



*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

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Focused Inspection

**Ceara School
Lurgan**

Inspected: October 2008

CONTENTS

Section		Page
	STATISTICAL INFORMATION	
1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS	1
3.	QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING	2
4.	LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	3
5.	OVERALL EFFECTIVENES	3
6.	CONCLUSION	4

STATISTICAL INFORMATION (SPECIAL SCHOOLS)

1.1 i. **School: Ceara School Lurgan** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 20.10.08**

ii. **School Reference Number: 531-6521** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

1.2

School Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Total Enrolment	84	91	91	92	91

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.

1.3 Number of Pupils in Outreach Programme: 0

1.4 Average Attendance for the Previous School Year: 87.3%

1.5 i. Number of Teachers in School: 13 on Outreach Programme: 0
(including the Principal and p/t teachers)
(f/t equivalent = 25 teaching hours)

ii. PTR (pupil/teacher ratio): 7

iii. Average Class Size: 7

iv. Number of Classroom Assistants: 26

v. Ancillary Support:
Number of Hours per week:

Clerical Support: 35

vi. Percentage of children in receipt of free school meals: 32.9%

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Ceara School is situated in Lurgan and provides education for pupils aged from three to 19 years of age who have severe learning difficulties.

1.2 The new school building opened in 2004, and was designed for 48 pupils. There are currently 91 pupils and the school accommodation is supplemented by mobile classrooms. An extension is planned.

1.3 The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Ninety-one parental questionnaires were issued to parents and 52 were returned to the Department of Education. Of these, 23 parents or guardians took the opportunity to submit a written response. Almost all of the parental responses were positive; any concerns raised were discussed with the Principal and members of the Board of Governors (governors). The governors met with the inspectors and expressed satisfaction with the work of the school and concern over the inadequacies of the size of the current accommodation.

1.4 The focus of the inspection was on the standards achieved by the pupils, the quality of the provision for learning, the leadership and management of the school and the arrangements for child protection and pastoral care.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 Throughout the inspection, the pupils' standards of achievements were judged in relation to their previous educational records.

2.2 Ceara School is an outstanding school where the pupils achieve well in a safe, secure and happy environment. The pupils make good progress and engage positively with the school curriculum which is appropriate to their needs. They are encouraged to be as independent as possible from an early age and attain good standards of communication in line with their ability. The senior pupils achieve sound internal and external accreditation through the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment Quest for Learning assessment materials and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network. The school is continuing to explore further external accreditation opportunities.

2.3 The school gives outstanding attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, healthy breaks and opportunities to taste new foods, which encourage the pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles. The standard of school meals provided within Ceara School is very high.

2.4 The inspection findings identified the following strengths in the achievements of the pupils:

- the pupils achieve their individual education plan targets which are appropriate to their needs, reflect their statements of special educational needs and build on previous learning;
- the pupils' behaviour is exemplary; they are polite and respectful of each other, to members of staff and to visitors;

- the pupils achieve well in national competitions, for example, Team Enterprise and Cook of the Year; and
- the pupils achieve a sound understanding of the advantages of healthy eating and lifestyles.

3. QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 The quality of teaching in the school is very good. Almost 90% of the lessons observed were evaluated as ranging from good to outstanding; 23% of the lessons were judged to be outstanding. The bright displays in the classrooms and in the corridors throughout the school celebrate the pupils' work, record their activities and achievements and provide a supportive environment for learning and teaching. The evidence indicates that the school curriculum is broad, balanced, coherent and promotes progression. The teacher's planning is thorough and focused on the individual needs of the pupils. Classroom management is very effective throughout the school and impacts positively on the pupils, enhancing their learning and enjoyment. Collaborative practice between teachers and classroom assistants is very good and further enhances the education of the children. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used effectively throughout the school to enrich the educational experiences of the pupils. Assistive technology is used well for the pupils' who have physical disabilities.

3.2 The school has partnerships with a training organisation and with the Southern Health & Social Care Trust for therapy provision which could be developed further. There are successful partnerships with other organisations, for example, Mencap. Looked After Children reviews are held in the school. Ceara School has European School status and has extensive national and international school links which engage and interest the pupils. The school has a Parent/Teacher Association, members of which attended a coffee morning in the school during the inspection. These opportunities are indicative of the priority given to a broad range of activities to promote effective learning. The school environment is very well cared for and maintained.

3.3 The school organisation has very good comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding the pupils. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is outstanding. There is a very caring and supportive ethos which permeates the school. The atmosphere is supportive and friendly and the working relationships at all levels are very positive. The members of staff are hard-working and dedicated and promote strongly a positive climate of pastoral care and concern for the pupils. Among the strengths are the skilful contribution made by the support staff to the pupils' well-being and their learning experiences.

3.4 The inspection findings identified the following strengths in the quality of the provision for learning:

- the warm, caring and inclusive ethos in which the parents are regarded as an important part of the school;
- the very good working relationships within the school which enable all members of staff and therapists to work effectively together;

- the good collaborative practice within the classroom which ensures that there is continuity of planning, practice and implementation of teaching and learning targets;
- the high quality of the teaching throughout the school;
- the outstanding pastoral care; and
- the very high standard of the work of the ancillary staff, including the school clerical administrator and the school catering staff.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 The Principal demonstrates strong and caring leadership and very effective management. He shows clear strategic leadership ensuring a vision and a clear educational direction for the work of the school. The school has a well-established culture of self-evaluation. The management of classroom assistants is effective with a well planned system of rotation and highly valued, extensive opportunities for professional development. The Vice-principal was absent at the time of the inspection.

4.2 The improvement process is clearly linked to a well-constructed school development plan (SDP), which is currently under review. There are excellent opportunities for consultation about the SDP within the school community and there is outstanding associated staff development. Policies and programmes are in place and have been recently reviewed. The school gives very good attention to the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005.

4.3 The main strengths of the leadership and management of the school are:

- the outstanding leadership of the Principal;
- the effective delegation of duties throughout the school;
- the very effective opportunities and out-workings of the staff development programme throughout the school; and
- the role of the co-ordinators in monitoring and evaluating the quality of the learning and teaching to inform improvement.

5. OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

5.1 The overall effectiveness of the school shows strengths in all aspects of the areas inspected.

5.2 The inspection has identified the following strengths:

- the clear, effective and strategic leadership of the Principal;

- the outstanding pastoral care and the very positive, friendly and caring ethos which permeates the life of the school;
- the very good quality of the teaching throughout the school, enhanced by the contribution of the supportive and skilled classroom assistants;
- the appropriate, broad and balanced curriculum and the good use made of ICT to engage and stimulate the pupils' learning;
- the friendly, polite and well-behaved pupils; and
- the strong support of the parents and governors for the work of the school.

6. **CONCLUSION**

6.1 In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is outstanding; the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. The school has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

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