

Report of a Primary Inspection

Cregagh Primary School
DE Ref No 401-1632

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Education and
Training Inspectorate
Empowering Improvement

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Throughout the report the use of an asterisk * denotes further information included at Appendix 2.

1. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Cregagh Primary School is a controlled, co-educational school, in East Belfast and the majority of the 130 children enrolled come from the local area. There are two long-established specialist units supporting deaf children, who are taught by qualified Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People. Almost one-half (49%) of the children have free school meals entitlement and approximately one-third (31%) have been identified as having special educational needs (SEN). The school offers a breakfast club and an extensive range of after-school clubs, all of which are very well attended. They have a well-established shared education partnership with St Bernard's Primary School and Lisnasharragh Primary School.

B. VIEWS OF PARENTS, LEARNERS AND STAFF

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) issued online confidential questionnaires to year 7 children, all parents and staff in advance of the inspection.

All of the year 7 children (21) responded to the questionnaire and over one-half of those who responded provided written comments. All of the children who responded said they feel safe in school; that the teachers and other adults in the school treat them with care and respect; and all know the adults they can talk to if they or worried or have a problem. The groups of children who spoke with inspectors told us they enjoy school very much. They are proud of their school and feel valued by the staff.

Thirty percent of families (32 parents/carers) responded to the online questionnaire; over one-half of those who responded provided written comments. Almost all of the parents indicated that their child is happy in school and is making progress. All are clear on the school's vision and feel their views are sought and acted upon. The written comments were highly positive. There was praise for the committed and pastoral staff and the school's caring ethos that is 'wholeheartedly child-centred with a feeling of home'.

Almost all of the teaching staff (9) responded to the online questionnaire. All indicated that they are clear about the school's vision, and they contribute well to achieving it. Almost all believe their professional skills, understanding and knowledge are valued, and that they have opportunities to share them with others. In addition, most of the teaching staff who responded to the questionnaire provided written comments and identified, in particular, high levels of respect and support for all in the school community. Almost all of the learning support assistants and support staff (15) responded to the questionnaire. They all indicated that they are aware of the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures, and all of them feel their views are listened to and are acted upon.

A summary of the questionnaire responses, including a small number of issues raised, was shared with the principal and the vice-chair of the board of governors.

C. THE PROCESS OF INSPECTION

ETI worked alongside Cregagh Primary School to consider how well the school:

- has identified and articulates its vision;
- prioritises actions to achieve the vision;
- overcomes the main challenges it faces;
- monitors and reviews progression to define, celebrate and embed success; and
- grows and develops an inclusive community of learning.

2. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- Cregagh Primary School's long-standing vision is understood by all stakeholders, who are wholly committed to building the school 'as a family of learning at the heart of the community'. The strong sense of a family of learning, including the staff professional learning network, is enhanced by support from a wide range of external agencies and links across the community.
- The children aspire to do their best, believe in themselves, have a strong sense of belonging at school and achieve in line with their ability.
- The wellbeing of the children is evidenced through the high levels of care, the high expectations for every child and the supportive working relationships across the school. Consequently, the children feel safe, well cared for and enjoy their learning.
- Wide consultation with governors, staff, parents and children has supported the identification of appropriate priorities for improvement. The recent focus on the development of phonics across the school has had a positive impact on the children's literacy skills.
- Teachers have high expectations of the children's behaviour, contributions and engagement in their learning. The clear focus on the promotion of specific vocabulary and talking and listening skills has impacted positively on the children's oracy and their writing.
- A monitoring and evaluation programme is in place to review the progress of school priorities. Senior leaders recognise the need to develop further these processes to gather first-hand evidence to measure the impact and progress against key priorities.

- The enriching provision for deaf children is at the core of inclusion in this school. The deaf and hearing children integrate daily and are thriving personally, socially, emotionally and academically with the support of the dedicated and skilful staff.
- The staff know and support all the children well in their learning. The classroom practice and tailored interventions used by the school to support children identified as having special educational needs (SEN) are impacting positively on their learning outcomes and self-esteem.
- The well-embedded shared education partnership across the key stage 2 classes enriches the children's learning experiences, such as preparing them better for transition to post-primary school.
- The carefully planned, purposeful and highly effective integration opportunities provided across the deaf unit and mainstream classes impacts positively on the inclusion and learning experiences of the children.
- At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by the school demonstrates that the arrangements for child protection align to the current statutory guidance.

Area for action:

- to continue to use first-hand evidence to identify and disseminate effective practice across the school and support the achievement of the key priorities for improvement.

Area of dissemination:

- the carefully planned, purposeful and highly effective integration opportunities provided across the deaf unit and mainstream classes.

3. MAIN REPORT

A. SETTING THE VISION

The school's vision, 'a family of learning at the heart of the community' is well understood by all stakeholders. This vision, which has been reviewed recently but remains unchanged, sets high expectations for the children. The children are encouraged to 'think big' in order to 'aspire, believe, belong and achieve', a motto they live out through all their interactions and frequently reference. As a result of the recent review, the school is currently pursuing the potential development of a specialist nursery provision for both hearing and deaf children.

The leadership team has been actively engaged in accessing financial support to develop areas within and outside the school, which have successfully enhanced the learning environment for the children. Middle leaders have clearly identified roles and responsibilities and as part of the monitoring and evaluation programme gather evidence through, for example, observations of learning and teaching to chart the progress of key priorities. The school recognises the need to reinvigorate the approaches previously established to ensure effective practice is identified and disseminated.

The priorities within the three-year school development plan (SDP) have been informed appropriately by all stakeholders and from the analysis of a wealth of qualitative and quantitative data. Staff professional learning (SPL) is aligned carefully to the key priorities and the recent focus on phonics and associated SPL has ensured a consistent approach to the delivery of phonics across the school. A useful, parent and child-friendly version of the SDP is often referred to and displayed across the school and on a range of communication platforms.

The governors are aware of the key priorities for improvement and receive updates from the co-ordinators. They are actively involved in the life and work of the school and attend a range of social events organised by the Parent and Staff Association (PSA).

B. IMPLEMENTING AND IMPROVING TO ACHIEVE THE VISION

The long-term literacy, numeracy and Using ICT (UICT) planning is detailed and progressive, which guides well the work of the teacher and supports the effective delivery of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. The children are exposed to a breadth of very good experiences across literacy, including a range of extended writing opportunities through, for example, the 'Big Write'*. Samples of the children's writing are collated in individual scrapbooks, which chart clearly their progression and attainment in writing. The recent focus on phonics is having a very positive impact on the children's phonological awareness, spelling and writing.

The teachers have high expectations for the children's behaviour, and contributions to, and engagement in, their learning. In the more effective sessions observed, the children take responsibility for their learning, access resources independently, and settle easily to their work. A targeted focus on the development of specific language and the use of open-ended questions promotes effectively the children's thinking skills and has impacted positively on their oracy and writing. The teachers' ongoing reflections on learning are well-considered and there are immediate adaptations made to reflect the children's interests and needs.

The school prioritises well the health, wellbeing and safety of the children, through the high levels of care shown by staff to the children and the positive interactions at all levels. In discussions with groups of children, they told us how they learn to manage their emotions; keep themselves safe in school, in the community and online; and use a range of strategies to address bullying, eat healthily and engage in regular physical activity. They value how the staff plan engaging events and opportunities to benefit from the after-school clubs, healthy break scheme, and the daily mile in helping them to lead healthy lifestyles.

The children benefit from the access to counselling services and workshops funded by the Department of Education's (DE) Extended Schools programme*. They explained how they use their worry box and a range of books and resources available for them to stay positive. Creative displays encourage them to keep their 'buckets full' and think 'happy thoughts and happy things'. The school counsellor delivers a bespoke 'Take a BEAT' (Body, Emotions, Action, Think) programme across the school to support children in managing their emotional wellbeing. The preventative curriculum is enhanced by meaningful contributions from external agencies. The relationships and sexuality education policy is kept under review, including planned further consultation with parents/carers.

C. BUILDING EQUITY

The school fosters an inclusive ethos, reflected in the high expectations for each child and the dedication of staff to encourage all children to reach their full potential. The children embrace diversity; they value, accept and include others in daily learning activities, class discussions, and after-school clubs including the weekly sign classes. The school promotes inclusivity through themed awareness events such as Deaf Awareness Week, Sign Language Week and Odd Socks Day*.

The staff know and support the children well in their learning. They make effective use of a range of quantitative assessment data together with observations to baseline and plan tailored literacy and numeracy interventions. The data provided by the school confirms that all of the children receiving support are making good progress from their individual starting points.

The school is moving in stages from using Individual Education Plans (IEPs) to Personal Learning Plans (PLPs) to guide the provision for the children with SEN. The IEPs/PLPs include appropriate targets, which are reviewed regularly, are informed by the views of the children and their parents/carers and by evidence from the class teacher, the learning support assistants and the learning support co-ordinator.

The staff across the school have engaged in a programme of relevant professional learning, for example deaf awareness training and autism awareness, which is broadening their knowledge and skills and in turn is extending the children's learning experiences across the school. The learning support assistants are sensitive to the needs of the children and skilfully support small groups and individual children in overcoming barriers to their learning, which enable the children to achieve and thrive.

The highly effective provision for the children in the deaf unit is characterised by a range of well-considered approaches, including the use of assistive technology and sign language. The well-planned daily opportunities for the deaf children to learn and socialise with their hearing peers are impacting positively on all of the children in the school, in particular, improved self-confidence and well-developed talking and listening skills. The children from the deaf unit, supported by the Specialist Speech and Language Therapist (Deafness) with the Belfast Trust, have worked together to create a 'deaf and proud' initiative across the school. The children have designed a poster with communication tips for those who can hear, which is being used and shared across the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. The engagement with this initiative has boosted further their confidence and pride in their deafness.

D. DEFINING, CELEBRATING AND EMBEDDING SUCCESS

The friendly, happy children engage well in their learning. They use kind words, follow directions, share resources readily and are polite to others and staff. They respond to questions enthusiastically, listen intently and speak clearly across the range of learning opportunities to develop their communication skills.

The children write with increasing accuracy and independence across a range of genres linked to their topics and class novels. The children benefit from the school's focus on phonics, resulting in improvements in the children's spelling and use of interesting vocabulary. The children's contributions to the 'Big Write' are celebrated regularly and receive special recognition at assemblies.

The children have a range of opportunities to develop their digital skills across the key stages. They spoke confidently about their use of coding languages, for example Scratch, and their ability to programme robotic devices such as bee-bots and sferos. They appreciate what constitutes appropriate online behaviour and spoke with confidence about how to avoid scams. The digital leaders share readily their skills with other children.

The children aspire to do their best, believe in themselves, have a strong sense of belonging at school and achieve in line with their ability. The children's successes are celebrated daily through the staff's positive praise, encouragement and feedback. Good attendance is encouraged and acknowledged through assemblies and the 'Cregagh Champions' scheme reinforces high aspirations and self-belief; awards, including 'The Little Ray of Sunshine' embed the importance of personal and social success. Vibrant displays, social media posts and events capture well the many ways the children experience success. Thoughtful approaches to remembrance pay tribute to those from the school community who have passed away.

E. GROWING A COMMUNITY OF LEARNING

The school is a family of learning at the heart of its community. Staff avail of a wide range of appropriate SPL aligned to the school's improvement priorities and engage in trusted colleague networks to assist their reflective practice. They participate and host SPL networks with staff from other schools and are involved in research initiatives with higher education colleges. As part of the Education Authority's Being Well Doing Well* programme, the staff are prioritising their own and the children's wellbeing.

The strong sense of a family of learning is enhanced by support from a wide range of external agencies and links across the community, including local churches, sports clubs, charities and the health and social services. The children benefit from the local council and extensive business funding, which has enhanced significantly the quality of the learning environment, including access to the community multi-purpose pitch. The family hub is a valuable resource for the school community, including the parental workshops and access to counselling services. Parents/carers support the school well through the wide range of social and fundraising events organised by the PSA.

The well-embedded shared education partnership across the key stage 2 classes enriches the children's learning experiences such as, supporting their transition to post-primary school. The children told us about the friendships they have made with others and the range of skills, experiences and self-confidence they have gained from the practical workshops and visits. They value meeting others from different backgrounds and appreciate learning about what makes each other unique. They exercise their leadership skills effectively through their eco- and school-councils.

F. CHILD PROTECTION

At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by the school demonstrates that the arrangements for child protection align to the current statutory guidance.

4. GOING FORWARD

Cregagh Primary School's vision to be 'a family of learning at the heart of the community' is developing well the children's enthusiasm and motivation for their learning. Every child is supported by this family of learning to, 'Aspire, Believe, Belong and Achieve'.

ETI, through the engagement of the district inspector, will continue to work with the school in addressing the area for action as laid out in this report and in sharing the example of highly effective practice from which others may learn.

5. APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: QUANTITATIVE TERMS

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

APPENDIX 2: NOTES

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'Big Write'

The school's bespoke writing programme where the children choose independently the genre for their extended writing.

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Department of Education's (DE) Extended Schools programme

The Department of Education's extended schools programme aims to improve levels of educational achievement for disadvantaged children and young people by providing the additional support that they might need to help them reach their full potential.

Odd Socks Day

Odd Socks Day, typically observed on the first day of Anti-Bullying Week is a national event that encourages embracing diversity and individuality through wearing mismatched socks. It serves as a symbol of inclusion, promoting the idea that being different is something to be proud of and celebrates uniqueness

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Education Authority's Being Well Doing Well

The programme aims to support schools (nursery, primary, post-primary, special and EOTAS) to develop a whole school approach to emotional health and wellbeing.

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