



*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

**Clarawood Special School
Belfast**

Inspected: January 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	2
5.	OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS	3
6.	AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT	4
7.	CONCLUSION	4

STATISTICAL INFORMATION (SPECIAL SCHOOLS)

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| 1.1 | i. | School: Clarawood Special School | iii. | Date of Inspection: W/B 14.01.08 |
| | ii. | School Reference Number: 131-6584 | iv. | Nature of Inspection: Focused |

1.2

School Year	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Total Enrolment	11	6	6	12	15

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.

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|-----|--|-------|--------------------------|
| 1.3 | Number of Pupils in Outreach Programme: | 91 | |
| 1.4 | Average Attendance for the Previous School Year: | 82.7% | |
| 1.5 | i. Number of Teachers in School:
(including the Principal and p/t teachers)
(f/t equivalent = 25 teaching hours) | 9 | on Outreach Programme: 4 |
| | ii. PTR (pupil/teacher ratio): | 3 | |
| | iii. Average Class Size: | 6 | |
| | iv. Number of Classroom Assistants: | 16 | |
| | v. Ancillary Support:
Number of Hours per week: | | |
| | Clerical Support: | 22.5 | |
| | vi. Percentage of children in receipt of free school meals: | 80% | |

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Clarawood Special School is situated in east Belfast and provides education for 15 key stage 2 pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) from across the greater Belfast area. In addition, seven pupils attend on a part-time basis whilst retaining links with their mainstream schools. The school has developed an Outreach Service for SEBD to primary schools in the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) area and some 91 pupils receive individual support.

1.2 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, as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and a group of pupils from across the school. At the meeting with the governors, they expressed their commitment to the school and support for the work which all the staff do with some of the most challenging young people. The governors expressed concern that the budget allocation is not adequate to meet the pupils' needs or the proposed action specified in the school development plan. The pupils, in discussion with the inspection team, indicated their awareness of the arrangements to ensure their safety and security in school. Four of the 15 parental questionnaires issued were returned to the Department of Education (DE), and of these, one included a supportive written comment.

1.3 The focus of the inspection was on the quality of provision to meet the individual needs of the pupils and the arrangements for child protection and pastoral care.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 In this report, standards of achievement are judged in relation to the pupils' previous attainments, their individual abilities and their special educational needs.

2.2 Clarawood Special School provides a good education for its pupils within a framework of carefully planned, consistent and appropriate behaviour plans. The majority of the pupils achieve well during their time in the school. There are strengths in many aspects of the provision, in particular, the good quality of the teaching in literacy and numeracy and the effective support and guidance given to pupils by the Outreach teachers. The teachers and classroom assistants demonstrate a high degree of skill when dealing with pupils who are reluctant to engage with learning or to interact with one another or their teachers.

2.3 The school gives very good attention to promoting health and well-being, including opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity. There are effective programmes in place, for example, a breakfast club, healthy breaks and practical cookery classes for all children, which encourage them to adopt healthy lifestyles.

2.4 The inspection findings indicate the following achievements and standards:

- the pupils respond well to suitably focused lessons and carefully structured rewards and behaviour targets; they make good progress in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT);

- the pupils behave acceptably and are developing, to varying degrees, appropriate social skills to help them cope with the demands of the curriculum and to work together in pairs or small groups; and
- the pupils' overall health and well-being is effectively promoted throughout the school.

3. QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 The ethos of the school is very friendly, warm and welcoming and much good work is done to help pupils re-engage with the primary school curriculum. The quality of almost all of the teaching is consistently good or better. Overall, some 67% of the lessons observed had strengths in many aspects of the educational provision, with some outstanding or excellent practice. The pupils were aware of the expected learning outcomes and diligently completed their tasks. In this best practice, for example, in literacy and numeracy classes, the pupils participated with enjoyment in carefully structured lessons with appropriate interventions to keep them on task. In all of the lessons observed, the teachers and assistants managed any challenging behaviour extremely well through carefully planned routines and procedures.

3.2 There are strengths in many aspects of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection. The school has procedures in place which implement the guidance outlined in the relevant DE Circulars and has identified appropriately a few minor areas for improvement which it is currently implementing. Among the strengths are the good working relationships between the pupils and staff, the induction procedures for new pupils and parents, the effective strategies used to promote positive behaviour, the prominent displays of the Child Line telephone number throughout the school and the close monitoring of pupil attendance with clear follow-up procedures when pupils are absent. The few areas for improvement identified include the need to consult further with parents when revising policies and the need to ensure that all governors complete appropriate training for child protection.

3.3 The main strengths of the quality of provision for learning are:

- the high quality of the majority of the teaching which provides clear direction and sense of purpose for the pupils;
- the good level of assessment and structured lesson planning, particularly for literacy and numeracy;
- the teachers' competence in managing the pupils' behaviours through appropriate use of targets and rewards; and
- the valued level of support to pupils in mainstream schools.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 The Principal, ably supported by the Vice-principal, manages the school well and has identified clear policies and systems to ensure that all of the pupils can participate in the curriculum, raise their self esteem and engage with learning. Further work is needed to develop the monitoring and evaluation of classroom practice and to agree and disseminate the examples of good practice found in most lessons.

4.2 The Outreach Service is highly valued by the mainstream schools supported and is effective. The Service, however, would benefit from a more systematic system to evaluate the impact of its work and inform its further development. There is currently no base room at the school where staff can meet to prepare materials, use ICT equipment and facilitate Outreach staff meetings.

4.3 Currently management has identified a changing pupil profile, with many pupils being identified at a younger age, with more extreme behaviour. Staff have limited access to additional therapies which may alleviate some of the social and behavioural issues which pupils bring to school. It will be important for the school management, in consultation with the BELB, to monitor carefully the profile of pupils so that any additional needs can be met in collaboration with other professionals or agencies. There is also a need for further staff development for Outreach staff involved in counselling and intervention approaches.

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

- the hard work and commitment of the Principal supported by the Vice-principal;
- the well-established school routines and structures which enable the pupils to re-engage with education;
- the good quality of the staff development programme which enables the staff to develop their expertise and skills to teach a very challenging group of pupils; and
- the committed and supportive governors who are kept fully informed and involved in the work of the school.

5. OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

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

5.2 The inspection has identified the following strengths:

- the secure, caring ethos and the good quality of the provision for the pastoral care of the pupils;
- the commitment and hard work shown by the management team in supporting the pupils;
- the good quality of the school's programme for the promotion of the pupils' health and well-being;
- the good quality of the majority of the teaching;
- the effective support given to individual pupils and schools through the Outreach Service; and

- the strong support of the members of the Board of Governors for the work of the school.

6. AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

6.1 The inspection findings indicate that the following areas for improvement need to be addressed: for the staff, lead by the management team:

- to develop an effective system for monitoring and evaluating the quality of learning and teaching in the school and in Outreach provision to lead to further improvement; and
- to provide a forum to support discussion about the quality of the work and to encourage the dissemination of good practice.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 In the areas inspected, the school has strengths in many aspects of its educational provision. The inspection has identified a few areas for improvement in important areas which need to be addressed to meet effectively the needs of all the learners.

7.2 The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing these areas for improvement.

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