

PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Holy Child Primary School and
Nursery Unit, Derry

Report of an Inspection
in November 2011



Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



CONTENTS

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

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: Holy Child Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 07/11/11**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 203-0381** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Year 1 Intake	40	28	27	33	33
Enrolments					
Primary	233	223	215	218	208
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Unit	52	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): 92.9% **NI Avg Att: 94.7%**

Average Attendance for those children on the Special Educational Needs Register: 91.9%

Primary & Reception	Nursery Unit	Special Unit	Irish Medium Unit
--------------------------------	---------------------	---------------------	--------------------------

- D. i. Number of Teachers (including the principal and part-time teachers): 11.6 2 0 0
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)

ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 18 NI PTR: 20.2

iii. Average Class Size: 23

iv. Class Size (Range): 17 to 30

v. Ancillary Support:

Number of Hours Per Week :	i. Clerical support:	36
	ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support:	55
	iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support:	0

vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 1.44%

vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 39.4%

viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age:

ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 76%

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 61.76%	Mathematics 64.7%	Irish N/A
---	--------------------------	-----------------------------	---------------------

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT

Holy Child Primary School and Nursery Unit is situated on Central Drive, Creggan, in Derry City. Almost all of the children come from the local area. The enrolment has remained steady over the past five years and is currently 261, including 52 children in the Nursery Unit. At the time of the inspection, 76% of the children were entitled to free school meals. Approximately 39% of the children enrolled in the school are on the special needs register.

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 teaching and 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, the teaching and support staff to complete confidential questionnaires prior to the inspection. Meetings were held with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors), and the children from year 6.

Of the 104 questionnaires issued to the parents of the primary school children; 49% were returned to Inspection Services Branch of which 20 contained additional written comments. An analysis of the questionnaires and the comments made by the parents and the staff were shared with the Principal and the governors. Almost all of the responses indicated a high level of satisfaction with the school. In particular, the parents highlighted the caring and hard-working Principal and staff, and the value placed on the school in the community. A small number of concerns raised were discussed with the Principal and governors

In the nursery unit, 31% of the parents responded to the questionnaires and a small number made additional written comments. The responses indicate a high level of satisfaction with the nursery provision, in particular the welcoming ethos and the helpful and caring staff. The responses made by the teaching and support staff indicated satisfaction with most aspects of the schools work. All the written comments made by the staff were wholly positive.

In discussions, held with the year 6 children, they spoke positively about many aspects of school life. In particular, they valued the help and support of the teachers and the opportunities available for extra-curricular activities. They indicated strongly that they feel happy and safe in school and know what to do if they have any worries or concerns.

In discussions held with the governors, they set the school in context and outlined its role in the community; they praised the welcoming atmosphere in the school.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The qualities of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school and nursery unit are very good. Among the strengths are the very well-behaved and polite children. The school works hard to meet the pastoral needs of the children and very good use is made of, for example, school assemblies, and a range of awards to develop the children's self-esteem and confidence. The school is developing effectively the children's understanding of the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) curriculum. The School Council and the eco-team provide the children with meaningful opportunities to contribute to discussions and decisions about aspects of school life which affect them; the children report that their opinions and ideas are valued and acted on. The colourful displays in the classrooms and corridors celebrate very well the children's work, their productive links with other schools and their achievements.

The school is a key member of the Creggan Family Hub which co-ordinates a range of family support services and activities to enhance the quality of life and well being of the children and their families.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school and nursery unit have very good 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. The healthy breaks and regular opportunities for energetic outdoor play and sports encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The school and nursery unit have developed very good communication links with the parents; an informative monthly newsletter is available to all parents, there are regular formal and informal opportunities for the parents to consult with the Principal and teachers about their children's learning and about aspects of school life including the School Development Plan and the Anti-Bullying Policy. A range of outreach programmes are available to parents through the Extended School's Programme including cookery, keep fit and ICT classes.

2. **ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS**

2.1 LEARNING

In most classes the children display enthusiasm for their learning and co-operate well with their teachers and one another. The children are well-settled and contribute to class and group discussions. They work collaboratively with each other, and are keen to talk about their learning and explain their thinking.

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 at level 4 is significantly below the Northern Ireland (NI) average. Compared with schools in the same free school meals (FSM) category, the levels of attainment in English and mathematics are generally in line with the average in similar schools.

The children's attainments in the ICT Accreditation scheme are above the NI average.

The school's data indicates that the majority of the children on the special educational needs (SEN) register are achieving standards in line with their ability.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

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

The literacy co-ordinator has been in post since September 2011. The Principal and the previous co-ordinator have developed a useful policy and relevant action plans to guide the development of reading and writing throughout the school.

The children talk and listen well in a majority of the classes. They work in groups, contribute well to discussions and can express their opinions clearly. In a minority of classes there is a lack of appropriate stimulus to promote discussion and teachers miss opportunities to build on the children's ideas and to encourage good listening skills.

The children learn to read through a well-structured programme which incorporates a range of appropriate teaching methods, and reading materials including story sacks and novels. The school makes very good use of the local library; all classes make regular visits to borrow books and to avail of the facilities provided. The school has identified a number of children who are underachieving in reading and have recently introduced an accelerated reading programme to help improve standards. The children are enthusiastic about reading and are able to talk about their favourite books and authors. By the end of KS2, the majority of the children are reading at a level commensurate with their ability or above expectation.

In the best practice, very good use is made of ICT to enhance the children's communication skills and to support their learning and written work. In foundation stage (FS) the teachers support the children effectively to develop letter formation, to write words and simple sentences. The children are able to experiment with writing during play-based learning. It is important that these early skills are developed further by providing the children with opportunities to extend their independent writing throughout FS and KS1. The majority of children in KS2 write with accuracy and fluency and to a very good standard. They write in a range of genre across the curriculum and for a variety of audiences and most children present their written work well.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

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

The numeracy co-ordinator has developed a policy and action-plan to guide the development of the mathematics provision. The whole-school planning for the mathematics curriculum, including mental mathematics is too general to meet the range of individual needs and in a few classes it is not fully implemented. The staff in the FS have recently begun to review the progression and challenge required in teaching mathematics and numeracy in order to consolidate the children's understanding of key mathematical concepts.

In the best practice, the teachers include problem-solving investigations and support the children through the use of practical mathematical resources, the interactive whiteboard and open-ended questions to develop mathematical language and concepts. The children are well-motivated to learn, particularly within meaningful contexts related to business activities and challenging tasks that promote flexible thinking.

In the less effective practice, the over-reliance on worksheets and commercial mathematics schemes restricts the potential to develop the children's confidence and competence across the curriculum. The progress and attainment of almost all the children in KS1 is too low. In discussions with the year 7 children, the more able responded well to questions on number facts, place value, estimation and measures; however, some of the children's ability to think flexibly and to calculate mentally is underdeveloped.

The staff have identified a minority of the children whose attainments are low and groups of children who are underachieving. Overall, the provision to address aspects of low and underachievement in mathematics is too inconsistent and opportunities are missed to raise standards. There is insufficient monitoring of the children's individual mathematical needs and appropriate planning for their development of skills and understanding of concepts. By the end of KS2 a majority of the children attain good standards in mathematics and a small number of the children attain outstanding standards.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

There is satisfactory short-term planning in place which guides the teachers in their work. In the best practice, this planning is differentiated and shows clearly the connected curricular learning opportunities. The children's views and ideas are incorporated into the planning and the evaluations take good account of the children's progress and development.

In a minority of classes, the planning does not reflect the teaching and learning taking place. The differentiation is unclear and it does not sufficiently meet the needs of all the children.

There is an urgent need to review the whole school planning for play-based learning and to develop further the whole-school schemes of work for literacy and numeracy.

3.2 TEACHING

During the inspection, the quality of the teaching observed ranged from outstanding to inadequate; one third was very good or better. A small number of the lessons observed were inadequate. All of the outstanding practice was observed in KS2.

In the most effective lessons the children were highly motivated and enjoyed the activities which were well-matched to their needs. The teachers used effective questioning to challenge the children's thinking and to extend their learning and made very good use of plenary sessions to consolidate the learning. Generally the classroom assistants were well-deployed and interacted well with the children to support their learning.

In the less effective practice, classroom management was poor, planning and resources were not well-matched to need and as a result the children's levels of disengagement with learning were evident.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

At a whole-school level the staff are beginning to use standardised tests to record and analyse the children's progress in literacy and numeracy. In addition, the staff has appropriately begun to analyse samples of the children's work in order to set targets for improvement. There is limited information gathered about the children's progress and development in the FS. Insufficient account is taken of the need to continue to monitor and record consistently the children's responses to learning through play on transition from pre-school to the primary school.

The marking of the children's work is regular and positive. The staff have agreed a marking policy which needs to be monitored and reviewed to ensure that all the staff implements appropriate procedures to help the children improve their work.

There are appropriate procedures and annual reports in place for keeping the parents informed about their children's progress. It is timely, that the staff is beginning to ensure that all the parents of the children registered with special needs are adequately informed about the targets set on the individual education plans.

3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Special educational needs is given a high priority by the school. The current provision is through in-class support, with some children also receiving withdrawal support in literacy or numeracy. The current action plan is not prioritised nor detailed enough to guide effectively the further development of SEN in the school.

The teachers, with the support of the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO), identify early those children who require additional support with their learning in both literacy and numeracy through observations of the children in class and the use of standardised tests. Whilst the teachers in the withdrawal sessions provide sensitive support for the children, the planning for learning needs to be focused more clearly on the individual needs of each child.

The SENCO, in consultation with the class teachers, writes individual and group education plans (EP) for the children with special educational needs. Most of the EPs outline literacy targets only. The teachers need to ensure that the EP targets reflect the needs of each child, and that these targets are focused on developing further improvements in the children's learning.

The SENCO has provided appropriate staff development in SEN. She maintains good links with the parents and a range of support agencies.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory.

The Principal has been in post for three years and provides effective leadership. She is highly committed to the well-being of the children and to the ongoing improvement of provision within the school. She has worked closely with the staff and governors to overcome challenges and to put in place, several initiatives, policies and procedures to improve the school.

There has been a re-organisation of the senior management team (SMT) and re-allocation of key co-ordinator roles. Currently, the leadership and management of almost all the curricular areas are at an early stage of development. It will be important that the school ensures that staff development is provided in order that the SMT can fully implement their role in monitoring, evaluating and action-planning to bring about improvements in standards for all the children. All the staff needs to develop a shared understanding and commitment to the strategic direction and ongoing development of the school.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The school improvement process is linked to a school development plan (SDP) which identifies many appropriate areas for improvement. Considerable consultation about policies that underpin school management and development has taken place. The SDP needs to be reviewed in order to revise the current priorities for the strategic direction and development of the school.

As a priority, the targets set for literacy and numeracy and the curricular action plans need to be self-evaluated more rigorously and appropriately reviewed to focus more sharply on raising standards in order to meet fully the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland).

4.3 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT and GOVERNANCE

The school governors make very positive contributions to the life and work of the school and support effectively the Principal and the staff. The turnover and attendance of the staff is appropriately kept under review in order to make the best use of all the resources to meet the needs of the children.

4.4 ACCOMMODATION

There are deficiencies in the fabric of the building, however good use is made of the available accommodation to support teaching and learning. Storage space is limited and there is no car park for staff. The standards of caretaking are good.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the strong pastoral provision for the children and their families;
- the very good behaviour of almost all of the children;
- the good to outstanding teaching observed in the majority of classes across the school and nursery unit;
- the very good use made of ICT to support learning and teaching;
- the strong links established with the local community and support services; and
- the effective leadership of the Principal and the good support provided by the governors.

5.2 The areas for improvement include the need to;

- ensure consistency of best practice in teaching and learning for all the children in order to raise the literacy and numeracy standards;
- develop further the shared understanding and commitment of the staff to the strategic direction and development of the school; and
- develop a more rigorous process of self-evaluation and action -planning leading to improvement.

5.3 In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this school is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in standards, learning and teaching and leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the learners are to be met more effectively. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

6. THE NURSERY UNIT

6.1 KEY FINDINGS

- There is a happy, caring atmosphere in the nursery unit. The children are very well-settled for the time of year, make full use of the learning environments, respond positively to the staff's expectations and demonstrate very good behaviour. The vast majority engage readily with the staff and sustain purposeful play.
- There are good opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum; the promotion of the children's personal, social and emotional development and the development of the children's language and mathematical awareness are particular strengths. In some areas of play the resources available do not provide sufficient choice and challenge in the children's learning and restrict the children's creativity.
- The quality of the interaction between the staff and the children is consistently of a high standard. The staff regularly engages the children in purposeful discussion about their work and use skilful questioning to develop their thinking and language.
- The staff provides a varied programme for the children throughout the year based on themes and topics. The written planning is used to guide the staff in their work and is evaluated regularly to take account of the children's responses and differing needs.
- A good start has been made to monitoring and recording the children's progress and development. Some of the methods used need to be reviewed to ensure they fully reflect and take account of the children's stage of development.
- The nursery unit teacher is very conscientious and has a clear vision for developing the work within the nursery unit. The staff is hard-working and dedicated and all contribute to the overall effectiveness of the nursery unit.

6.2 The inspection has identified the following area for improvement.

- Review aspects of the organisation of the session to ensure that all time is used effectively to develop the children's learning.

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the nursery unit is good. The nursery unit has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the nursery unit has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the nursery unit's progress on the areas for improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON HOLY CHILD PRIMARY SCHOOL NURSERY UNIT, DERRY

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*	N/A	N/A
With statement of SEN**	0	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4***	2	2
At CoP stages 1 or 2***	0	0
With English as an additional language	0	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.	44.2%
Average attendance for the previous year.	92.8%

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	2	0
Nursery Assistants	2	0
Qualified Nursery Assistants	0	0

Number of: ****	
Students	0
Trainees	0

**** Total placements since September of current year

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

Number issued	52
Percentage returned	31%
Number of written comments	5

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- The controlled access for the nursery unit door was left unsecured at times during the inspection.
- The wooden walkways at the entrance to the mobiles are potentially hazardous when wet.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2011

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the ETI website: www.etini.gov.uk

