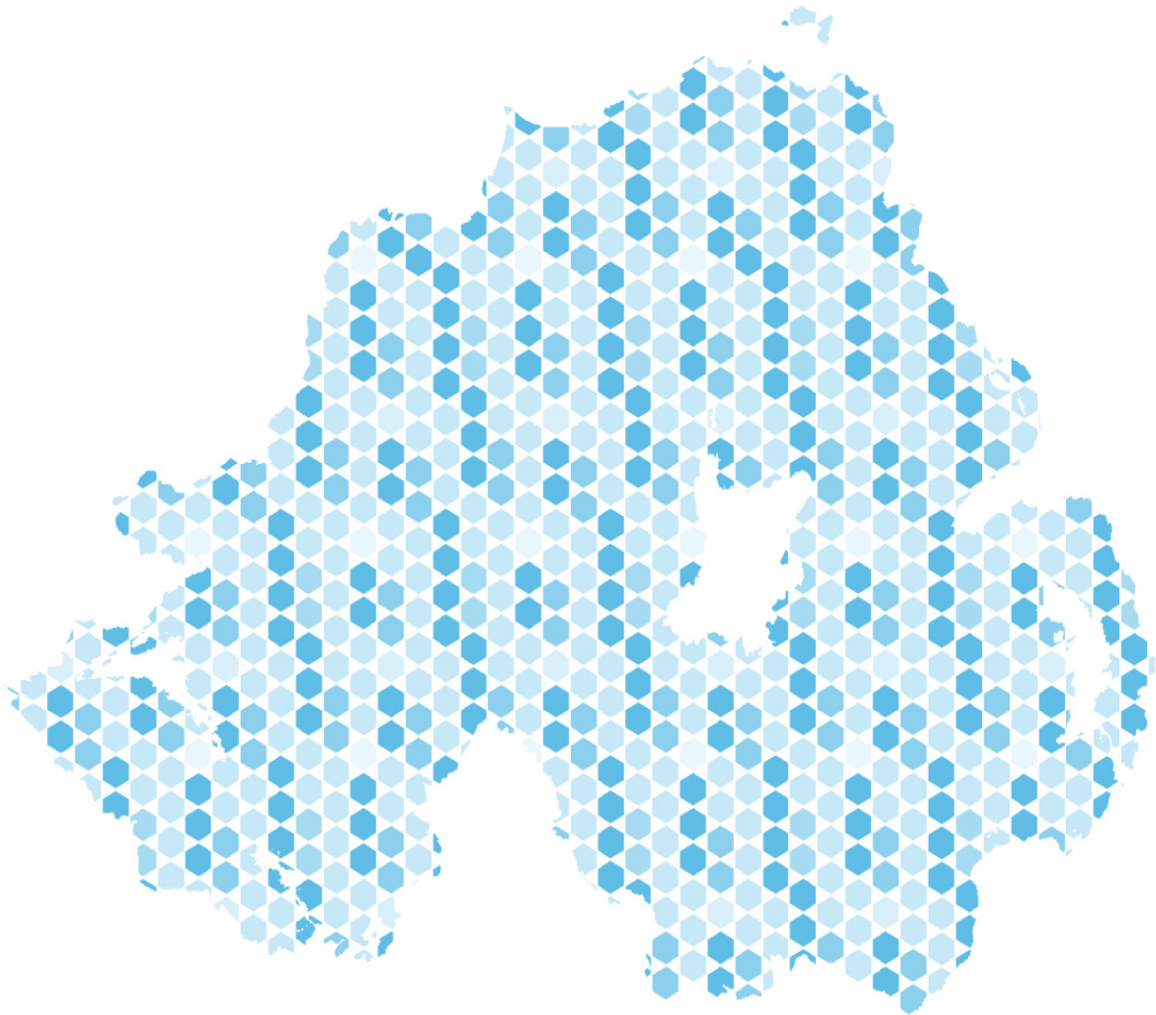


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Botanic Primary School and
Nursery Unit, Belfast

Report of an Inspection
in May 2012

CONTENTS

Section		Page
	STATISTICAL INFORMATION	
1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS	3
3.	THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING	5
4.	LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	6
5.	CONCLUSION	6
6.	THE NURSERY UNIT	8
	STATISTICAL INFORMATION (NURSERY UNIT)	

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: Botanic Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 21/05/12**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 101-6499** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Year 1 Intake	22	26	32	26	30
Enrolments					
Primary	165	189	178	180	169
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Unit	26	26	26	26	26
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): 84.5% **NI Avg Att: 94.7%**
- Average Attendance for those children on the
 Special Educational Needs Register: 91%
- | | Primary &
Reception | Nursery
Unit | Special
Unit | Irish Medium
Unit |
|--|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
|--|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
- D. i. Number of Teachers
 (including the principal and part-time teachers): 9 1 0 0
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 18.77 NI PTR: 20.2
- iii. Average Class Size: 24.14
- iv. Class Size (Range): 16 to 30
- v. Ancillary Support:
 Number of Hours **Per Week**:
- | | |
|---|-------|
| i. Clerical support: | 57 |
| ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support: | 46.25 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 49.02 |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 4.1%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 30%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 40.3%
- x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2010/11 who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics, and Irish (in Irish-medium schools):
- | | | |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------|
| English | Mathematics | Irish |
| 43% | 48% | |

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Botanic Primary School is situated on the edge of Belfast Botanical Gardens in the Queen's University area of South Belfast. The enrolment of the school has fluctuated slightly over the last five years and currently stands at 169 children with a further 26 children in the nursery unit. The children come from both the surrounding and wider Belfast area and some 21 nationalities are represented within the school population. Almost one-half of the children are newcomer children whose first language is not English and a minority are from the Roma Traveller Community. At the time of the inspection approximately 40% of the children within the school were entitled to free school meals (FSM). The school has identified 30% of the children as requiring 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 the children from year 6.

One hundred and thirty-two questionnaires were issued to the parents in the primary school; approximately 30% of the parental questionnaires were returned to the Inspection Services Branch (ISB) and 20 contained additional written comments. The responses indicated that most of the parents are very supportive of the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents acknowledged the welcoming, inclusive ethos and diverse nature of the school and the supportive and approachable staff.

Twenty-six questionnaires were issued to the parents in the nursery unit; approximately 23% of the questionnaires were returned to ISB and two contained written comments. Almost all of the parents are happy with all areas of the life and work of the nursery unit. In particular, the parents indicated that they value the work of the staff in providing a wide variety of learning experiences for the children.

Nine teachers and eight support staff completed the confidential online questionnaire. A significant minority of the teachers and support staff also submitted additional written comments. Most of the teachers and support staff were very positive about all aspects of the life and work of the school; in particular they acknowledged the team spirit among the staff and their strong commitment to the continuous improvement of the school.

The questionnaire responses and a summary of the written comments made by the parents and the staff were shared with the Principal and the governors.

The governors expressed their strong support for the school; in particular their appreciation of the leadership of the Principal and Vice-principal, the commitment of the staff to every child in the school and the strong links established with the local community. They reported that they are kept well-informed by the Principal and have a good understanding of the priorities outlined in the school development plan and their role in bringing about school improvement.

The children in year 6 talked very openly and positively about their experiences in school. They value the diverse multi-cultural ethos of their school and the help and support given to them by their teachers. The children indicated that they are happy and feel secure in school and that they know what to do if they have any concerns about their safety and well-being.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in both the school and the nursery unit is outstanding.

The school and nursery unit have a welcoming and friendly ethos. All of the staff are committed to the care and welfare of the children; they promote the children's self-esteem and confidence and celebrate well their identity, culture and achievements. The school has achieved the International School Award in recognition for its curriculum-based international work. The staff provide a supportive and very inclusive environment for learning for all of the children. The high level of commitment to inclusion is reflected in the very good work which supports those with additional learning needs.

The behaviour of the children is excellent and they are respectful and supportive of each other. The active School Council and Eco Club ensure that the children's views and opinions are sought and valued. The school has achieved the Green Flag Award for Eco Schools. The children develop their personal interests through a wide range of extra-curricular activities, sports competitions and visits.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school and the nursery unit have comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school and the nursery unit give very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity through a wide range of strategies and initiatives to encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The school and the nursery unit have purposeful links with the parents, local businesses and the wider community. The parents are kept well-informed about the school and their children's progress through an annual written report and the opportunity for two formal parent-teacher meetings. Regular open mornings provide additional support and guidance for the parents of newcomer children and a Multi-Language Kiosk in the school provides

parents with essential school information translated in 23 different languages. The newly-formed Parent/Teachers' Association (PTA) was recently awarded Regional Winner for Northern Ireland for 'Newly Formed PTAs', and has provided additional resources to broaden the children's learning opportunities.

The school works in partnership with the nearby university to provide the children with an extensive range of facilities within the university physical education centre.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

The children are confident, active and motivated learners. They are very supportive of one another and collaborate well in pairs and groups. As they progress through the school, they demonstrate a growing resilience and are willing to take risks in their learning. They can transfer their skills across all areas of the curriculum which helps develop their independence and enables them to manage their own learning.

An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 assessment data over the past four years shows that in literacy and numeracy the school's performance is below both the Northern Ireland (NI) average and the average for schools in the same free school meals band. Over a similar period, the percentage of children achieving at the highest levels at the end of KS2 is just below the NI average and above the average for schools in the same free school meals band.

An analysis of the school's own performance data and of the standards of the work in the children's books indicates that almost all of the children make very good progress, and many overcome significant barriers to learning, to attain the standards of which they are capable.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

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

The literacy co-ordinator, who carries a number of responsibilities, provides effective leadership and monitors the provision through the scrutiny of the teachers' planning, lesson observation and the analysis of performance data. He has led the staff in developing comprehensive writing and reading schemes as part of the ongoing focus on developing literacy throughout the school.

A key strength of the provision is the skilful and creative development of literacy across all areas of the curriculum in meaningful and interesting contexts based on the children's interests and experiences.

The children demonstrate excellent talking and listening skills; they present their views confidently through regular sustained opportunities for talking and listening and well-planned paired, group and whole-class discussion. They offer extended oral responses and are able to explain and justify their thoughts and opinions. The newcomer children engage well orally with the adults and their peers and, in keeping with the school's ethos, their views and contributions are valued and responded to sensitively.

The teaching of reading is well developed throughout the school and the teachers' skilful questioning during shared and guided reading sessions develops well the children's understanding. During the inspection, the children read with fluency and expression and spoke enthusiastically about a wide range of fiction and non-fiction books and authors.

The overall standard of the children's writing is very good. They write in different genre and for a variety of purposes with increasing accuracy, independence and proficiency as they progress through the year-groups. The teachers take very good account of the children's own interests, experiences and cultural background in the well-planned opportunities for developing and widening the children's writing experiences across all areas of the curriculum. Information and Communication Technology is used well to support the children's learning in literacy.

The children make very good progress in English and literacy and by the end of KS2 achieve standards in line with their abilities or above expectation.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

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

The numeracy coordinator provides very effective support and guidance for the staff in developing the provision and is a role model for staff in the teaching of mathematics and numeracy. She has carried out a thorough audit of the provision to identify strengths and areas for development. The targets in the numeracy action plan are clearly focused on improving the learning experiences for and the standards achieved by all the children.

In the foundation stage (FS) and early KS1, the children's mathematical language and understanding is developed effectively through well-planned activity-based learning opportunities. In the best practice, the teachers make effective and skilful use of routines, everyday situations and incidental opportunities to promote using mathematics. Throughout the school, the children enjoy mathematics and engage enthusiastically with practical problem-solving and investigative tasks. They use a wide range of resources, including ICT, confidently and support one another well in paired and group activities. The teachers set the learning in meaningful contexts based on the children's experiences and interests, and across other areas of the curriculum.

During discussions with year 4 and year 7 children, they demonstrated very good knowledge and understanding of important mathematical ideas and concepts across all areas of the mathematics curriculum, were flexible in their thinking and were able to explain the strategies they use when coming to an answer.

The children make very good progress in mathematics and numeracy and by the end of KS2 achieve standards in line with their abilities or above expectation.

2.4 ADDITIONAL LEARNING SUPPORT

The school has a very good commitment and sensitive approach to the inclusion of the children with special educational needs (SEN) and the arrangements for SEN are managed well by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO). A full range of information is used appropriately to identify the children's needs as early as possible, including observations and information received from the nursery unit. It will be important for the SENCO to ensure that the targets on the individual education plans (IEP) are more specific and measurable and that there is consultation with both the children and their parents in drawing up the targets and reviewing the progress made by the children.

Additional support is provided for literacy and numeracy through both withdrawal sessions and in-class support. In the best practice the withdrawal sessions are well-paced and active and stimulating approaches are used. A number of outside and voluntary agencies are also used to enhance the provision for those children who are in need of additional learning

support. The school has identified a number of children who are exceptionally gifted academically and has put in place strategies to ensure that they continue to be challenged and make the progress of which they are capable.

The children for whom English is not their first language receive additional support through withdrawal sessions from either the newcomer co-ordinator or within the Induction and Intensive Support Class. This tailored support is linked well to the children's learning in class and contributes effectively to raising the children's confidence and self-esteem and developing their learning. These children make very good progress across all areas of the curriculum.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The quality of the teachers' medium-term planning to support the learning and teaching is very good. The staff plan conscientiously to take full account of the range of ability within each class. They have developed themes and topics which support very effectively connected learning across the curriculum and reflect well the interests and experiences of the children. In the best practice, the teachers make very comprehensive evaluations of the children's learning which they use well to inform future practice and choice of learning activities. It will be important to ensure that all the teachers plan for the effective deployment of classroom assistants in order to maximise their role in providing good quality learning support.

3.2 TEACHING

The quality of the teaching in the most of the lessons observed was good or better; one-half was very good or outstanding. In a minority of the lessons, there was a need for improvement.

The teachers have high expectations and manage well the diverse needs of the children. They build well on the children's prior learning and exploit sensitively their cultural diversity to enrich the learning experiences of all of the children. In the best practice, the teachers used innovative and creative strategies which engaged the children effectively and developed their thinking skills and personal capabilities. As a result, there was a clear focus placed on the learning and all opportunities for learning were exploited fully.

In a minority of lessons, the pace was too slow and the focus was on the completion of tasks and activities rather than the learning and skills to be developed.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

The teachers mark the children's work regularly and supportively and, in the best practice, the feedback, orally or in writing, focuses on how the children can improve the quality and standard of their work. The school has identified appropriately the need for more consistent implementation of marking for improvement, self and peer assessment.

The teachers know the children well and track their progress in learning well. They use data from a range of standardised tests well to identify those children with low attainment or who are at risk of underachievement and ensure that targeted support is put in place to address their needs.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The quality of leadership and management within the school is very good.

The Principal, who has been in post for four years, has a strong vision for the continued improvement of the school and nursery unit. He has managed successfully significant changes in staffing and brought about major improvements to the accommodation and learning environment in the school. He has overseen many initiatives that enhance and support the learning experiences of the children and is thoroughly committed and dedicated to providing high standards of education for all of the children. He provides very good strategic leadership; setting high expectations for himself, the staff, the children and the parents.

The Vice-principal has led well the recent focus on developing the role of the co-ordinators which has resulted in a more collegial approach to school improvement. In order to take this work forward, the school has identified appropriately the need to develop further the capacity of the co-ordinators to make effective evaluations of the agreed monitoring strategies in place, to inform future development.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The school improvement process is clearly linked to a detailed school development plan (SDP) underpinned by effective self-evaluation. There are effective processes for consultation about the SDP within the school community. The school meets the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010.

4.3 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The governors are fully involved in the life and work of the school. They provide appropriate challenge and support in working closely with the Principal, Vice-principal and the staff to raise the profile of the school, strengthen links with the parents and the local community and to ensure that the provision is open to and accessible by all of the children, regardless of their identity and background.

4.4 ACCOMMODATION

As a result of major improvements to the accommodation over the last number of years the school now provides a bright and stimulating learning environment both indoors and outdoors. The accommodation is used effectively to meet the curricular, pastoral and social needs of the children. The standard of caretaking is excellent.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include the:

- highly motivated, well-behaved children who are enthusiastic learners and are respectful and supportive of their peers;
- quality of the teaching observed which was very good or outstanding in one-half of the lessons;

- very good progress made by the children in Literacy and numeracy and the standards they achieve which are in line with their ability or above expectation;
- outstanding quality of pastoral care provision which embraces the cultural diversity of the children and enriches their learning experiences;
- highly effective leadership of the Principal and governors in effecting school improvement; and
- purposeful links with parents and the wider community which benefit the educational experiences of the children.

5.2 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 learners; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

6. THE NURSERY UNIT

6.1 The main strengths within the nursery unit's educational and pastoral provision are as follows:

- there is a happy and caring atmosphere in the nursery unit based on an inclusive and respectful ethos. The children respond very well to the staff's high expectations, make full use of the learning environments indoors and outdoors and demonstrate exemplary behaviour. Throughout the session they engaged in lengthy periods of purposeful and productive play and readily approached the staff for support;
- high priority is given to planning a broad and progressively challenging pre-school programme for the children based appropriately on their individual needs and interests. All areas of the pre-school curriculum are well catered for; the development of the children's language and communication skills is a key achievement given that a significant minority of the children have English as an additional language. During the inspection the children demonstrated very good use of imaginative language in role play, very good recall skills at the end of the story session and a small group were able to plan and sequence a story based on a variety of items;
- the quality of the interactions between the staff and the children is consistently of a very high quality. The staff regularly engage the children in purposeful discussion about their work and use skilful questioning to develop their thinking and language. The thoughtful organisation of the session develops the children's independence and social skills;
- the staff have developed comprehensive methods of planning and assessment which guide them in their work with the children. The parents are kept well informed about their children's progress and development and are encouraged to become involved in the education of their child and the life and work of the nursery unit;
- the children with special educational needs are very well supported through effective early identification of need and referral to both the primary school SENCO and outside agencies for additional advice, guidance and support; and
- the teacher-in-charge of the nursery unit is dedicated and committed to the future development of the unit and the well-being of the children. She leads the staff effectively in the process of self-evaluation to promote improvement and is very well supported by the hard-working classroom assistant. All of the staff contributes to the high quality of the provision in the nursery unit.

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this nursery unit is very good. The nursery unit is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

**STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON BOTANIC PRIMARY SCHOOL NURSERY UNIT,
BELFAST**

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending full-time	26	26
Attending part-time	0	0
Under 3 years of age*	0	0
With statement of SEN**	0	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4***	3	2
At CoP stages 1 or 2***	1	0
With English as an additional language	9	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.	19%
Average attendance for the previous year.	87%

2. Duration of Sessions

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

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-Time	Part-Time
Teachers	1	0
Nursery Assistants	1	1
Qualified Nursery Assistants	0	0

Number of: ****	
Students	1
Trainees	1

**** Total placements since September of current year

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

Number issued	26
Percentage returned	23%
Number of written comments	2

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