

PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Towerview Primary School
and Nursery Unit, Bangor

Report of an Inspection
in March 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

BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Towerview Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 26/03/12**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 401-6111** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Year 1 Intake	55	42	41	48	52
Enrolments					
Primary	333	340	328	317	321
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Unit	52	51	51	52	52
Special Unit	0	22	20	15	11
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): 96.3% **NI Avg Att: 94.7%**
- Average Attendance for those children on the Special Educational Needs Register: 95.5%
- | | Primary & Reception | Nursery Unit | Special Unit | Irish Medium Unit |
|--|---------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
|--|---------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
- D. i. Number of Teachers (including the principal and part-time teachers): 15 0 1 0
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 25.5 NI PTR: 20.2
- iii. Average Class Size: 25.5
- iv. Class Size (Range): 11 to 29
- v. Ancillary Support:
 Number of Hours **Per Week**:
- | | |
|---|-----|
| i. Clerical support: | 57 |
| ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support: | 95 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 240 |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 5.72%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 18.4%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 12.95%
- 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 | 78.38 | Mathematics | 81.08% | Irish | N/A |
|----------------|-------|--------------------|--------|--------------|-----|

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Towerview Primary School is a co-educational controlled primary school located in Towerview Crescent on the east-side of the town of Bangor. The enrolment of the school has remained steady over the last five years and currently stands at 321 children in the primary school; 52 children attending on a part-time basis in the Nursery Unit (NU) and a further eleven children attending the Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD) Unit. The majority of the children come from the Bangor area. At the time of the inspection approximately 13% of the children within the school were entitled to free school meals (FSM). The school has identified approximately 6% 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 communications 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 of the Board of Governors (governors) and a group of the children from year 6.

One hundred and six questionnaires were issued to the parents in the primary school; 61% of the parental questionnaires were returned to the Inspection Services Branch (ISB) and 42 contained additional written comments. Fifty-two questionnaires were issued to the parents in the Nursery Unit; 75% were returned to ISB and 21 contained additional written comments. In addition, eleven questionnaires were issued to the parents in the MLD Unit; 46% were returned to ISB and a small number contained additional written comments.

Almost all of the questionnaires expressed very high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the life and work of the school. In their written comments the parents highlighted: the strong commitment of the Principal, together with the teaching, support and ancillary staff in providing high quality care and guidance for the children; the very effective communication between home and school; and, the high regard that the local community has for the school.

Eighteen of the teachers and eleven of the support staff responded to the online questionnaire. Nearly all of the responses indicated very high levels of support for the work of the school. Almost all of the staff reported that they feel valued, enjoy working in the school and work collaboratively as a team in developing the school in the best interests of all the children.

The governors reported that they were very well informed about the work of the school through effective communication with all staff; in particular they praised the teachers with roles of responsibility who presented to them their work and their vision for further improvements in their respective areas for learning. The governors expressed strong support for, and confidence in, the Principal and the staff in promoting school improvement, the commitment of the staff to the pastoral care of the children, and the efforts made to strengthen the school's links with the local community.

In discussions held with a group of children in year 6, they talked very openly and positively about their experiences in school. They value the help and support of their teachers and the very good opportunities they have to participate in extra-curricular activities. They indicated strongly that they feel happy and secure in school and they know what to do if they have any worries about their safety and well-being.

An analysis of all of the questionnaire responses and a summary of the written comments made by the parents and the staff were shared with the Principal and the governors.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school and nursery unit is outstanding. There is an inclusive, welcoming ethos in which each child is valued and supported by all of the adults. There are very good working relationships at all levels and good pastoral links between the school and the nursery unit. The children are pleasant, courteous, welcoming to visitors and their behaviour is exemplary. Their work and achievements are celebrated across the school, in the classrooms, the corridors and in assemblies. The Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) Programme is well conceived and enhances the development of the children's confidence, self esteem, personal and social skills. The PDMU programme is further enhanced through the use of the 'Towerview's Approach to Problem Solving' (TAPS) programme which encourages the children to develop positive personal skills and attitudes with the aim for the children to become better citizens. The children develop their personal interests through an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, sports competitions and educational visits.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school and nursery unit have satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the child protection guidance issued by the Department of Education (DE). The school needs to review the child protection and associated policies and procedures to reflect the good practice within the school and to ensure that the policy reflects more fully the guidance issued from DE.

1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, the emphasis on healthy breaks, and the very good programme of physical education available to all of the children which encourages them to adopt healthy lifestyles.

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 the nursery unit. The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) provides valuable support to the school as well as raising funds to further enhance the provision and quality of experiences for the children. The parents are kept well informed about the work of the school through, for example, regular newsletters, text messages, and the school's web site, as well as through

their attendance at Open Days, parental consultation and curriculum information meetings. Excellent links have been established with the nursery unit to help to ensure that the children make a smooth transition at the Foundation stage. Valuable links have also been established with other local Primary schools through cluster group meetings and the events held to disseminate good practice. The school contributes to nominated charities and a strong emphasis is placed on the importance of caring for others in the wider community.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

The majority of the children respond very well to the very high expectations set by their teachers and are highly motivated to learn. Most of the children settle quickly to their work, demonstrate good self-management skills and engage purposefully in their learning. They work together collaboratively in pairs and small groups, expressing their own ideas confidently and showing respect for the opinions of others.

An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 data over the past four years shows that the school's performance in literacy, when compared with the Northern Ireland (NI) average, has fluctuated. In mathematics, when compared with the NI average, the school's performance has improved from being below the average to being in line with or above the average in the last three years. When compared with the same free school meals category, the levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy are consistently below the average. In both literacy and numeracy, and in both KS1 and KS2, the performance of the more able children is consistently above both the NI average and the average for schools in the same free school meals category. The school's internal data would indicate that most of the children are making good progress.

Through the use of testing and the teachers' observations, the school identifies well the children who would benefit from additional support in literacy, in numeracy or with aspects of their behaviour. With the support of the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO), the class teachers identify targets and appropriate intervention strategies in individual education plans (IEPs) which are shared with the parents. The school's data and the outcomes from the children's IEPs demonstrate that the children with special educational needs (SEN) are making good progress in their learning and are achieving in line with their ability. As reported by the school, all of the children who attend the literacy and / or numeracy withdrawal sessions are developing positive attitudes to their learning and demonstrating increased confidence in their work.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

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

The literacy co-ordinator provides outstanding leadership; she has identified significant areas for the development of literacy which are integral to the school development plan, implementing, in particular, a balanced reading programme which contributes effectively to the whole-school focus on raising standards further. She works well with the literacy team and accesses appropriate support, when necessary, to provide whole staff training through a well conceived staff development programme. She has established a range of effective procedures for monitoring and evaluating the quality of the provision for literacy, including extensive internal moderation based on the collation of writing portfolios from each class; she gives the teachers helpful feedback on the quality of their planning and the standards of the children's work. The quality of the written planning for literacy across the year groups is excellent.

The teachers give high priority to the development of the children's oral skills across the curriculum. As a result, the children attain very good standards in talking and listening. In the foundation stage (FS) the children respond enthusiastically to their teachers' effective questioning; they are encouraged to think and give extended responses. In KS1 and KS2 the children enjoy, and engage purposefully in, paired and group discussions through which they are given the opportunities to take on, and develop, a range of roles. Overall, the children co-operate effectively and work very well with one another; they listen respectfully and are able to express their own views and opinions with increasing confidence. The teachers exploit effectively opportunities to develop the children's oral skills across the curriculum.

The school's assessment data demonstrates that the majority of the children are making good progress in their reading. In the FS there is a well-structured and systematic approach to the teaching of reading. The teachers use a range of appropriate strategies to develop the children's phonological awareness and their word attack skills. Across the year groups, the children benefit from a balanced programme for reading which includes shared, modelled, guided and independent reading; the school provides attractive, age-appropriate resources to support the children's progress and to foster their love of reading. The children are able to read with fluency and expression; they display a high level of understanding. Those children who have additional needs in literacy receive very good support from the classroom assistants who have been trained as 'reading partners'; almost all of the children involved in the programme this year have made significant progress.

The children attain very good standards in writing. A notable feature of the school's writing culture is the range of opportunities for the children to write independently; their achievements, in writing, are displayed and celebrated throughout the school. In the FS the children are encouraged to 'have a go' at spelling unfamiliar words; the teachers provide them with good support to develop as independent writers and the standard of their writing is appropriate to their age and stage of development. In KS1 and KS2 the children write with increasing confidence for a range of audiences and purposes, including diaries, newspaper articles, poems, recounts and others. The teachers' comments are consistently supportive and, in the best practice, their comments give the children very clear guidance on how their work can be improved. The children use ICT effectively across the year groups for research and to draft and edit their work.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

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

The curricular leadership of mathematics by the numeracy co-ordinator and the mathematics curriculum team is outstanding. They monitor and evaluate well the quality of the mathematics provision through, for example, the rigorous analysis of a range of performance data and the sampling of the children's work. By effective monitoring of the quality of both the teachers' planning and their evaluations of the children's learning, the teachers are provided with useful guidance to help ensure the taught programme provides appropriate coherence and progression. Recent in-service training has helped raise the profile of mental mathematics and the development of a shared approach to written calculations throughout the school.

Across all key stages the children's work is displayed and celebrated, and standards of numeracy presentation are excellent. The children's enjoyment of mathematics is promoted well throughout the school. The teachers have realistically high expectations for the children; they provide very good opportunities for the children to develop their mathematical language and to articulate, clarify and extend their mathematical thinking. There is effective use of ICT to support the learning and teaching through, for example, the good use of interactive games and programmable devices.

In the FS, the children develop well mathematical concepts, skills, language and reasoning through a combination of suitable oral and practical work which is matched well to the children's interests. The children have excellent opportunities to talk about their learning, and to extend further their knowledge, understanding and reasoning through the use of open-ended tasks and the effective questioning by the teachers and the classroom assistants.

In KS1, mental mathematics strategies are promoted well and the children are encouraged to talk about their work using appropriate mathematical language. In the best practice, which was in almost all of the lessons observed, the children were fully engaged in their learning and the work was matched well to their individual needs and abilities. In KS2, the children develop and consolidate their mathematical learning through imaginative, well-planned lessons where the children work effectively individually, or in groups, to meet very clear, challenging learning outcomes.

During discussions with the most able children in year 4 and year 7, the children spoke positively about their learning of mathematics, used competently a range of mental mathematics strategies and had an excellent knowledge of shape and space, measures and number.

Overall, across KS1 and KS2, most of the children are making good progress.

2.4 MODERATE LEARNING DIFFICULTY (MLD) UNIT

Eleven children, from year 4 to year 7, and who have statements of educational need, attend the MLD unit.

A caring and welcoming ethos permeates the MLD class, and relationships between the adults and the children are very good. The staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the children and their needs, and the two classroom assistants support effectively the work of the teacher. Whilst the children have a wide range of ability, the needs of all of the children are met well through the provision of a broad curriculum, which is appropriately matched to the individual needs of each child. The teaching in the unit is of a consistently very good standard. There is a clear focus on encouraging the children to participate in the learning and to develop their thinking skills; the teacher provides very good opportunities for the children to improve and develop their communication skills and their independence through working collaboratively in small groups. The children respond well to the teacher; they enjoy the work, are keen to talk about what they are doing, and are well motivated by the good use of the interactive whiteboard and the practical activities.

The teacher has identified the need to ensure that the targets set for the children are more consistently realistic and achievable. She reviews the children's targets regularly, and most of the children are making good progress in line with their abilities. The quality of the teacher's planning, assessment and recording is thorough, informs future teaching and records the progress made by the children.

In all of the lessons observed, praise and rewards are important features which promote positive behaviour and assist the children to concentrate and achieve. Key strengths of the provision are the very effective integration opportunities for the children from the MLD unit to play and to learn alongside their peers in the mainstream classes on a daily basis.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The teachers prepare well for lessons; their short- and medium-term planning, to support the learning and teaching, is very good. They have developed themes and topics which support very effectively connected learning across the curriculum. The teachers complete useful written evaluations of their planned work and the children's learning to inform future practice. The teachers work closely with the Special Educational Needs (SEN) support teacher to ensure that the planning for the children, who require support with aspects of their learning, leads to early and effective intervention and ensures consistency and coherence in the children's learning.

3.2 TEACHING

During the inspection, the quality of the teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding; almost all of the teaching was good or better, with one-fifth of the teaching being evaluated as outstanding. The teachers are conscientious and hard-working; they know the children very well, have high expectations of them and understand their learning needs.

In the most effective practice, the lessons had a clear focus and purpose; a suitable range of teaching approaches were used, including the application of ICT, and opportunities were provided for the children to discuss their learning. Cross-curricular topics enriched the experiences of the children and contextualized their learning, and the teachers used skilful questioning to extend the children's thinking and understanding. On the few occasions when the teaching was less effective, there was insufficient pace and challenge in the learning tasks.

Information and communication technology is integrated well into the classroom practice. All of the classrooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards; these are used skilfully by the teachers to support and enhance all opportunities for the children's learning. There is very good use of ICT resources, including a very well-equipped ICT suite and the laptop computers used within the classrooms to provide extension activities and challenge for the children.

The classroom assistants make a significant contribution to the teaching and learning in all classes and contribute to the high standards in the school.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

The teachers mark the children's written work regularly and provide supportive feedback to the children. In the most effective practice, observed during the inspection, the teachers negotiated success criteria skilfully with the children and used the plenary sessions to consolidate effectively the learning. On occasions, the written comments provided by the teachers do not provide sufficient evaluative detail on what the children need to do in order to improve their work further. The teachers need to improve the quality of the written feedback with a focus on learning and to further embed assessment for learning strategies across the school.

The children's achievements and standards are reported to the parents regularly through the annual written report, formal parent-teacher meetings and informal contact between the teachers and the parents as the need arises. The annual written report provides the parents with a comprehensive, broad and holistic evaluation of their children's progress and attainment.

3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The SENCO is highly committed to maintaining high quality provision for SEN throughout the school. She works closely with a range of external support agencies and has identified key areas for development in SEN.

Support for the children with SEN is provided through a combination of withdrawal sessions and in-class support. The withdrawal sessions in literacy and numeracy are of a high quality, and the children who attend these sessions are benefiting from effective small group teaching based on a sound knowledge of their needs. The SEN teachers, one of whom is the SENCO, work in close collaboration with the class teachers to plan for and to evaluate the quality of the support provided. The classroom assistants support the teachers well in helping to address the needs of those children identified as having SEN.

The school has identified a small group of gifted and talented children, and provides very effective weekly withdrawal sessions in numeracy to further challenge and extend the thinking skills of this group of children.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The overall quality of the leadership and management is very good

The Principal has been in post for three years; he provides outstanding leadership and is highly committed to developing all aspects of the school's work. He promotes a collaborative leadership style and a strong team spirit at all levels. He gives a high priority to the care and well-being of all of the children and to raising further the standards they attain. He has successfully developed links and partnerships with a range of stakeholders to enhance the learning opportunities for all the children. The Principal is very ably supported by the Vice-principal in developing the work of the school.

The co-ordinators are hard-working; they are very effective in developing their areas of learning. They have a clear understanding of their roles and work collaboratively to develop clear links across the curriculum.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The school improvement process is very good and clearly linked to the school development plan (SDP) with relevant associated action plans. There are effective processes for consultation about the SDP within the school community. Appropriate policies and action plans are in place for the key curricular areas that are focused on raising further the children's standards and achievements. The plan complies fully with the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010.

4.3 ACCOMMODATION

The new school is very attractive and good use is made of all available space; the children's work is used to create stimulating environments in the classrooms and shared areas which support and celebrate the children's learning. Good use is made of the available outdoor space to enhance learning opportunities and the school is maintained to a very high standard.

4.4 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The governors are very supportive to the Principal and the work of the school; they have a good understanding of the challenges faced and opportunities provided by the school.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include the:

- exemplary behaviour of the welcoming, courteous children who demonstrate high levels of engagement in their learning;
- outstanding pastoral care provided for the children;
- very good provision for numeracy, literacy and special educational needs;
- quality of the teaching observed which was almost always good or better, and was outstanding in one-fifth of the lessons observed;
- very good quality of the school's self-evaluation and action to promote Improvement; and
- Outstanding leadership and management of the Principal; supported ably by the Vice-Principal and the co-ordinators who contribute significantly to the overall effectiveness of the teaching and learning within the school.

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.

6. THE NURSERY UNIT

6.1 KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

- There is a happy, caring ethos in the nursery unit based on very good working relationships at all levels. The children display a positive attitude to their learning and almost all are able to work independently and collaboratively for sustained periods of time. They are friendly and courteous to visitors and demonstrate very good behaviour.
- The quality of the interaction between the staff and the children is consistently of a high standard. The staff participate willingly in the play activities to engage the children in purposeful discussion about their work. They use skilful questioning to develop the children's thinking skills and language.
- 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 their language are particular strengths of the programme. The staff need to ensure the children's art work is not overly directed at times by the adults.
- The staff provide excellent support for the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning.
- At the time of the inspection the nursery teacher had been in post for seven months. She is very conscientious and has a clear vision for developing the work within the nursery unit. She is very well supported by the nursery assistant and other staff and all contribute to the overall effectiveness of the programme.

6.2 The inspection has identified the following areas for improvement:

- develop further the methods of record-keeping and assessment to ensure there is sufficient evidence to provide an accurate account of the children's progress and development across all areas of the pre-school curriculum; and
- develop aspects of the written planning to identify clearly the learning to be promoted in the planned activities.

6.3 In the areas inspected, the quality of the 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 Inspectorate will monitor the nursery unit's progress on the areas for improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON TOWERVIEW PRIMARY SCHOOL NURSERY UNIT, BANGOR

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending full-time	0	0
Attending part-time	26	26
Under 3 years of age*	0	0
With statement of SEN**	0	1
At CoP stages 3 or 4***	0	0
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.	1%
Average attendance for the previous year.	96.4%

2. Duration of Sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
-	2½ hours	2½ hours

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-Time	Part-Time
Teachers	1	0
Nursery Assistants	1	0
Qualified Nursery Assistants	0	1

Number of: ****	
Students	2
Trainees	0

**** Total placements since September of current year

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

Number issued	52
Percentage returned	%
Number of written comments	

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- The main entrance door into the nursery unit needs to be secured.

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