



*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**



Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection

**Nettlefield Primary School
Belfast**

May 2014

FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF NETTLEFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL, BELFAST, BT6 8BG (101-0267)

The focused inspection of Nettlefield Primary School in January 2013 highlighted strengths in relation to the good quality of the pastoral care, the friendly, welcoming and inclusive ethos, the good teaching in half of the lessons observed and the effective start made to the collection of performance data.

The inspection identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- to improve the quality of the learning and teaching;
- to raise the standards in literacy and numeracy; and
- to ensure the leadership and management at all levels are supported effectively in developing their roles to bring about the necessary improvement.

The inspection conclusion in January 2013 stated:

“In almost all of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided in this school is inadequate; the areas for improvement outweigh the strengths in the provision. The inspection has identified significant areas for improvement in leadership and management, standards, and learning and teaching which need to be addressed urgently if the school is to meet effectively the needs of the all the children.”

The school entered the formal intervention process on 18 February 2013. The Department of Education (DE) indicated at that time that a follow-up inspection would take place and that, in the interim, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) would evaluate the progress being made in bringing about the necessary improvements through a follow-up visit. The post-inspection action plan was received in the Department of Education (DE) in June 2013. The DE acknowledged the positive response that the school had made, and planned to make, regarding the areas for improvement identified in the report. The DE also advised that particular issues required further consideration, namely that:

- specific targets for end of key stage attainment in English and mathematics should be set and included in the literacy and numeracy action plans.

These matters were discussed with the school during an initial visit that was carried out by the ETI on 3 June 2013, and the post-inspection action plan was revised. An interim follow-up visit took place on 10 October 2013.

In the interval since the original inspection, the school received extensive support from the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS) of the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB).

The following information is relevant to the work of the school since the original inspection.

- There were have been a number of changes in teaching staff including the appointment of a ‘Signature Project’¹ teacher and an ‘Achieving Belfast’² teacher, and the re-deployment of a nursery unit teacher into the main school.

¹ The ‘Signature Project’ refers to the OFMdFM Delivering Social Change Signature Project on improving literacy and numeracy.

- The school enrolment remains steady and the number of children entitled to free school meals remains constant at 74%; the number of newcomer children increased and is now 28%.
- The roles and responsibilities of the co-ordinators were reviewed, resulting in a number of changes in key personnel.
- The co-ordinators and staff produced a framework for progression in writing and in mathematical language, and are currently completing lines of progression for reading and number.
- The newly appointed special educational needs co-ordinator accessed training for her role, conducted an audit of the provision and, along with the other special educational needs teachers, visited another setting to observe effective practice.
- The numeracy co-ordinator joined a number of other co-ordinators in the 'North Belfast Working Maths Group' to share best practice in the development of numeracy.
- The organisation and deployment of staff expertise was reviewed to support further the children identified as having additional learning needs, and those children potentially underachieving in literacy and numeracy.
- The teachers developed an agreed understanding of what constitutes effective learning and teaching, and all have had the opportunity to share good practice through 'trusted colleague' observations.
- The staff reviewed the half-termly planning format.
- The school submitted a folder of evidence in the area of Communication to the Council for the Curriculum Education and Assessment (CCEA) and had the school levels verified.
- The principal and staff make extensive use of the internal data from standardised tests to inform evaluations at whole-school, class and individual levels.
- The principal led the senior management team and the board of governors through a self-evaluative process, using well as external quality indicators the ETI 'Together Towards Improvement' document and 'Every School a Good School'.
- A school council has been developed and the children have played an active role in planning, budgeting and ordering additional playground equipment.
- The Parent Liaison Worker has begun a series of workshops, visits and events to help parents support their children's learning.

² Achieving Belfast' is a Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) programme to target under-achievement in the Belfast area.

The following are the most important improvements since the original inspection.

- The standards achieved by the children in both literacy and numeracy have significantly increased, and, in the last two years, the results at the end of key stage 2 were above the Northern Ireland average and well-above the average for schools in the same free school meal band.
- The school's internal data indicates that most of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, are now achieving in line with their ability or above expectation in both literacy and numeracy, significantly improved from the time of the original inspection.
- The most able children in year 7 enjoy reading and they achieve very good standards in this key area. They read with very good fluency and expression; can discuss a range of reading preferences and they value the opportunities they have to read to the younger children in their roles as 'reading buddies'. In mathematics, the children are very confident in applying and explaining a range of mathematical strategies in problem-solving and have a very good understanding of key concepts and associated knowledge across the areas of mathematics.
- The teachers have high expectations of the children. Across the school the children have a pride in their work; this is evident in the improved presentation of their work and the much improved standards of behaviour since the time of the original inspection. The children are now highly motivated, engaging well in groups and pairs while respecting the views and opinions of others. The standards of talking and listening are very good and the quality of writing across the school is now good.
- Through effective liaison with the nursery unit, the teachers identify at an early stage the children who have additional learning needs. The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning benefit from high quality in-class and withdrawal sessions. Well-focused individual education plans are in place with appropriate, measurable targets, with good opportunities for input from both the children and their parents. The high level of communication between the class teachers and the special educational needs teachers ensures that the additional support reinforces and builds effectively on the children's work in class.
- The teaching ranged from satisfactory to outstanding; almost all of the teaching was good or better with approximately two-thirds of the teaching very good or outstanding. In the most effective practice, the teachers use a wide range of active teaching strategies to motivate the children and match well their learning styles. The learning was set in appropriate and meaningful real-life contexts, and the teachers use skilful questioning to encourage the children to explain well their thinking and reflect on their learning.
- The co-ordinators provide effective strategic leadership and make very good use of a range of monitoring strategies, including classroom observations and regular evaluations of the teachers' planning and the standards of work in the children's books, to ensure continued improvement within their curricular areas.

- The teachers and co-ordinators make very good use of the school's internal data to identify potential underachievement, set appropriate targets to track individual children's progress and ensure that they reach the standards of which they are capable.
- The teachers' planning effectively supports the classroom practice with clearly differentiated activities; almost all of the teachers evaluate the planning with a clear focus on the learning and use their evaluations to inform future planning.
- The new lines of progression for aspects of literacy and numeracy provide appropriate progression across the school and guide the teachers well in their planning.
- Parents access courses in literacy, numeracy and ICT and the school facilitates a breakfast club. The newly-established parents' association is well-supported.
- The outstanding strategic leadership of the principal has been a key factor in the development of a strong culture of collegiality among all of the staff, with a clear and appropriate focus on sustained school improvement in the best interests of the children.

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is now 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.

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