

PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Chapel Road Primary School,
Derry

Report of an Inspection
in May 2012



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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

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Chapel Road Primary School is situated on an elevated site in the Waterside area of Derry. The enrolment of the school has increased over the last three years and currently stands at 202 children. This includes eleven children in reception. At the time of the inspection 39% of the children were entitled to free school meals (FSM). The school has identified some 25% 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.

One hundred and ninety-seven questionnaires were issued to the parents; approximately 36% of the questionnaires were returned to the Inspection Services Branch and 27 contained additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaires indicated that most of the parents are very supportive of the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents acknowledged the hard work and commitment of the Principal.

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

Nine teachers and a small number of support staff completed the confidential online questionnaire. All of the teachers and support staff were very positive about all aspects of life and work of the school.

The governors expressed very strong support for the school; in particular, they indicated their praise and appreciation for the work of the Principal. They reported that they were kept well informed by the Principal on the standards the children attain and have a good understanding of the priorities outlined in the school development plan (SDP) and action plans.

The children in year 6 talked in a very mature and positive manner about their experiences in school. They indicated that they are happy and feel secure in school and know what to do if they have a problem or concern about their safety and well-being.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is outstanding.

The school demonstrates a strong sense of inclusion through all it does. There is evidence to show the strong value placed on developing the children's academic and social ability and staff are particularly sensitive to the children's personal and social needs. The school values the contribution of all the children and celebrates diversity, for example, through the work with other local primary schools in the REACH ACROSS programme. The children in many of the classes take on responsibilities with confidence and maturity. The working relationships between the adults and the children are excellent. The children get many opportunities, particularly during the after school clubs, to mix with children from other classes. They all benefit from this and the children respond positively to all the activities on offer. In the early years classes the parents are encouraged, to 'stay and play' with the children. This benefits the parents as well as the children.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

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.

1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The children respond positively to the good attention given by the school to healthy eating and physical activity.

1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

There are strong links between the school, the parents and the community. Important links with post-primary schools in the area help the transition at the end of primary school.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

Most of the children are highly motivated and engage positively and willingly with their learning. They settle quickly to the task or activity and are keen to contribute to any questions asked. When given the opportunity they work very effectively in pairs and in groups. This way of working is popular with the children; they are aware of the different roles which they can hold in a group setting, and fully participate in the discussions. Most of children show high levels of engagement and enthusiasm in their learning and are able to help others in the class.

The overall quality of provision for children who require additional support with aspects of their learning is very good. The needs of the children are identified early and clear strategies are put in place to address these needs. The work is monitored and evaluated rigorously. The classroom assistants play an important role here; communication between the teachers and classroom assistants is very strong and their joint planning helps the children make appropriate progress.

An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 assessment data over the past four years shows that the school's performance in mathematics, when compared with both the Northern Ireland (NI) average and with schools in the same FSM band, has fluctuated from being in line with the average to being well below the average. In English the school's performance has fluctuated from above to below the average. An analysis of the school's internal performance data indicates that most of the children achieve standards in line with their ability in English and mathematics.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

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

Across the key stages appropriate emphasis is placed on developing the children's talking and listening skills and as a result almost all of the children have very good oral communication skills. In the reception class and foundation stage (FS), these skills are being developed by the adults working with the children during play based learning. The children's language is further developed through the effective questioning by the teachers during the literacy lessons; these lessons are well-paced and challenging and make good use of the children's own experiences. As the children progress through the school, the teachers encourage the children to respond in an extended manner and seek their views and opinions on a wide range of topics; the children are given appropriate thinking time to help them formulate an answer; extended responses are encouraged and their suggestions are valued.

The staff have worked hard to develop reading across the school. The children are taught systematically to read through the use of commercial reading schemes which are enhanced by a wide range of appropriate and contemporary support materials such as novels, 'big books' and reference materials. The children enjoy reading and are developing a good range of appropriate strategies to help them read unfamiliar text. In the best practice their ability to read letters and recognise sounds is developed through the use of poems, rhymes and stories. During the inspection, groups of children in year 4 and year 7 read with fluency and understanding. Reading is promoted positively in the school through the annual book fair, World Book Day and through several reading support programmes and initiatives, for example, 'Reading Partnerships' and 'Accelerated Reading'. The staff have created a literacy rich environment throughout the school and very good use is made of the attractive class libraries and the school library which provide books that match the interests and abilities of the children. Most of the children achieve very good standards in reading and by the end of KS2 they are reading at a level commensurate with their ability.

The standards attained by the children in writing are very good. In the reception class and the FS, the children enjoy the interesting, well-planned opportunities to experiment with writing during play-based learning.

In the (FS) the children are well supported, to write words and to express their ideas in simple sentences and extended pieces of writing. By the end of KS1 and KS2 the children have increased accuracy, fluency and maturity in their writing. They are becoming more independent and have opportunities to plan, edit and extend their writing through a wide range of genres and for a variety of audiences across the curriculum.

The literacy coordinator monitors the literacy provision by overseeing the teachers' planning and through the analysis of standardised scores. She carries out classroom observations and collects samples of the children's work. It will be important to ensure that the information gathered from the monitoring process informs effectively the development of the literacy provision in order to improve further the standards attained by all the children. The literacy policy and whole-school planning for literacy are currently under review. It will be important that this work is completed within an agreed timeframe.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The quality of provision in mathematics and numeracy is very good.

There is a good numeracy policy which guides the teaching across the school. The planning provides a programme which is broad and balanced, includes appropriate differentiation of the tasks to match the needs of all of the children, and the setting of the work in meaningful, real-life situations. The children have good opportunities to apply their mathematical knowledge in an appropriate range of contexts across the curriculum and to develop their skills of problem-solving. The children benefit from the very good focus the school places on making mathematics relevant to them and developing life skills such as those gained through work on financial capability.

In the reception and FS, the children are developing their confidence in the use of mathematical language and their conceptual understanding through a range of creative practical activities.

In KS1, the teachers use well practical resources, including mathematical games, to develop and consolidate the children's learning. During discussions with the children in year 4, the children spoke positively about their learning of mathematics and had a good understanding of shape and space, number and measures.

In KS2 the children extend and secure their mathematical learning through innovative, differentiated and well-planned lessons where they work in groups and in pairs to meet very clear and realistically challenging learning outcomes. Across KS 1 and KS 2, the children's learning in mathematics is developed progressively through a variety of experiences, including an appropriate range of mental mathematics activities, which develop and support their learning. The children discuss the methods they use to solve problems and demonstrate flexibility in their thinking and enjoyment in mathematics. By year 7, the children have a very good understanding of number, shape and space and time and have flexibility in their mathematical thinking.

The co-ordinator is a very good role model for the teaching of numeracy across the school. He monitors the quality of the provision regularly including the teachers' planning, and evaluations, the children's books, classroom observations and the analysis of standardised tests. Through this rigorous process he has identified areas for development and appropriate targets to promote further improvement.

By the end of KS 2, most of the children make good progress and attain good standards in mathematics.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

There is very thorough planning which guides well the work of the school. The planning provides a clear overview which helps promote continuity and progression. The medium-term planning for literacy and numeracy sets out the content, key learning intentions, teaching approaches, and assessment strategies for each year group. The children evaluate their own work and that of others; these evaluations are shared with the class teachers to help inform future planning.

3.2 TEACHING

During the inspection, the teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding. Most of the lessons were very good or better.

In the most effective practice observed, the teachers focused explicitly on helping the children connect the learning to other areas of the curriculum. The lessons were clearly focused on learning, and teachers re-visited their learning intentions throughout the lessons to ensure the children were understanding the main aspects of the learning. Teachers adopted innovative and creative approaches to much of their work which helped create an exciting and challenging experience for the children.

In a small number of lessons there was an over reliance placed on worksheets and the completion of low-level tasks. This led to the work not always meeting the needs of many of the children.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

The school has a detailed policy on assessment and uses effectively and rigorously a comprehensive range of performance data to help bring about improvement in the children's attainment. All teachers are aware of the data and how best to use it. Marking is generally effective and helps the children improve their work. The best practice should be disseminated across the school.

The parents receive an informative annual report on their children's progress and have two formal meetings each year.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The overall quality of the leadership and management is very good.

The Principal is a very good role model for all the staff and carries a considerable responsibility for areas of the curriculum. She has worked with the assessment co-ordinator, to lead the significant work on data analysis. Her supportive and practical approach to management has ensured a settled and positive learning environment. In recent years she has introduced a range of important initiatives which have helped raise the quality of the children's experiences. Her knowledge and encouragement of the strengths of staff has established a very strong sense of teamwork.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

Through rigorous and honest self-evaluation the Principal and staff have implemented an innovative approach to developing the provision in the early years. There is evidence to show that these changes are having a positive impact on the children's experiences and standards throughout the school. All staff participate in the process of establishing future priorities; these priorities help identify targets through the performance review and staff development programme.

The school gives very good attention to and meets fully the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010.

4.3 ACCOMMODATION

The school building and grounds are well maintained.

4.4 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The governors are fully involved in the life and work of the school and support effectively the work of the Principal and staff.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the positive disposition of the children towards their learning;
- the outstanding quality of the pastoral care which supports the children's learning;
- the very good leadership of the Principal;
- the quality of the teaching observed most of which was very good or better;
- the good standards in numeracy and the very good standards in literacy attained by the children; and
- the strategic vision of the principal in promoting and developing high quality provision in the reception and foundation stages.

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

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- The steps at the main entrance of the school are uneven and present a health and safety hazard.

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