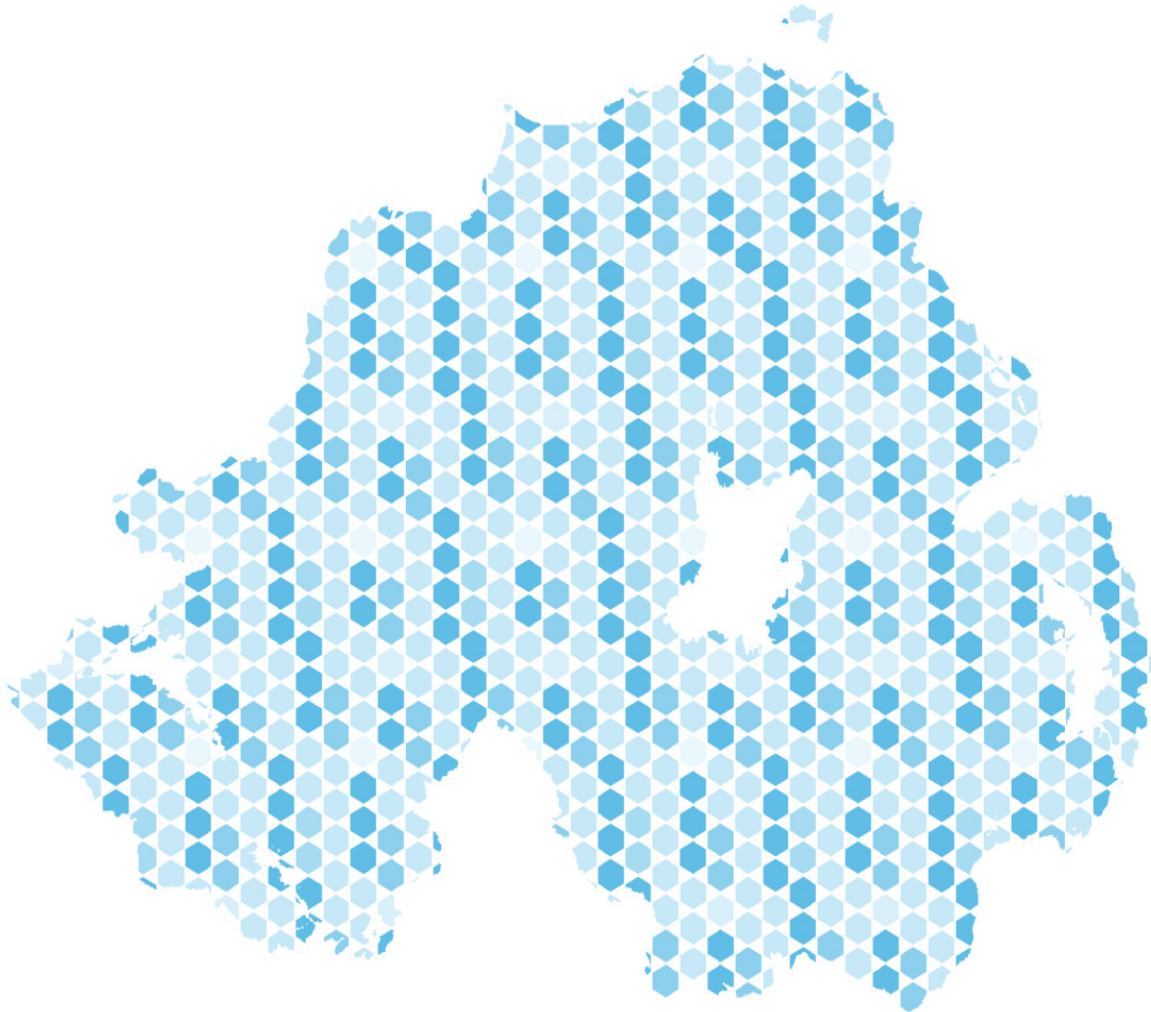


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Carr's Glen Primary School,
Belfast

Report of an Inspection
in November 2010

eti

*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



CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

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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. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Carr's Glen Primary School is situated on the upper Oldpark Road in north Belfast. The enrolment has decreased over the past five years from 319 and currently stands at 288 children. Almost all of the children who attend the school come from the local and surrounding area. Approximately 27% of the children are entitled to free school meals (FSM). The school has identified 32% 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 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 the children from year 6.

Just over 25% of the parental questionnaires were returned to Inspection Services Branch. Sixteen returns included additional written comments. The parents expressed a high level of satisfaction with the educational and pastoral provision provided by the school. In particular, they acknowledged the professional and hard-working staff, the good communications established between the school and the parents, and the opportunities provided for the children to participate in projects with other schools at home and abroad.

All of the teachers and 9 members of the support staff responded to the online questionnaires. Almost all of these responses were very positive and highly affirmative of the work of the school.

The governors expressed strong support for the school. In particular they commented on the high standing in which the school is held in the local community and the excellent links that exist between the school, the parents and the local post-primary schools.

In discussions, the children in year 6 reported that they feel very safe and secure and are aware of what to do if they have concerns about their safety or well-being. They talked confidently about the subjects and activities they enjoy; in particular the children appreciate the wide range of activities that they can take part in before and after school.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is very good. The school provides a welcoming and inclusive environment; the positive working relationships and mutual respect between the teachers and the children foster a supportive ethos throughout the school. The children are very welcoming and their behaviour both in and out of class is exemplary. A whole school approach to promoting and rewarding positive behaviour, including a reorganised school council, encourages the children to develop their interests as well as raising their confidence and self-esteem. The wide range of extra-curricular activities enriches the children's learning experiences.

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.

1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example through the popular healthy breaks scheme and the well-planned opportunities for the children to contribute to the school's healthy eating policies and practices. The area for improvement is the need to extend the range of healthy eating programmes with the support of external agencies.

1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The links with the parents and the local community are given a high priority within the school and extensive links with the local and international community have been developed. The parents are encouraged to become involved in school events and in supporting their children's learning. Very good communication with the parents is maintained through regular newsletters and meetings. The parents take an active role in the life and work of the school through the 'Parent Teacher and Friends Association'. Effective links established with the local post-primary schools are helping to ensure that the children are supported appropriately as they transfer to the next stage of their learning.

2. **ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS**

2.1 LEARNING

The children are highly motivated and demonstrate very good levels of engagement in their learning. Throughout the school, there is an increasing emphasis on promoting independent thinking and learning. The children interact confidently with their teachers and with one another, and are encouraged to extend their responses in group discussions. When presented with more challenging activities they demonstrate the ability to solve problems and the perseverance to complete investigations. The school has identified appropriately the need for the teachers to maintain appropriately high expectations of what the children can achieve.

An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 assessment data over the past four years shows that in English and mathematics the school's performance is below the Northern Ireland average. When compared with schools in the same FSM category, the levels of attainment in English and mathematics are also below the average. The school's internal data indicates that,

when comparing the children's standardised scores in English and mathematics with tests of innate ability, in English, most of the children are achieving at a level in line with their ability, and in mathematics, the majority of the children are performing at a level in line with or above their ability.

Appropriately, the school has prioritised, in the school development plan (SDP), the need to improve standards in literacy and numeracy.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

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

The children demonstrate very good skills in talking and listening; they share their views and opinions with one another and, when given the opportunity, talk confidently about their learning. The teachers encourage the children to give extended answers and develop their language through effective questioning, paired, group and whole class discussions.

The school has recently introduced a phonics programme which is being implemented throughout the school and is supporting the children in their reading of unfamiliar words. There are effective links with the parents of children in the foundation stage to encourage a love of reading from this early age. The teachers make good use a variety of teaching strategies including shared, paired and guided reading to support the children's development of reading across the school. The school is in the process of developing a reading scheme to support further the children's development in reading and to improve standards. The children read with fluency and expression and by the end of KS2 the majority of the children are reading at a level in line with their ability.

The standard of writing in the children's books is good. The children learn to write in a range of forms, for a variety of purposes and audiences, including the sharing of creative writing with children in their partner school through the good use of ICT. The involvement of visiting authors supports the children's development of specific genres of writing such as poetry. As the children progress through the school they write with increasing independence. Within KS2, to improve standards further, there is a need to provide more opportunities for extended writing.

The recently appointed co-ordinator for literacy provides good curricular leadership. She monitors and evaluates effectively the provision in literacy through collecting samples of work and observing literacy classes. The action plans for literacy are set within the context of the SDP, contain detailed evaluations and focus appropriately on raising standards of literacy for all of the children.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The quality of provision in mathematics and numeracy is good.

The ongoing development of the provision for numeracy and mathematics is prioritised within the SDP. The associated action plan is informed by the analysis of performance data and, whilst the school's data indicates that the majority of children achieve standards in line with, or above, their ability, the action plan is appropriately focused on improving further the children's standards and achievements.

The comprehensive whole-school programme for mathematics provides appropriate guidance for the teachers to plan effectively for a broad and balanced coverage of the mathematics curriculum.

The teachers make effective use of a wide range of practical equipment, including ICT, to support the children in their learning and provide good opportunities for the children to apply their learning in everyday contexts. During the inspection, there were good examples of the children's literacy and learning in other areas of the curriculum being promoted through mathematics. In almost all of the lessons observed, the teachers used good questioning to motivate and challenge the children, and encouraged them to reflect on and explain their learning using the appropriate mathematical language. On a few occasions, the activities lacked sufficient challenge and the learning outcomes were unclear.

The children work with enthusiasm and enjoyment, particularly during mental mathematics sessions, and work well with their peers to complete problem-solving and practical investigative activities set in meaningful real life contexts. During the inspection the highest attaining children in years 4 and 7 demonstrated good knowledge of important ideas and concepts and flexibility in their mathematical thinking.

The numeracy co-ordinator provides good leadership and is committed to ensuring that high quality learning experiences are provided for all children through the increasingly systematic monitoring and evaluation of the provision.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The quality of curriculum planning across the school is very good. The bi-monthly planning provides a clear overview which outlines variety, continuity and progression in the children's learning. Good use is made of topic-based planning to enhance the learning experiences. In almost all of the lessons the planning is matched closely to the needs of the children. In the best practice the teachers' evaluations inform appropriately future action for individuals and groups. The teachers prepare very well for lessons and the short-term planning includes appropriate differentiation. There is evidence that the planning is implemented well into the practice and used to guide the teachers and support staff in their work.

3.2 TEACHING

During the inspection, almost all of the teaching observed was good or better.

In almost one-half of the lessons the teaching was very good. In the best practice, the lessons were well-paced, practical and appropriately matched to the needs and abilities of the children. The teachers used effective questioning to promote thinking skills and oral responses and good use was made of the children's real life experiences to promote learning. The lessons were differentiated and the children had opportunities to work individually, in pairs and groups where they were supported well by the teachers and support staff. In the less effective practice there were missed opportunities for the children to reflect on, and to consolidate their learning, at the end of the lesson.

Special educational needs (SEN) is given an appropriately high priority by the school. The special educational needs co-ordinator has been in post since 2001, and is committed to the children in her care. She works diligently with the teachers and co-ordinators in identifying need and agreeing the provision for those children requiring help with aspects of their learning. The school's data indicates that just over half of the children on the SEN register as achieving standards in line with their ability. To improve the standards further, and meet the needs of all of the children more effectively, there is a need for the senior leadership team (SLT) to put in place a more systematic monitoring, evaluation and review of the SEN provision.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

There are appropriate procedures and records in place for keeping parents informed about their children's learning which include two annual formal parent-teacher consultations and a written report at the end of the school year. In addition, there are opportunities for informal consultations with class teachers on request.

Assessment procedures identify clearly the progress and development of each child and are used to set individual and group targets to enhance the provision. There is evidence that the consistent focus on the targets set for the majority of the children is beginning to have a positive impact on their learning and achievements. Additional support is provided through a combination of in-class and withdrawal sessions.

Across each key stage there is regular and effective observation, monitoring and recording of individual children's progress. In all classes, the teachers mark the children's work regularly and constructively in accordance with the school's marking policy. Good progress has been made in implementing assessment for learning practices.

The recently appointed assessment co-ordinator has worked very hard to develop effective systems of analysing and sharing data to help bring about improvement in learning and teaching. The information gained is shared with the other co-ordinators and is used to inform planning, to track longitudinally the progress of all children and to respond appropriately to their individual needs.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

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

The quality of the leadership provided by the Principal is very good. Since taking up his appointment four years ago, the Principal has worked very hard to develop a more effective leadership and management structure which has an appropriate focus on improving standards through more effective learning and teaching. He adopts an inclusive approach to managing change and has overseen important improvements in the standards the children attain.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The Principal and SLT have worked effectively to create a culture of self-evaluation, involving children, parents, teachers and governors in the audits of provision leading to the setting of priorities for improvement. An effective SDP is in place and is clearly focused on raising further the standards achieved by the children in literacy and numeracy. A well-structured staff development programme enhances the skills of the staff and there is evidence that the opportunities taken for continuing professional development are impacting positively on the quality of teaching and learning in the school. The school gives very good attention to and meets fully the requirements of the Education (School Development Plans) Regulations NI 2005 Order.

4.3 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The school governors make a very positive contribution to the life and work of the school; they are fully involved in the strategic planning and policy development and support effectively the Principal and staff in the implementation of the SDP.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the quality of the teaching observed, almost half of which was very good;
- the high levels of motivation and the very positive engagement of the children in their learning;
- the very good quality of the planning and the ongoing evaluations which inform learning and teaching;
- the very good strategic leadership of the Principal and the commitment of the co-ordinators to raising further the children's attainments in English and mathematics;
- the very good quality of the pastoral care provision which promotes high levels of respect and exemplary behaviour among the children; and
- the good use of data to identify priorities for improvement.

5.2 The area for improvement is:

- the need for the SLT to put in place more systematic monitoring, evaluation and review of the SEN provision to improve the standards the children attain.

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this 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 school has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the school's progress on the area for improvement.

ACCOMMODATION

- The school's accommodation is inadequate and falls short of acceptable standards.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- The tiled inspection covers in a main corridor have risen above floor level and are a tripping hazard.

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