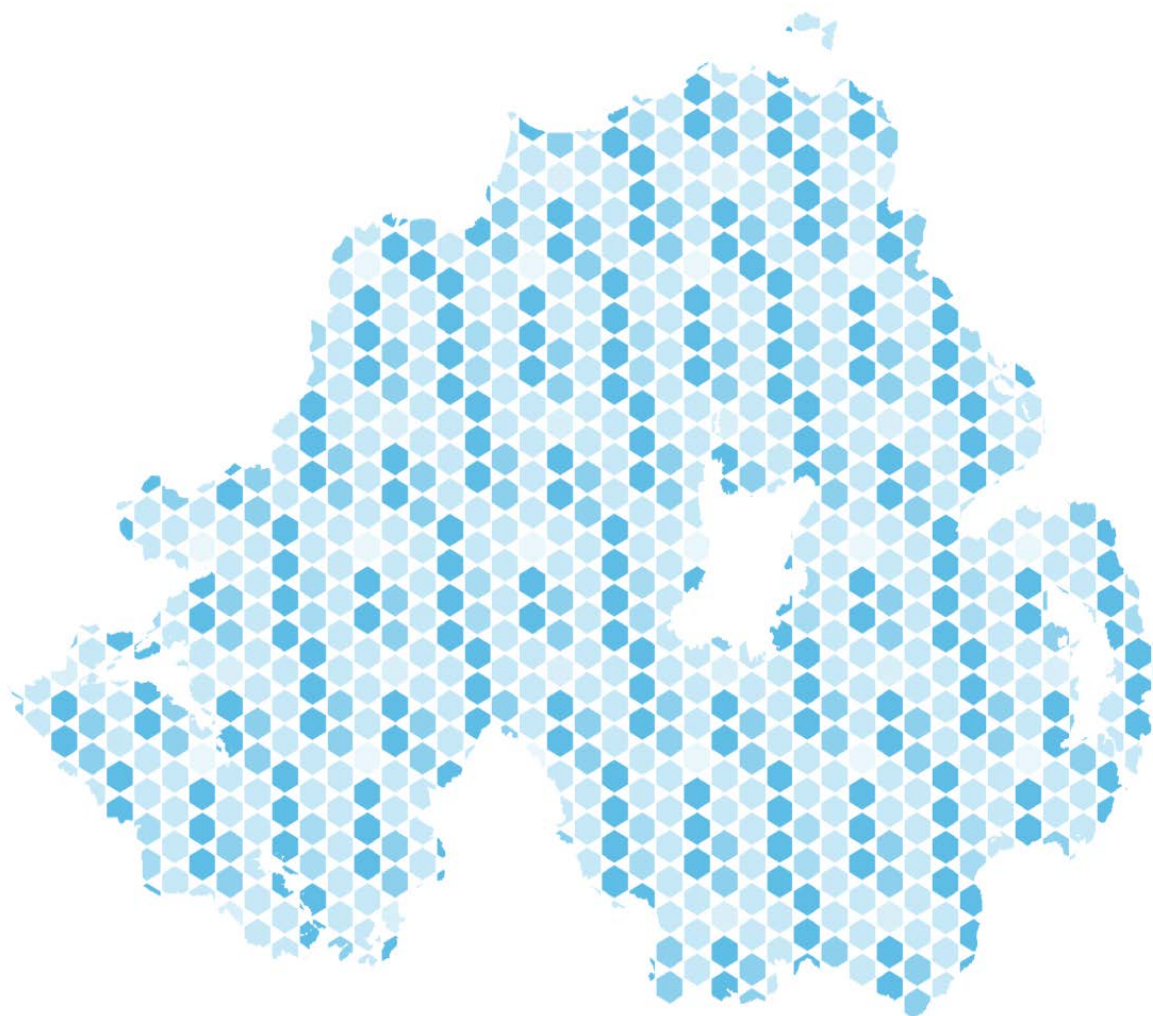


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Bunscoil Phobal Feirste,
Belfast

Report of an Inspection
in October 2012

CONTENTS

Section		Page
1.	School Context	1
2.	Focus of inspection and overall finding	1
3.	Achievements and standards	1
4.	Provision for learning	3
5.	Leadership and management	4
6.	Summary of questionnaire responses	5

Inspection methods and evidence base

The inspection evaluations are based on evidence gained from lesson observations, from scrutiny of the children's completed written work and from a range of documentation including the school's internal performance data. In addition, the inspection team held discussions with groups of the children, with teaching and non-teaching staff and with representatives from the Board of Governors.

The views of the parents, teaching and non-teaching staff were sought through a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. The reporting inspector discussed any issues raised through the questionnaires with the principal and the governors. A summary of the outcomes from the questionnaires is included in section 6 of the report.

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%

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

1. School context

Bunscoil Phobal Feirste is an Irish-medium primary school located off Shaw's Road in the Andersonstown area of Belfast. The children come from a wide area of west Belfast. Almost all of them come from English speaking homes and they experience the curriculum through total immersion in Irish. The enrolment has remained steady in recent years and stands currently at 235. Approximately 28% of the children in the primary school have been identified as having special educational needs (SEN). Around 34% are entitled to free school meals. The school's Nursery Unit, Naíscoil Bhreandáin which achieved statutory, full-time status in 2010, provides a daily full-time session catering for 52 children.

2. Focus of inspection and overall finding

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy, in particular, how the school is addressing low attainment and under-achievement where applicable;
- the quality of provision in the school and nursery unit; 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 child protection, were evaluated.

OVERALL FINDING OF THE INSPECTION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is outstanding. The school has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

Summary of key findings

Achievements and standards Quality of provision Leadership and management Nursery Unit	Outstanding Very Good Outstanding Good
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KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

3. Achievements and standards

The quality of the children's achievements and standards is outstanding.

- The school focuses on quality and high educational performance by placing the child at the centre of the learning process. Consequently, the children are highly motivated to achieve and take great pride in all of their work. They engage fully with their teachers adapting well to the wide range of teaching approaches. As they progress up the school they develop increased levels of independence and they are highly competent in managing their own learning. They display confidence, enthusiasm and perseverance in completing the challenging tasks and in responding positively to the high expectations set by their teachers.

- An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 assessment data over the past four years shows that in Irish, almost all of the children reach the expected levels of attainment. The school's performance in English has been well above the Northern Ireland (NI) average in three of the last four years and is well above average when compared with schools in the same free school meals category. In mathematics the performance has been above the NI average in two of the last four years and is above average compared with schools in the same free school meals category.
- Almost all of the children make very good progress in most aspects of their learning. By the end of year 7, most of the children attain very good or excellent standards in both Irish and English, and in mathematics. Throughout the school, the quality of the children's presentation of their work is of a very high standard.
- In literacy, by the end of KS2, the children are able to talk and listen, read and write with fluency and competence in Irish and English, and achieve high levels of bi-literacy. They can answer questions using extended responses and they can justify their answers with evidence. Their skills in Irish and English are highly developed and they are flexible in using both languages in a wide range of contexts. They are able to transfer skills and capabilities across all areas of the curriculum. The children's bilingual learning has a very positive impact on activating and extending their thinking skills as well as deepening their understanding of how languages work.
- In mathematics, the children gain a very good grasp of mathematical language and concepts. They are secure in their knowledge of number facts and handle simple and more complex computation well. By the end of KS2, they are able to talk enthusiastically and with very good understanding about their work in mathematics across a broad range of areas including number, measure, shape and space and data-handling. The older children are able to undertake mathematical investigations in which they work with a good degree of independence. The children achieve very good standards across all the areas of the mathematics curriculum and their work is often well supported by the use of ICT.
- Most of the children with learning difficulties make very good progress in literacy and numeracy, and a small number make sufficient progress to be discontinued from the special needs register. The school's detailed internal data indicates that the children meet the targets in their individual education plans and make very good progress.
- The majority of the children in the nursery unit are well-settled and engage in sustained, purposeful play. They play collaboratively with the adults and one another. They show high levels of independence, can access resources readily and assist with the snack and dinner routines. The majority of the children attain very good standards in representational drawing and experimental writing, and they listen attentively to stories in the small group sessions. A significant minority of the children require more support to develop their concentration at play and to take part more fully in the daily routines.

- The achievements and standards in ICT are very good. The children in year 4 and year 7 are entered for the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) Information Technology (IT) Accreditation Scheme. Over the last four years, almost all of the children have achieved the expected level at KS1 and KS2.

4. Provision for learning

The quality of the provision for learning is very good.

- The teachers have developed comprehensive, short and medium-term planning which focuses sharply on the children's learning outcomes. The planning takes very good account of the range of abilities in each class and the activities are well-matched to the children's needs and interests. A strong feature of the work of the school is the focus on assessment for learning; the teachers provide very good feedback to the children during lessons and respond constructively to the children's written work. The quality of the teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding. Almost one-half of the teaching was very good or outstanding. A minority of the teaching was satisfactory. Key features of the best practice included the enriching linguistic experiences provided by the teachers which enhanced the children's capabilities and competences in comprehension, expression, communication and problem-solving. In these sessions, the children interact successfully with peers and adults in both languages and across a wide range of relevant topics. In the least effective practice, the activities were pitched at a level that did not challenge sufficiently all of the children in their learning and the pace of the lessons was too slow.
- A key strength of the school's provision for literacy is the highly skilful and holistic way in which all of the staff build upon and extend the children's understanding and use of language across all aspects of their learning. The immersion strategies used by the teachers impact positively on literacy development in both languages, broadening the children's understanding of different topics. This is achieved through the connections made in the planned programme; the high quality open-ended interactions and the adults' effective questioning. The teachers encourage the children to use various sources of information in one language which they then use to give an oral presentation in the other language.
- In mathematics, the children have a broad programme which covers all the important areas of numeracy and sets out a clear line of progression across the key stages. The mathematical experiences provided are linked well to work in other areas of the curriculum.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is overall outstanding. This is evident through: the caring and friendly ethos; the exemplary behaviour of the children; and the quality of working relationships in the classes. The children's achievements are celebrated regularly helping to build their confidence and self-esteem. The children develop positive attitudes and values through the taught Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) programme and through incidental opportunities. They are able, through the Pupil Council, to voice views, opinions and ideas for developments within the school, all of which contribute to their development as responsible young citizens.

- The quality of the provision for children with SEN is very good. Succinct targets are outlined in the individual education plans (IEP) drawn up for each child who requires support in his/her learning in literacy or numeracy or guidance in his/her behaviour. These IEPs are of very good quality and outline appropriate strategies to promote improvement. The staff is very well-informed about the learning needs of the children. For example, through the use of a wide range of tests and the teacher observations, the school identifies early the children requiring additional support with their learning and provides suitable intervention strategies in class. The classroom assistants work closely with the class teachers and provide effective support for the children in class.
- The quality of provision within the double nursery unit is variable. There are good to very good, well-planned opportunities for learning across most areas of the pre-school curriculum. There is a need for all the staff to ensure that all the planned activities meet the interests of the children, and provide appropriate challenge for the children's age and stage of development.
- The school and nursery unit give very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity through, for example, healthy break-time routines and the wide range of after-school activities provided all of which encourage the children to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

5. Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management is outstanding

- There is a cohesive leadership team which works very well together to effect improvements in the children's learning. Their main focus is on quality education and the core business of learning and teaching. There are effective processes established for rigorous self-evaluation leading to improvement in the children's outcomes. The quality of learning, teaching and standards is monitored through a systematic programme of lesson observations and the scrutiny of the children's written work. In addition, effective use is made of performance data to monitor the children's progress over time, to identify children in need of additional support with their learning and to set realistic targets. The school development planning process is rigorous and has led to a series of suitable action plans that inform well future development work.
- The school and nursery unit is very well connected with the parents and the community. The parents are encouraged to be involved in the life and work of the school through, for example, the Parent Teacher Committee, fund raising events, regular newsletters and attendance at school functions and religious festivals. Through workshops and written guidance, the parents are shown how they can help with their children's learning and development. They learn about their child's progress through a comprehensive, annual written report, parent teacher interviews, curriculum evenings and incidental discussions upon request. The school makes very good use of its Extended Schools funding through providing a wide range of additional activities which address very well the children's personal, social and educational needs.

- The governors are highly effective. They work alongside the Principal and senior leadership team providing an appropriate balance of support and challenge.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

CONCLUSION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is outstanding. The school has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

6. Summary of questionnaire responses

PARENTAL QUESTIONNAIRES	
Number of Questionnaires Issued to the school and nursery unit	140
Number of Questionnaires Returned	35
Percentage of Returns	25%
Number of Comments	19

Most of the parental responses were positive; they highlighted the approachable teachers, the positive changes made by the Principal to raise morale and the extensive range of after school clubs and activities.

The governors expressed their commitment to, and support for, the work of the school. They praised the Principal's leadership, the very good working relationships at all levels, the dedicated staff, and the high standards of achievement attained by the children.

The children in year 6 spoke confidently and positively of their experiences at school, in particular, their friendships in the classes, their successes in sporting competitions and their enjoyment of lessons. The children know where to seek help if they have a concern about their safety.

TEACHERS QUESTIONNAIRES	
Number of Questionnaires Returned	11
Number of Comments	7

SUPPORT STAFF QUESTIONNAIRES	
Number of Questionnaires Returned	6
Number of Comments	3

All of the staff who responded indicated that they are happy in their work in the school.

NURSERY UNIT	
Number of Questionnaires Issued	52
Number of Questionnaires Returned	15
Percentage of Returns	28.8%
Number of Comments	7

The responses indicate that almost all of the parents regarded the nursery highly; they valued the work of the committed staff in developing the children's confidence.

The Education and Training Inspectorate reported to the Principal and the Chairperson of the governors the very few issues emerging from the questionnaires.

BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Bunscoil Phobal Feirste** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 08/10/12**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 104-6501** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Year 1 Intake	42	27	34	37	39
Enrolments					
Primary	248	236	233	228	235
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Unit	49	52	52	52	52
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): 94.2% **NI Avg Att: 94.7%**

Average Attendance for those children on the
 Special Educational Needs Register: 93.2%

Primary & Reception	Nursery Unit	Special Unit	Irish Medium Unit
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- D. i. Number of Teachers
 (including the principal and part-time teachers): 13 2 0 0
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 19.6 NI PTR: 20.2
- iii. Average Class Size: 19.6
- iv. Class Size (Range): 15 to 24
- v. Ancillary Support:
 Number of Hours **Per Week:**
- | | |
|---|------|
| i. Clerical support: | 32.5 |
| ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support: | 72.5 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 200 |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 3.4%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 27.6%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 34%
- 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 |
| 96.3% | 100% | 96.3% |

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