



*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

**Springhill Primary School
Belfast**

September 2012

FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOCUSED INSPECTION OF SPRINGHILL PRIMARY SCHOOL, BELFAST, BT13 3NH (101-0307)

The focused inspection in March 2011 highlighted strengths in the friendly and welcoming children who are motivated and respond well when the learning activities match their abilities, the hard working teachers who demonstrate loyalty to the school, the good provision for pastoral care, the good work of the subject co-ordinators for English and mathematics in beginning the process of self-evaluation, and the recent introduction of initiatives to support the children's language development.

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

- to raise the inadequate standards reached by a significant minority of the children in literacy and numeracy;
- for stronger curricular leadership by the Principal, supported by the Board of Governors, to provide better strategic direction and an improvement in the learning and teaching across the key stages; and
- to disseminate more widely the elements of good practice already existing within the school.

Subsequent to the inspection, the school entered the formal intervention process in April 2011. In the interval since the original inspection, the school received support from the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS) of the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) in developing aspects of the school's provision for literacy, numeracy, foundation stage (FS), special educational needs, and leadership and management.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out three interim follow-up visits (IFUV), and a follow-up inspection on 17-18 September 2012.

The following are the most important actions that have taken place since the original inspection:

- the Vice-principal has been acting as Principal since March 2012 owing to the illness of the Principal;
- the staffing has reduced from eleven to eight full-time teachers;
- the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) has retired from post;
- the school enrolment has decreased from 224 to 177; and
- the percentage of children entitled to free school meals has increased significantly from 29% at the time of inspection in March 2011 to approximately 45%.

The action plan produced by the school in response to the inspection findings was of a good quality and was adjusted appropriately in light of feedback given by the inspectors during the IFUVs.

The most important improvements are outlined below.

- There is greater involvement of parents in the life and the work of the school.
- The governors are playing an increasingly proactive role in both supporting and challenging the senior leadership team to raise standards.

- The quality of the teaching has improved since the original inspection and is mostly good or better. The learning and teaching observed in the sample of lessons visited during the follow-up inspection and interim visits demonstrated that the children achieve satisfactory standards.
- The best practice is characterised by high expectations and suitable challenge, often achieved through the teachers' skilful questioning. The teachers catered well for the wide range of abilities within their classes and matched the work to the needs of the children. The children responded well to problem solving activities and there was a good focus on mathematical language; they remained on task for the duration of the lesson and displayed good behaviour. However, a minority of the lessons lacked a clear focus on the learning to be achieved; some of the children were unclear about the instructions given to them and too much time was diverted from the core business of learning and teaching.
- Good improvements have taken place in literacy and numeracy across the school; this work has been driven effectively by the co-ordinators. In English there has been a whole school focus on talking and listening, and on writing. The literacy co-ordinator has addressed the standards and progression in the children's writing and has devised very helpful instruments to guide the teachers in their approaches to this work. The children's written work is improving across an increased range of genres and a majority can provide oral responses and use extended language when encouraged by their teachers.

In mathematics, the emphasis has been on the children's learning, progression and assessment. The teachers have agreed a common vocabulary to improve mathematical communication, and problem solving approaches and activities are more embedded in daily practices. The children participate well in practical activities in mathematics and display a sound grasp of important mathematical concepts. They can explain their mathematical processes and reasoning in a coherent manner.

While in most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided by the school is now satisfactory, further improvement is required.

The main areas for improvement, identified in the follow-up inspection, is the need for closer and more systematic monitoring and evaluation by the senior leadership team of the impact of the actions taken to improve the quality and extent of the children's learning and the standards they achieve. For example, further analysis is required using first hand evidence and other available performance data to evaluate the gains made by all of the children and where further intervention is required. In particular, the outcomes of the lesson observations need to be discussed and best practice shared in order to inform more effectively the future direction of whole school development work. In addition, target-setting is at an early stage of development and needs to include the greater involvement of all of the staff.

In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided by this school is now satisfactory; strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified the need for the Principal and senior leadership team to focus whole-school development on actions designed to bring about consistent and sustained improvement in the standards which the children achieve and the quality and extent of their learning experiences. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the remaining areas for improvement within an 18-24 month period.

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