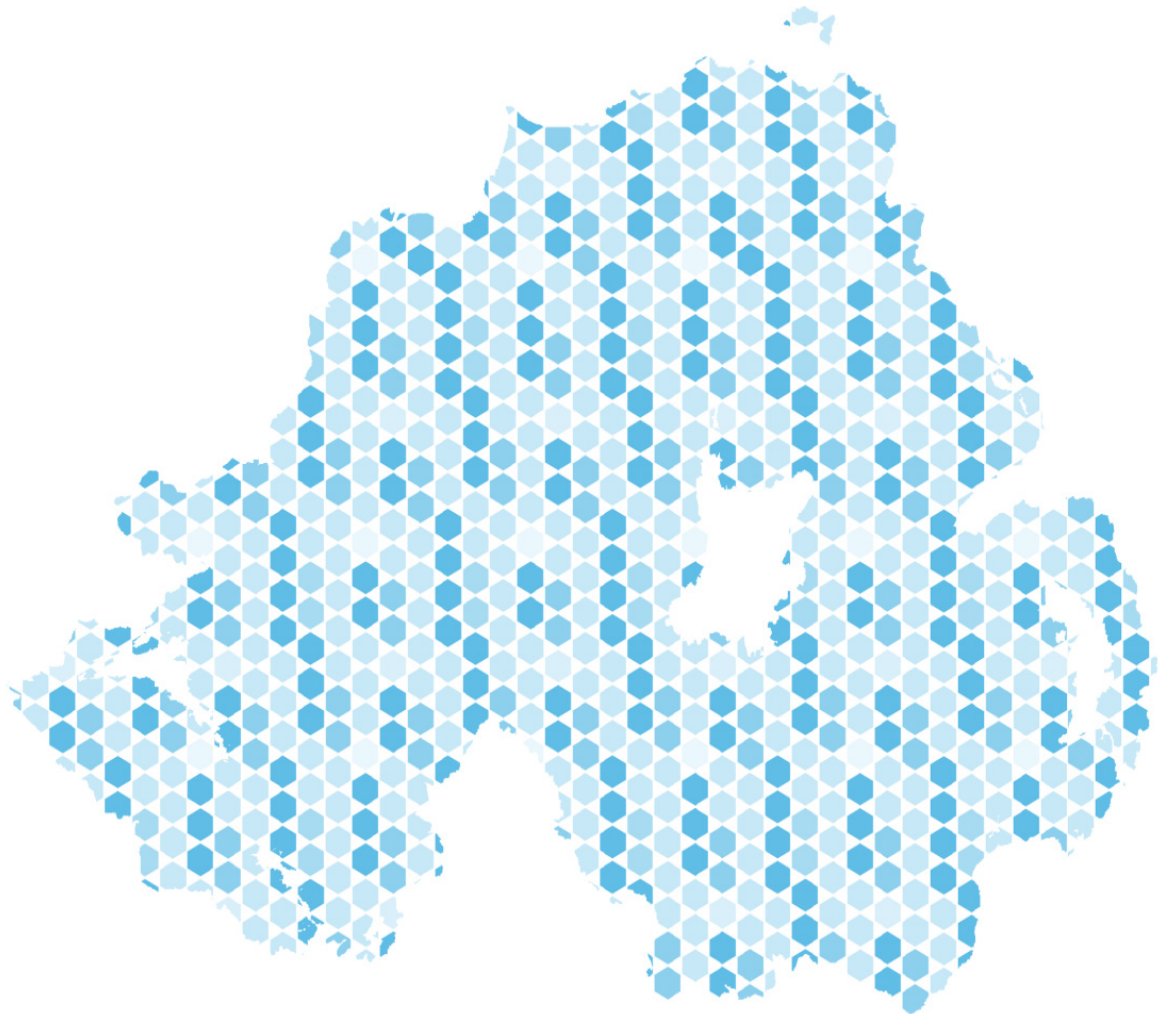


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Wheatfield Primary School,
Belfast

Report of an Inspection
in October 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

Wheatfield Primary School is located at the junction of the Ardoyne Road and the Alliance Road in North Belfast. The children come from the immediate surrounding area. The enrolment of the school has been stable in recent years; the current figure is 149; 26 pre-school aged children attend the nursery unit. Sixty-three per cent of the children are entitled to receive free school meals. Almost 36% of the children have been identified 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 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 the children from year 6. In the primary school, 125 questionnaires were issued to parents; almost 30% were returned to Inspection Services Branch, and ten contained written comments. In the nursery unit, 26 questionnaires were issued to parents and ten were returned; there were no additional written comments. Almost all the responses from the parents were very supportive of the school and praised the caring environment provided for their children by the staff.

Eight teachers and nine support staff completed the confidential online questionnaires; two responses included additional written comments. The responses were mostly positive of all aspects of the work of the school.

The governors expressed their strong support for the work of the school. In particular, they talked about the very challenging circumstances in which the school has been involved in recent times and commended the Principal for his leadership of the school, which is now emerging from that period of community unrest.

The year 6 children indicated that they feel safe in school and they know whom to turn to if they have any concerns regarding their safety and well-being. The children talked about the positive relationships they have with their teachers, and their enjoyment of the good range of extra-curricular activities provided for them.

The Education and Training Inspectorate has reported to the Principal and the governors the very few issues emerging from the questionnaires.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in both the school and the nursery unit is very good.

All the staff show a genuine concern for the care and welfare of each child. The Principal, teachers and support staff have worked hard to create a welcoming, supportive and reassuring environment which helps develop the children's confidence and self-esteem. Sound processes are in place to promote good behaviour, and during the inspection, the behaviour of almost all the children was observed to be good. For the last six years, the school has used the services of a counsellor who attends the school on a regular basis and is reported to provide a high quality of service for both the children and, on occasions, the parents. This service, together with a very accessible means within school whereby the children are able to convey any concerns they have, help provide valuable support for the children in times of need. The school accommodation and site are maintained and cleaned to a high standard ensuring a quality physical environment for the children.

The school shows a strong commitment to inclusion, and provides additional support for those children with special educational needs through the deployment of a full-time special educational needs (SEN) teacher and classroom assistant.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school and the nursery unit have very good comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding the 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 good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example through the provision of the Save our Smiles Healthy Breaks Scheme, the planting of fruit trees and vegetable beds in the school grounds and the regular opportunities for physical activity both outdoors and in the school hall. The area for improvement identified is the need to disseminate more fully the school's approaches to healthy eating through its Whole School Food Policy.

1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The school gives a high priority to the maintaining and developing of good links with the parents and the local community. The staff in the school and in the nursery unit have developed effective links with the parents, who are encouraged to become involved in school events and in supporting their children's learning. Parents are kept well-informed about their children's progress and about the life of the school, through, for example, the weekly lending library in the nursery unit, and invitations to attend a range of meetings and events in the primary school. The parents of those children who require support with their learning are fully involved in, and well-informed about, the SEN programme for their child. The successful Parents' Association is very supportive of the work of the school.

The school has established important links with a wide range of external agencies, including SureStart, which is based in the school, and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) which provides counselling services. The school is a member of the Upper Ardoyne Community Partnership, and is the focal point for the community

through delivery of education courses for adult learners, and through its parent support programme. Other excellent links include those with other schools, locally through the Sparking the Imagination programme, as well as internationally through the Dissolving Boundaries programme.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 assessment data over the past four years shows that in English and mathematics, the school's performance is consistently below the Northern Ireland average. Compared with schools in the same free school meals category, the levels of attainment in English are also below the average. In mathematics, when compared with schools in the same free school meals category, the levels of attainment have been above the average in three out of the past four years.

The majority of the children are motivated, engaged and display good attitudes to their learning. When the activities are appropriately challenging, the children co-operate with one another and work collaboratively in pairs and small groups.

Individual and group education plans (EPs) featuring appropriate targets have been drawn up for those children with special educational needs requiring support in literacy, and evidence shows the children are meeting these targets. It is important that appropriate targets are also included in the EPs for those children who are experiencing significant difficulties in mathematics.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The quality of provision for literacy is satisfactory. The recently appointed literacy co-ordinator has made a good start in the analysis and use of data to identify under-achievement and inform planning for the provision of additional learning support. The literacy action plan specifies significant areas for development which are integral to the school's development plan. The school is involved in the Raising Achievement in Literacy programme and has accessed appropriate support from external agencies to identify the children's needs and help parents support their children's reading. The quality of the teachers' half-termly planning is good, and the literacy co-ordinator has appropriately identified the need to review the longer term planning.

The children develop good talking and listening skills, thinking skills and personal capabilities through effective paired work and group discussion. In a significant minority of classes, talking and listening were also promoted through effective questioning by the teachers. In the less effective practice, the children were not given the opportunities to develop their oral responses fully.

The school has recently implemented a whole-school phonological programme and there is evidence that the children in the foundation stage (FS) and KS1 are more confident in their reading as a result. The progress of the children throughout the school is supported through the provision of a range of approaches, including shared, modelled, guided and independent reading. The enjoyment of reading is encouraged in all year groups through timetabled silent reading and regular visits to the attractive, well-stocked library.

The standards achieved by a significant minority of children in writing are satisfactory. The children in the FS classes engage in early writing activities, although these opportunities need to be more consistently matched to the children's needs and interests. In KS1 and KS2, the children's writing is limited; the teachers need to plan to provide more opportunities for a wider range of extended writing. The teachers have appropriately begun to analyse the children's work through Writing Record books in order to identify trends and address the needs of groups and individual children.

Where the use of ICT is identified in the teachers' planning, it is employed effectively to support the children's progress in English and literacy. It is timely to review the provision for ICT in literacy across the school.

Most of the literacy support provided by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) for the children who have special educational needs is through withdrawal sessions; the quality of these sessions is very good, the children enjoy the purposeful and engaging activities and the work is linked to their class work in. Additional effective support in literacy is provided for a small number of children through, for example, the outreach services of Harberton School and of the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB).

The withdrawal support in literacy is of a high quality and is linked to the children's work in class.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The quality of provision for mathematics and numeracy is satisfactory. The current mathematics policy and whole-school scheme of work provide good guidance for the teachers to prepare their planning. Most of the provision is appropriately practical and the majority of the children acquire their skills and understanding progressively and systematically as they move through the school.

The mathematics lessons are often introduced with a mental mathematics session in which the children are able to respond orally and, in the best practice seen, are able to explain the processes they used to arrive at an answer. In a majority of the mathematics lessons observed, an emphasis was placed on developing the children's mathematical language and the teachers use questioning and exposition effectively to help develop the children's thinking and understanding.

The teachers have begun recently to monitor and evaluate more rigorously the children's attainment in mathematics and to set this against measured ability. This analysis of the data has indicated to the teachers that a minority of the children are under-achieving and should be doing better. To this end, they are ensuring that these children receive additional attention and support within class. It is essential that the provision for these children is differentiated and is focused appropriately on the identified need of each to help ensure that they make the progress and attain the standards of which they are capable. By the end of KS2, a majority of the children attain standards which are satisfactory, for a small number they are good to very good; these children, for example, display a sound knowledge of place value, understand the relationship between fractions, decimals and percentages, and can relate their mathematics learning to real life contexts.

The mathematics co-ordinator has, with good support from the BELB, developed a sound strategy for the future development of the mathematics provision. The outworking of this strategy needs to be monitored closely for the intended improvements in the children's attainments in mathematics which it is planned to provide.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

All of the teachers undertake their planning conscientiously. In the best practice seen, in the majority of classes, they focus their planning appropriately on the intended learning outcomes for the children; activities are differentiated well and the quality of the children's learning is evaluated effectively and used to inform subsequent teaching. Where it needs to improve further, the planning needs to take greater cognisance of the children's current level of attainment and understanding and ensure that the work provided is more appropriately matched to their needs.

3.2 TEACHING

The quality of the teaching observed ranged from outstanding to inadequate. The quality of the teaching in approximately half of the lessons observed was good or better. In the remaining lessons, there was a need for significant improvement, with a minority of the lessons evaluated as inadequate. In the best practice, the teachers had realistically high expectations for all the children; they shared the intended learning with the children at the start of the lesson and assessed how well the lesson objectives had been achieved through effective discussion and questioning at the end of the session. Where the practice was less effective, the level of challenge for the children was inappropriate, the activities were not well matched to the children's ability levels and consequently the children did not make the progress or reach the standards of which they are capable. There is a need to ensure that the good teaching observed is disseminated and applied more consistently across the school.

The quality of the provision for SEN is good. The SENCO has a clear vision for the development of SEN provision, which is firmly focused on the needs of the children. An appropriate action plan guides the future development in special needs. The SENCO is systematic and effective in her work and is diligent in liaising with and supporting the teachers.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

The teachers mark the children's work regularly. Their comments are consistently supportive and encouraging. In the best practice, the teachers are giving the children oral and written guidance on how to improve the quality of their work. This good practice needs to be developed and applied more consistently across the school.

The school uses a range of standardised and non-standardised testing in English and mathematics to assess the children's attainment and teachers are beginning to use the outcomes of these tests to track the children's progress. The recently appointed assessment co-ordinator, in conjunction with other co-ordinators, including the SENCO, has begun to make more effective use of the analysis of this performance data to evaluate the children's progress, identify under-achievement, set appropriate targets and implement strategies in order to improve the standards achieved in English and mathematics.

The school keeps the parents well informed about their children's progress through regular interviews and reports, as well as opportunities for informal contact throughout the year.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The quality of the leadership and management in the school is good. The Principal is dedicated and committed to the life and work of the school and to the well-being of the children; he has a very good knowledge and understanding of its context and knows the children and their families well. He steered the school effectively through a recent period of traumatic and high-profile community disruption. His concern and care for the children are evident through the strong commitment within the school to safeguarding and pastoral care.

It is now timely, given the findings of this report, for the Principal, supported by the co-ordinators, to focus more strategically on developing the curriculum, and monitoring and evaluating the quality of learning and teaching to improve it further and to raise the standards achieved by all the children.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The school has an appropriate school development plan which sets out clearly the school's priorities and which meets fully the requirements of the Department of Education School Development Planning Regulations/Schedule 2005/19.

Several of the co-ordinators of key curricular areas have been appointed recently, and have made a good start to developing those key areas through good collaborative working and the compilation of action plans to guide their work. In the light of the inspection findings, there is a need to review the action plans in order to promote further the development of provision within the FS.

4.3 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The governors are highly committed to the school and to the welfare of the children and their families. They support the Principal and the staff in the implementation of the SDP.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the very good quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection, characterised by the welcoming and inclusive ethos throughout the school;
- the very effective links established with the local and wider communities which promote the involvement of the parents and enrich the children's experiences;
- the hard work and commitment of the teachers and the examples of the very good teaching in one third of the lessons observed;
- the high priority given to, and good provision made for, those children with special educational needs;
- the good behaviour, courtesy and positive attitude displayed by the majority of the children; and
- the good leadership of the Principal and his strong focus on the care and welfare of the children, and the school's relationship with the parents and the community.

5.2 The areas for improvement include the need:

- to raise further the quality of the teaching through the dissemination of the good practice already evident in the school;
- to improve further the standards of attainment in literacy and numeracy for all the children; and
- for the leadership at all levels to monitor and evaluate more effectively the quality of learning and teaching throughout the school and the standards the children attain.

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 achievements and 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 The main strengths within the nursery unit's educational and pastoral provision are as follows:

- there is a very positive ethos in the nursery unit based on the caring and supportive working relationships between the staff and the children. The children are well settled and are very well behaved; they display respect for their environment, share and play co-operatively. The playroom is bright and well organised with attractive displays of the children's own work;
- the children display satisfactory to very good levels of interest in the range of activities provided in the playroom and the outdoor play area. There is less effective engagement during the use of the large school hall and during the latter part of the outdoor play session;
- the staff listen to the children, foster their personal and social skills and promote purposeful and settled play. In the best practice, the staff enhance the children's language, thinking and learning as they engage meaningfully for extended periods. At times, they are too supervisory or are ineffectively deployed and consequently miss opportunities to exploit fully the learning potential of activities and daily routines;
- the staff plan a broad and balanced programme with satisfactory to good opportunities for learning in almost areas of the pre-school curriculum. Particular strengths include the good levels of independence and co-operative play demonstrated by the children, the children's high levels of engagement in a wide range of art activities, the promotion of mathematical language and the children's interest in mark making. Areas requiring further development include the need to improve opportunities for investigation, construction and activities which motivate and engage the boys more fully in their learning; and
- the nursery unit teacher recently took up post and is at an early stage in developing the work within the nursery. She has made good progress in settling the children, building relationships with the parents and developing pupil profiles. She recognises the need for ongoing staff development and training, to develop this work further.

6.2 The inspection has identified the following areas for improvement.

- The weekly planning needs to be developed further to identify more clearly the learning to be promoted through activities both indoors and outdoors and to guide the day to day work of the staff.
- The quality of the staff interaction needs to promote more consistently the children's language and learning through the play activities.
- The learning environment needs to be developed further to support more fully choice, investigation and activities which interest and motivate the boys.

6.3 In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in the nursery unit is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in 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 nursery unit's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

**STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON WHEATFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL NURSERY UNIT,
BELFAST**

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending full-time	26	0
Attending part-time	0	0
Under 3 years of age*	1	0
With statement of SEN**	0	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4***	0	0
At CoP stages 1 or 2***	2	0
With English as an additional language	1	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.	61.5%
Average attendance for the previous year.	85.5%

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	1	0
Nursery Assistants	0	0
Qualified Nursery Assistants	1	0

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	
Percentage returned	%
Number of written comments	

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