers in pairs and small groups. These approaches need to be used more consistently across the school; there is currently an over-emphasis on the use of worksheets and repetitive, routine calculations.

The children have the opportunity to use their mathematical knowledge in meaningful contexts across the curriculum. In year 2, for example, as part of a topic on homes, the children enter information into a simple database to generate pictograms and bar charts. In year 5, as part of a topic about Egyptians, cubits and palms are used to measure a range of objects. Information and communication technology is used very effectively, with teachers making good use of interactive whiteboards, websites, programmable devices, digital cameras and computer programs to motivate children and support learning and teaching in mathematics.

The school has identified appropriately the need to improve planning for numeracy. In particular, the quality of medium-term planning varies across the school. In the best practice learning intentions, learning and teaching strategies and activities have been clearly identified and evaluative notes are made that inform future planning. In the less effective practice learning and teaching strategies need to be more fully developed if planning is to guide and inform adequately classroom practice. To enhance further the teaching across the school, more attention should be given to differentiating the work to meet the needs of all learners, including the more able.

Overall, the standards in mathematics in this school are good. During the inspection, the children demonstrated their ability to think mathematically at an appropriately high level. By the end of KS2, nearly all of the children achieve or exceed the expected level of attainment in mathematics for children of their age.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

There is significant variation in the quality of planning within and across literacy and numeracy. It is appropriate that the school development plan (SDP) has identified the need to review both the long-term and medium-term planning in order to focus less on content and more clearly on learning intentions and success criteria. The teachers have begun to self evaluate in year groups. During the inspection, some good examples were observed of evaluations being used effectively by the teachers to inform future planning. This good practice needs to be disseminated more widely with a clear emphasis on learning.

3.2 TEACHING

During the inspection, the quality of the teaching observed was always satisfactory, and the majority of lessons observed were good or better. In the best practice, there was clear planning for learning and suitably high expectations held for what the children could achieve. The teachers used the learning intentions and success criteria effectively throughout these lessons to focus the children's attention and to consolidate their learning. In the less effective practice, the pace of the lessons was slow, closed questioning styles created limited opportunities for the children to give extended responses and there was insufficient challenge for the more able children.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

There are appropriate procedures and records for keeping the parents informed about their child's progress. These include written reports and formal parent-teacher consultations. In addition, the parents are encouraged to meet with the teachers, both on a formal and informal basis, to discuss their child's educational and pastoral needs.

There is a variation in the quality of the marking of the children's work. In the best practice, there is effective marking for improvement. This good practice needs to be implemented more consistently across the school.

The school is beginning to use a suitable range of standardised and non-standardised testing to assess the children's level of achievement in English and mathematics and to identify areas for development. The school has identified the need for more effective use of the analysis of this performance data to inform planning for learning and teaching, and to raise further the standards in English and mathematics attained by the children. The inspection team endorses this as a key priority to promote improvement.

3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Fifty-seven children have been identified as requiring additional help with their learning. The school makes good use of a range of standardised tests and teachers' observations, knowledge and experience to identify the children's difficulties in literacy and numeracy at an appropriately early stage. Assistance is provided for these children in both literacy and numeracy through withdrawal sessions provided by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and a part-time teacher. Additional support in literacy and numeracy is provided by one of the class teachers for two hours each week.

The SENCO works diligently to liaise with and support the teachers in devising Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Useful IEPs have been drawn up and these are subject to ongoing review and to further development. Appropriate links are maintained with the parents and with external support agencies. The school receives beneficial multi-disciplinary support for those children requiring specialised help through, for example, the SEELB Autistic Spectrum Disorder Support Team.

The school recognises the need to evaluate more effectively the extent to which its special educational needs (SEN) arrangements lead to improvements in the standards achieved by the children. The staff need to review the effectiveness of the current provision for SEN in order to support more effectively the children who experience difficulties in their learning and to determine, monitor and record the progress made by these children.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The Principal has been in this current position since September 2007 and she provides good leadership. She has given effective guidance regarding changes in education, has played a key role in drawing up and implementing new management structures and has made a good start to reviewing and developing the middle management roles and responsibilities within the school. The Principal, ably supported by the acting Vice-Principal, contributes significantly to the overall effectiveness of the teaching and learning within the school and provides good pastoral support for colleagues.

A School Development Plan (SDP) has been devised to guide the work of the school. Whilst it meets fully the requirements of the Department of Education School Development Planning Regulations/Schedule 2005/19, it is appropriate for the Principal, with staff to review the current SDP in the light of this report in order to identify the key priority areas for development. Appropriate action plans should be prepared, success criteria identified, and clear strategies to monitor and evaluate progress agreed and implemented.

5. CONCLUSION

The strengths of the school include:

- the polite and welcoming children whose behaviour during the inspection was exemplary at all times;
- the effectiveness of the leadership of the Principal, ably supported by the Vice-Principal;
- the very good quality of the pastoral care arrangements;
- the good or better quality of the majority of the teaching;
- the good standards attained by the children in literacy and numeracy; and
- the strong and effective links established with the parents.

The area for improvement is the need:

- to devise a rigorous and systematic process for the monitoring and evaluation of learning and teaching to help inform developments and raise further the standards achieved by all the children.

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified an area for improvement which the organisation has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the organisation's progress on the area for improvement.

6. THE NURSERY UNIT

The main strengths within the nursery's educational and pastoral provision are as follows.

- The nursery has a very positive ethos with a clear sense of purpose and relationships at all levels are very good. The staff are very caring and supportive. The children are friendly and welcoming. They have the confidence to ask staff for help and support and respond well to the staff's high expectations and their behaviour is excellent. The children's work is thoughtfully displayed to create an attractive learning environment.
- The daily timetable is well organised and provides a good balance of free play and activities organised by the staff during which the children have good opportunities to make choices and to explore the range of activities provided. Appropriate time is given to story, music and physical play sessions which promote settled and concentrated activity.
- The programme offers good opportunities for learning in all areas of the curriculum. The children demonstrated good levels of motivation, concentration and confidence. They displayed positive attitudes to learning. During the inspection, there were particular strengths in the promotion of the children's oral language and listening skills, enthusiastic story and music sessions, early science ideas, the use made of natural and real materials in the imaginative play areas and the regular opportunities for physical play outdoors.
- The staff are hard-working and dedicated; they have a caring approach and clearly enjoy their work with the children. The teacher-in-charge is a very good role-model for the staff and provides effective leadership. She is committed to reflect on and improve their practice, particularly in relation to involving the parents more fully in the education of their children. The Principal is very supportive of the nursery's work and ensures that the pre-school children are invited to many of the school's events.
- The communication with the parents is good. Valuable and supportive links have been established with the primary school. Effective arrangements have been developed to ensure that the children from the nursery make a smooth transition to year 1.
- The nursery has a Development Plan with relevant targets for improvement including the physical play programme outdoors, the further development of parental involvement and the use of information and communication technology in supporting teaching and learning in the nursery environment. They have appropriately consulted with the parents to seek their comments and suggestions on the quality of the provision and begun to introduce and monitor new approaches to inform and involve the parents more fully in the education of their children. There is good evidence that their efforts have improved the children's experiences.

The inspection identified areas for improvement. The following are the most important areas that need attention.

- The staff need to develop the planning and assessment methods further in order to build more clearly on the children's own ideas, ensure that the programme progresses steadily throughout the year and provides appropriate challenge and progression indoors and outdoors.
- Update the child protection procedures to ensure they are detailed, reflect the daily practice, are fully understood by all of the staff and shared with the parents.

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the nursery is good. The nursery has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the nursery has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the nursery's progress on the areas for improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON CAIRNSHILL PRIMARY SCHOOL NURSERY UNIT

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending full-time	0	0
Attending part-time	26	26
Under 3 years of age*	0	0
With statement of SEN**	0	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4***	0	0
At CoP stages 1 or 2***	0	0
With English as an additional language	1	0

* On 1 July.

** Special Educational Needs.

*** The stages refer to those set out in the Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs.

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	0
Average attendance for the previous year.	

2. Duration of Sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
-	2½ hours	2½ hours

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-Time	Part-Time
Teachers	0	2
Nursery Assistants	0	2
Qualified Nursery Assistants	0	2

Number of: ****	
Students	0
Trainees	0

**** Total placements since September of current year

4. Parental Questionnaires (to be completed by Inspection Services Branch)

Number issued	52
Percentage returned	46%
Number of written comments	4

HEATH AND SAFETY

- The school, with the help of the SEELB, needs to carry out a risk assessment of the access arrangements for the gym and for the year 3 annex.

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