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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
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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

**Clifton School
Bangor**

Inspected: November 2006

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Clifton School provides education for pupils, aged three to 19 years, with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. The pupils have a wide range of diverse and complex needs and, as a consequence, the school provides a highly specialised and appropriate provision. The school is situated on the Old Belfast Road, Bangor and serves a wide catchment area which includes North Down and the Ards Peninsula.

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 and a group of pupils from year 15. Of the 122 questionnaires issued to parents, some 43% were returned to the Department of Education (DE) and 32 contained additional written comments. The few concerns raised by the parents were discussed with the Principal and, where relevant, with South-Eastern Education and Library Board personnel.

1.3 Since the last inspection in 1999, the school has moved location from the centre of Bangor to a purpose-built, spacious accommodation and site; the school has plans for further outdoor development.

1.4 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 Clifton School is an effective school with major strengths and no significant areas for improvement. The pupils clearly enjoy being at school and make substantial gains in their personal and social development, language and communication and other learning across the curriculum. Since the last inspection the school has improved significantly in preparing the pupils for life after school.

2.2 The school gives consistently good attention to promoting health and well-being and has appropriate policies and programmes in place, which encourage the pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles. There is evidence of commitment on the part of staff to promoting healthy eating and to improving the pupils' eating habits. There are opportunities for all pupils, where appropriate, to participate in a wide range of physical activities. The pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the importance of making healthy life choices. At the time of the inspection the fully equipped kitchen was not staffed, and consequently the schools' meals were transported from another location.

2.3 The inspection findings indicate the following achievements and standards:

- the consistently good and, often very good, quality of the teaching and, in particular, the good practice in the team-work of the teachers and classroom assistants, planning and working together in the classroom for the benefit of each pupil;
- the imaginative, well-prepared and well-resourced lessons;

- the oral responsiveness of the pupils, their attentiveness, interest in and perseverance with the tasks set;
- the staff's depth of knowledge of the needs of the individual pupils and their skill in matching the work effectively to these needs with appropriate support;
- the consistency across the school in the maintenance and sharing of information and the very comprehensive and meticulous planning, record-keeping and assessments for each pupil; and
- the quality of the school's programme for transition and school leavers.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good throughout the school and reflected in the thorough and detailed planning and comprehensive assessment of the pupils' needs. Teachers write appropriate individual education plans and achievable targets, and, as a consequence, the pupils make good progress. In addition, the much valued and strong multi-disciplinary provision throughout the school has ensured good access to therapy where needed. Overall, approximately 59% of the lessons observed were graded consistently good or better, including some 12% with outstanding features.

3.2 The school is implementing fully the guidance outlined in the relevant DE Circulars pertaining to child protection matters. The good quality of pastoral care is a significant feature of the school's work and makes a valuable contribution to promoting an atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning. Pastoral care systems are well-developed and communicated to staff to ensure a commonality of approach, and a school environment in which the welfare of the pupils is addressed. The pupils express confidence that the staff will respond sympathetically and appropriately to their concerns. Strenuous efforts are made to create flexible working partnerships with the parents and relevant agencies.

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

- the effective use of a wide range of teaching approaches, including the very good emphasis on active learning, practical activities, talk, discussions and pupil involvement, to meet the differing needs and learning styles of individual pupils;
- the supportive and caring ethos which creates an environment conducive to learning;
- the strong sense of team-work at all levels throughout the school;
- the effective focus on improving the pupils' communication, numeracy, social skills and behaviour;
- the staff's commitment to promoting the highest possible levels of pupil achievement;
- the summative assessment system which the school is developing; the system has

the potential to enhance further the individual planning for teaching and learning throughout the school;

- the impact of the additional ‘support class’ provision which has been successful in re-engaging some pupils in school life; the skilful multi-disciplinary work of the teaching staff, behaviour nurse therapy and psychology services is particularly effective;
- the effective early intervention of the mother and toddler group which provides parents with guidance, advice and support for their children; and
- the good and effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) to support the learning of the pupils in some classes.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 The quality of the leadership and management of the school is very good. The Principal uses her experience and knowledge to lead the school in a measured, efficient and effective way. Her pastoral leadership is exemplary; she leads by example, caring for the pupils and staff.

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

- the building of staff collegiality, leading to their professional empowerment;
- the clear roles and responsibilities of the staff;
- the well established routines and protocols resulting in the smooth running of the school;
- the close and effective communication links with parents, health service professionals and the local community;
- the Vice-principal and senior management team who support the Principal in the outworking of school policy and practice; and
- the excellent planned use of the new school environment.

5. OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

5.1 The overall effectiveness of the school is consistently good.

5.2 The main strengths of the provision are:

- the leadership of the Principal in promoting a strong caring school ethos;
- the robust working relationships and team-work throughout the school;
- the staff’s detailed knowledge of the needs of the pupils ensuring appropriate

planning and teaching;

- the consistently good quality of the teaching;
- the progress made by the pupils in social skills and behaviour;
- the appropriate and effective therapy provided within the school environment; and
- the attractive, well cared for and imaginatively utilised school environment.

6. **AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

6.1 The inspection findings indicate that the overall effectiveness of the school presents many strengths with no significant areas for improvement. The inspection team recommends:

- the staff, individually and in teams, address the further dissemination of good practice within the school;
- the review of existing ICT provision to better enhance learning and teaching, and to facilitate the sharing of planning and resources; and
- the further development of the school's structures for self-evaluation.

7. **CONCLUSION**

7.1 In the areas inspected, Clifton School has major strengths in its educational and pastoral provision. The educational and pastoral needs of the learners are being well met. The parents and local community can have confidence in the school's capacity for sustained self-improvement.

No follow-inspection is required.

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