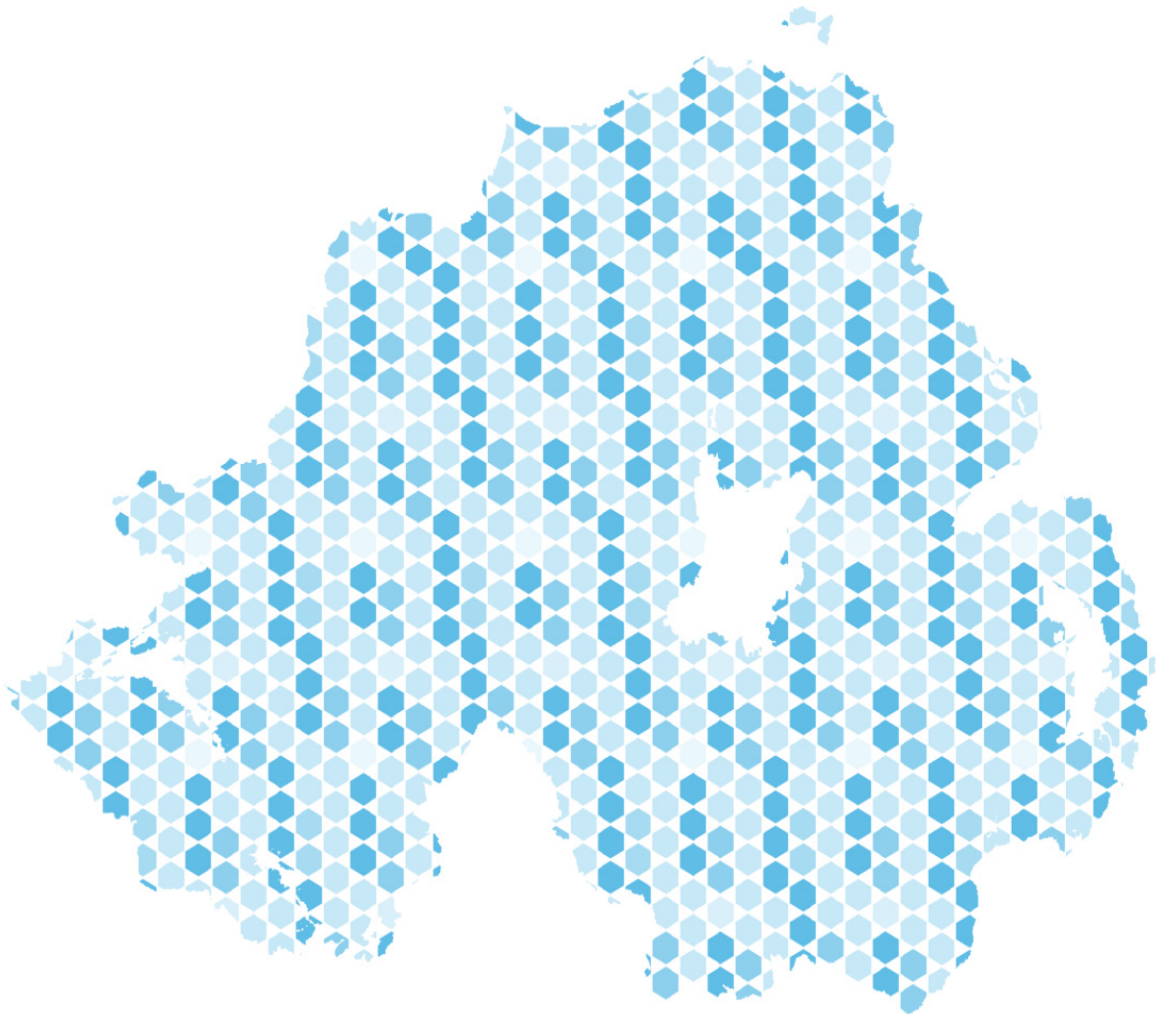


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Luke's Primary School,
Twinbrook

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

St Luke's Primary School is located on Glasvey Drive, Twinbrook, Dunmurry. The enrolment has declined slightly over the past four years and stands currently at 185 children. Almost all of the children attending come from the local vicinity. At the time of the inspection, 72% of the children were entitled to receive free school meals and 17% were identified by the school as having special educational needs.

1.2 FOCUS

The inspection focused on:

- the quality of the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy;
- the quality of provision for learning; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

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 children from year 6. One hundred and fifty-one questionnaires were issued to the parents; 38% were returned to the Inspection Services Branch and 20 contained additional written comments. The parents placed a high value on the leadership of the Principal. They appreciated the commitment and hard work of all staff in providing a caring and supportive environment for their children, including placing a strong emphasis on their academic and social development.

Six of the teachers and three members of the support staff responded to the online questionnaires. Most of the responses commented very positively on the very good working relationships across the school, the dedicated teamwork of the staff and the focus on developing the school in the best interests of all the children.

The governors praised the dedication of the staff, the quality of the pastoral care, the very good quality of the Principal's leadership and the high standing of the school within the community.

The children in year 6 spoke confidently and positively of their experiences at school, in particular, their access to a wide range of extra curricular activities. They indicated that the playground 'buddy system' ensured they made a valuable input to the life and work of the school. Their views and opinions on a range of topics are sought and valued through the operation of a Pupil Council. The children were aware of how they should behave, and they knew where to seek help if they had a concern.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) reported to the Principal and representatives of the governors the main messages emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is very good. An inclusive, caring and supportive ethos is evident throughout the school. All the staff are committed to the welfare of the children; they implement an effective whole-school approach to promoting and rewarding positive behaviour that encourages the children to work hard, and develops their self-esteem and confidence. The children respond well to the staff's expectations for good behaviour; they are friendly and courteous, and their behaviour is very good. The children's learning and social development are enhanced through regular visits to places of educational interest and visitors to the school.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school has very good and 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 very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, the provision of healthy school breaks and the successful promotion of a breakfast club. There is an appropriate emphasis on participation in sport for the children throughout the day, with additional sports coaching, and a good availability of playground activities at break and lunchtimes.

1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The school encourages and enjoys the strong support of the parents. The communication between school and home is effective and helps the parents to understand more about the working of the school. The staff organise a range of curriculum meetings to provide the parents with information on how to support effectively their children's learning. The outstanding work of the Parents' Centre is a noteworthy feature; for example, the centre provides a wide range of courses for parents including the "Incredible Years" Programme and accredited qualifications in Essential Skills.

The Extended Schools initiative provides a breakfast club, a homework club, and a counselling service, as well as a useful range of sporting and art activities. The children benefit greatly from their participation in a science, technology, engineering and mathematics project, which includes curricular links with the Bombardier Company.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

The children enjoy their work, and are motivated and enthusiastic learners. They responded well in class, particularly, when encouraged to play an integral role in their own learning by listening to the opinions of others, and by taking on different roles and responsibilities in effective paired and group work. In the best practice, the children have a wide range of opportunities to reflect on their learning through, for example, plenary sessions and through peer or self-assessment.

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 in English is good and in mathematics is very good, when compared with schools in a similar free schools meals category. The school's internal quantitative information indicates that, when comparing the children's standardised scores in English and mathematics with the Non-reading Intelligence Test, most of the children are performing at a level commensurate with their abilities.

The children with special educational needs (SEN) benefit greatly from the carefully structured teaching that encourages them to share, listen, learn and co-operate. They demonstrate continuous improvement in their learning and participate actively in all aspects of school life. The SEN programmes for individual children contain appropriate and challenging targets, and the children are confident, motivated and eager to be involved. Those children requiring additional learning support in literacy, particularly reading, benefit greatly from the well-targeted, suitably fast paced, challenging, and effective withdrawal teaching which increases their confidence, desire and ability to read. The supportive atmosphere created for the children, within a very well-structured programme, ensures their maximum progress within the allocated time.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

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

The literacy co-ordinator provides effective guidance and has a clear vision for the development of English in the school. A recent curriculum audit provided a useful evaluation of the work in English, in particular, the teaching of spellings and phonics.

In English, the most effective learning involved the children in a wide range of activities that integrated well the talking and listening, reading and writing. In the foundation stage (FS), the teachers recognise appropriately that many children need to build their social confidence and to develop more effective communication skills. Consequently, the children experience meaningful opportunities to share their ideas and experiences with their teachers and peers through well-planned activities, such as, themed play-based learning, shared reading, songs, and dramatised stories. In KS1 and KS2, there are examples of skilful questioning which encourage the children to generate their own ideas and to make their own judgements. The children enhance further their oral skills through the valuable participation in school assemblies and performances in school plays.

In the FS and KS1, the children are provided with a language rich environment that promotes effectively their interest in books and the written word. The children acquire the core reading skills through their development of phonological awareness, and their experiences of modelled and shared reading; they use these skills to assist them in reading unfamiliar text. By the end of KS1, most of the children read with a good level of fluency, understanding and enjoyment. In KS2, the children experience a variety of approaches, including shared, guided and independent reading. By the end of KS2, the majority of the children read with fluency, expression and evident pleasure. In addition, the children's reading skills are promoted through a range of reading partnership schemes, including the use of children who serve as 'reading buddies' from the neighbouring post primary school. The children access a good range of poetry, fiction and non-fiction books to support their independent reading from the class libraries and the well-stocked central school library.

In the FS, the children become familiar with different forms of print and experiment with early writing skills. The children's letter formation, word building skills and knowledge of the basic conventions, such as simple sentence structure, are developed effectively through shared writing activities. In KS1 and KS2, the children's independent writing is promoted; however,

the children need more opportunities to express their ideas with a length and quality of content appropriate to their ability. By the end of KS2, the children experience a good range of writing styles, and have had appropriate opportunities to write for a variety of purposes and audiences.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

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

In the FS, the children experience a range of well-planned opportunities to consolidate and extend their mathematical language and understanding. They develop their ability to sort, match, count, recognise and create patterns, and use appropriate early language associated with measures and money through their very good use of practical equipment and everyday materials. This effective early mathematical development is built upon successfully in KS1 and KS2. A strength of the provision in KS1 and KS2 is the well-planned progression in the children's mental mathematics strategies. This progression complements effectively the development of the children's written computational skills. By the end of each KS, the children have a very good understanding of place value, can recall basic number facts and display a good knowledge and understanding of the key aspects of measures and shape and space.

Handling data is the school's mathematics priority for improvement; this was identified appropriately through a rigorous analysis of the mathematics standardised test scores. The mathematics co-ordinator led the necessary staff development. There is evidence that the children have very good opportunities to collate, record and graph statistical data in order to address meaningful queries arising from realistic situations. Information and communication technology is used effectively to support the children's work in mathematics.

The whole-school lines of development in number, shape and space, measures and handling data guide the teachers' planning in mathematics. The mathematics co-ordinator monitors regularly the medium-term planning. The school has identified appropriately the further development of mathematical processes to extend the children's independent mathematical thinking skills.

Overall, the mathematical standards achieved by the children are very good.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The teachers' medium term planning, including their use of topic webs, is very thorough and guides well their day-to-day work. Information and communication technology is integrated appropriately into the medium-term planning. Most of the teachers' evaluations of the children's learning are of a very good quality and inform the future learning. The children contribute successfully to the development of their class topics through the appropriate use of the "planning board" approach.

3.2 TEACHING

During the inspection, the quality of teaching in almost all of the lessons observed ranged from good to outstanding; two-thirds of the lessons evaluated were very good or outstanding. The most effective teaching was characterised by skilful questioning from the teacher which promoted well the children's thinking skills, allowed extended responses, and ensured

appropriate pace and challenge. In the best practice, the development of purposeful paired and group work, through practical and well-planned follow-on activities, catered well for the wide range of the children's abilities. The children benefited greatly from these activities and, in particular, developed very well their thinking skills and personal capabilities. This very good practice needs to be disseminated, particularly in KS2.

In the FS, the children's learning experiences provided very good opportunities to develop their problem-solving capabilities, greater independence and connected learning through the play-based learning sessions.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

There is a very good culture of self-evaluation within the school and the Principal and acting Vice-principal have played a key role in facilitating this development. In particular, there is now a more extensive and effective use of performance data, including a good range of data available on the children's performance in various standardised tests and DE benchmarking information. Lesson observation and examination of samples of the children's written work are used increasingly, and to good effect by the teachers, as part of the school's self-evaluation arrangements, to ascertain whether any adjustments are needed to the learning and the teaching. The teachers use a C2k computer program to track the children's progress; they are using appropriately the information to identify and target underachievement.

The teachers mark regularly the children's work. In the best practice, they annotate the work with positive comments on how the children can correct errors and develop their skills in English and mathematics. The children are encouraged to self-evaluate against their individual targets and as a result are developing their own self-evaluative skills; this practice needs to be developed further.

3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The quality of the provision for SEN is outstanding.

The Principal of the school gives a high and appropriate priority to promoting inclusion. The teachers display a strong commitment to meeting the needs of all children, including the most challenging and vulnerable. The school's policy is directed appropriately at addressing the children's needs and reducing any barriers to progress. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and literacy withdrawal teacher provide an effective assessment of need and a rigorous screening of progress and, as a result, the children receive an outstanding quality of intervention and support. The teachers and classroom assistants have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and staff co-operate well across the school to meet the needs identified in the well-targeted individual education plans.

Of particular note, is the outstanding leadership provided by the nurture class teacher, ably supported by her classroom assistant in establishing and developing the nurture class provision, with the active support and encouragement from the Principal and governors. The children benefit greatly from the carefully planned programme that promotes well their self-esteem, social skills and confidence within a context of well-planned curricular activities that meet their individual needs.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The Principal provides very good leadership. She has a clear and well-conceived vision for the future direction of the school, including an appropriately strong focus on improving further the already good to very good standards achieved in English and mathematics. The Principal has played a key role in ensuring that the pastoral care and the special needs provision integrate well with the ongoing work in English, mathematics and other areas of learning; this very good integration is a noteworthy feature of this school. She is supported effectively by the acting Vice-principal and the senior leadership team. The Principal includes well the teachers, ancillary staff and the classroom assistants in key decisions affecting the work of the school. She is strongly supportive of the welfare of all of the staff. The evidence from the inspection indicates they respond well to this approach. For example, the outstanding work of many of the classroom assistants was observed in supporting the children's academic and pastoral needs, and they spoke of the Principal's evident valuing of their work as a key motivating factor. Under her leadership, there is an ongoing and useful redefinition of some roles and responsibilities. The school has identified appropriately the need to continue this redefinition and clarification, including the need to develop and strengthen the roles of the various post holders in monitoring and evaluating the work within their curricular areas.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The school development plan (SDP) sets out appropriate priorities for the medium and longer term. In formulating the new SDP, the Principal consulted extensively and effectively with the parents and the local community. The accompanying action plans underpin well and supply the necessary detail needed to complement the whole-school priorities. The action plans for English and mathematics need to be adjusted in light of the inspection findings. The school meets fully, the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005.

4.3 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The governors contribute effectively to the overall strategic planning and policy development for the school. They are well-informed about the work of the school. In meeting the governors during the inspection, it was evident they supported whole-heartedly the Principal and the staff in the implementation of the SDP.

4.4 ACCOMMODATION

Very good use is made of all the available space in the school; the staff work diligently to create inviting learning environments in the classrooms and in the corridors, providing forums to celebrate the children's learning. The school is maintained well. Health and safety matters are detailed in Appendix 1.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the very good quality of the pastoral provision;
- the outstanding provision for children with additional learning needs;

- the quality of the teaching in the lessons observed, almost all of which ranged from good to outstanding;
- the very good standards achieved in mathematics and the good standards in English;
- the Principal's effective and supportive leadership, and her shared vision for the development of the school, supported effectively by the acting Vice-principal and the senior leadership team; and
- the school's high standing in the community, including the strong support from the governors and the parents.

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

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- To make secure the main reception area of the school.
- The lavatories are in need of refurbishment.

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