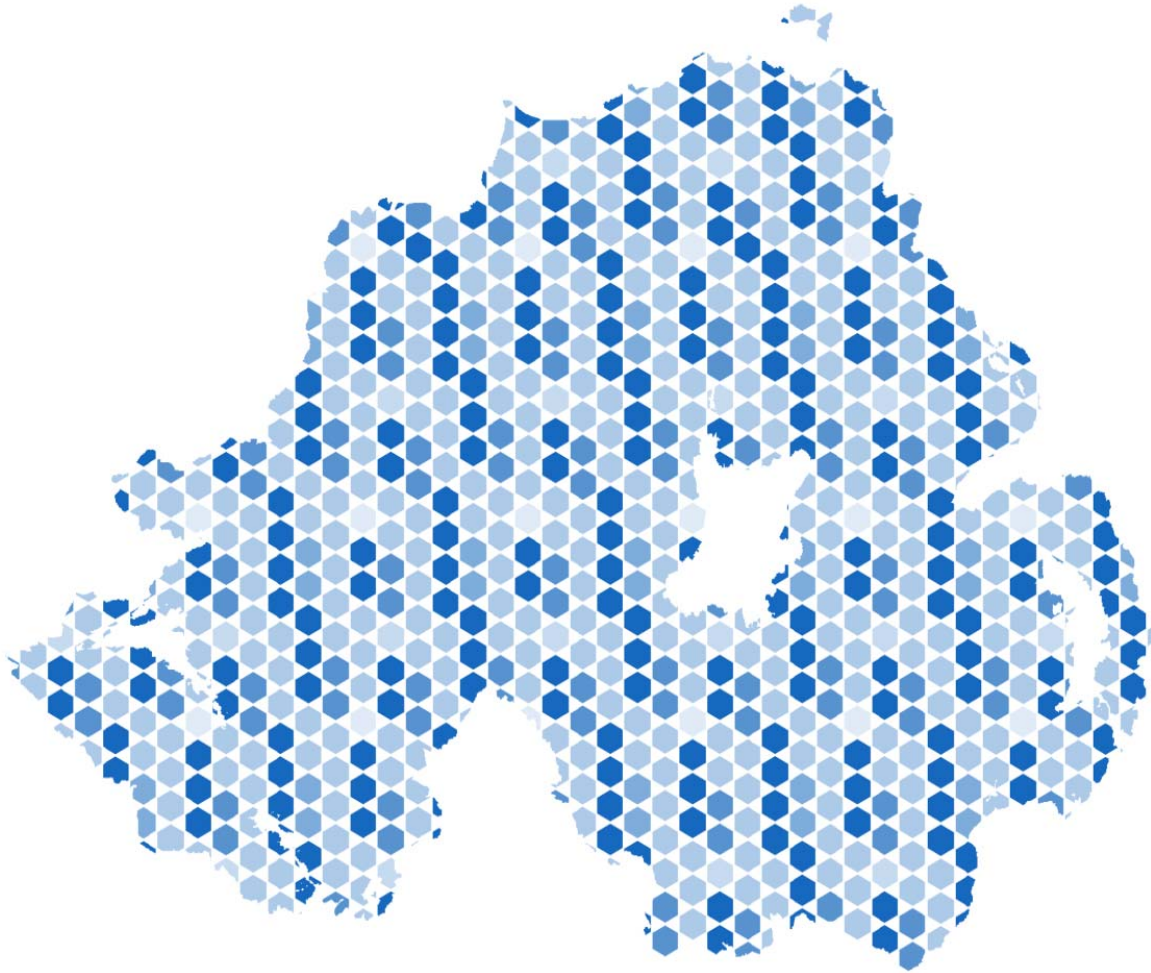


SPECIAL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Harberton School, Belfast

Report of an Inspection
in November 2009

eti

*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



CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

CONTENTS

Section		Page
	STATISTICAL INFORMATION	
1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS	2
3.	QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING	3
4.	LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	5
5.	OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS	6
6.	CONCLUSION	7

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

In assessing the various features of the provision, the Inspectorate relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Harberton School is situated in Harberton Park, Belfast. The school provides education for 221 children in the main school; it also provides outreach support for approximately 413 children, aged between three and eleven years of age as part of the overall support for special educational needs in the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) area. The school is organised into six departments.

1.2 The main Harberton School is for children with moderate and complex learning difficulties and provides for children with a variety of special educational needs including general global delay and speech and language problems.

1.3 The Diagnostic Nursery Unit is also based in the school and is available to children in their pre-school year following referral by an educational psychologist. The children are assessed during the year by an educational psychologist, speech and occupational therapists, and the teacher; a decision is subsequently made, in consultation with the parents, about the most appropriate future placement.

1.4 The three Reading Units support children with specific language difficulties. The children attend either full- or part-time in Harberton School, for a period of one to two years.

1.5 The Outreach Support Service for children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD), including two part-time nurture classes based in Harberton School, provides behaviour support to children in the foundation stage (FS) and key stage (KS) 1 across the BELB area. The aim of the service is to support and advise teachers with regard to behaviour management in order to sustain attendance in mainstream education.

1.6 The Outreach Learning Support Service provides learning support in literacy to children in the FS, KS1 and KS2 across the BELB area with the aim of enabling them to maintain their places in mainstream schools. Most of the Outreach Learning Support teachers are trained Reading Recovery tutors.

1.7 The Nursery Support Service provides support across the BELB area for children who are having difficulty settling into the routines of nursery school as referred by the Educational Psychology Service.

1.8 The school has recently been rebuilt on the Harberton Park site with purpose-built accommodation.

1.9 The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents and the teaching and support staff 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 children from KS2. One hundred and fifteen questionnaires were issued to the parents of the children in the main school; almost half were returned to Inspection Services Branch and half of these contained additional written comments.

1.10 The responses from the parental questionnaires indicate that the majority of parents strongly support the work of the school. The Governors expressed their appreciation of the outstanding leadership of the Principal and the senior management team (SMT), the hard work and commitment of the staff and the happy, family ethos of the school. The members of staff acknowledged their extensive professional development opportunities within the school. The children talked enthusiastically about their learning and sports activities within the school. The inspectors reported to the Principal and a representative of the Governors the main issues emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions.

1.11 The inspectors observed a total of 52 lessons in the school. Interviews were also held with the Principal, the SMT, co-ordinators, teachers, Governors and children. The school's strategic development plans, other related documentation and policies, the teachers' planning and the children's work were scrutinised. The inspectors also visited 24 outreach sessions across a range of schools.

1.12 The focus of the inspection was on the standards achieved by the children in the school, the quality of the provision for learning, the leadership and management of the school and the arrangements for child protection and pastoral care. The inspection also evaluated the quality of the teaching in the outreach provision.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 Throughout the inspection, the children's standards of achievement were evaluated in relation to their prior educational achievements.

HARBERTON SCHOOL PROVISION

2.2 Harberton School is an outstanding school. Overall, the children in the main school progress very well in their learning. The majority of the children in the year 7 groups have attainments in literacy and numeracy which are higher than the ability level recorded on their statement of special educational need would indicate possible. All of the children, with the exception of the younger children, are involved fully in the development of targets within their individual education plans (IEPs): the evidence indicates that the children achieve and often exceed the learning targets set for them. The children are involved actively in celebrating their success through records of achievement, displays of their work and events such as Pupil of the Week.

2.3 The children achieve well in the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) KS2 information and communication technology (ICT) Accreditation Scheme with approximately 80% of those entered achieving level 1 to 3 and 20% achieving level 4.

2.4 By the end of KS2, the standards achieved in literacy by the children in the Reading Units show significant improvement. The school reports that the majority are successful in improving their reading age by one to three years during their time in the school. The BELB and Harberton School need to review the provision to ensure it meets the legislation and guidance that govern the provision of special educational needs.

2.5 The children in the nurture classes respond extremely well to the highly structured programme and improve their social, emotional and behavioural skills. This enables them to work better with their peers in class, and helps them to re-integrate into their respective mainstream schools. Support from Harberton School staff, including the use of well trained classroom assistants to work alongside mainstream teachers, helps to build capacity in the mainstream setting.

2.6 The children in the diagnostic nursery class make very good progress. The teacher and the assistants collaborate closely with therapists to plan for teaching and learning. They make very detailed and comprehensive assessments of the needs and the progress of the children throughout the year. These observations and assessments inform the educational psychologist's reports on the best future placements for the children.

OUTREACH PROVISION

2.7 The outreach provision from Harberton School is outstanding. During the outreach sessions for behaviour and learning support, the children work with enjoyment and respond positively to the well established routines, the frequent praise and the reward systems in place. They take pride in their work and, in most cases, were keen to talk to inspectors about their learning. There is evidence that the children are meeting the targets set within the IEPs and, in most of the lessons observed, the children produced work to a suitably high standard. The schools also report a sense of achievement and higher self esteem particularly among those children receiving SEBD support. Children presenting specific challenges, particularly those receiving outreach behaviour support, were well managed and encouraged effectively to participate in lessons. Those children receiving support from the Nursery Support Service benefit from detailed assessment, the deployment of a Harberton Nursery Support Service classroom assistant, and a support teacher; there is clear evidence, based on the detailed tracking of the children's progress, that the children and schools benefit greatly from this early intervention.

2.8 In all of the settings observed during the inspection the children behaved extremely well.

2.9 The inspection findings identified the following strengths in the achievements of the children in both the school and outreach services:

- the very good progress made by all the children in achieving their IEP targets;
- the very good progress in literacy;
- the children's development of self-confidence, independence and social and life skills;
- the improvement in the standards achieved by all the children; and
- the outstanding behaviour demonstrated by the children throughout the school including their social skills.

3. QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

HARBERTON SCHOOL PROVISION

3.1 The quality of teaching in the school was always satisfactory and very good or outstanding in 80% of the lessons observed. In all of the lessons the teachers set appropriately high expectations for the children. The well structured literacy and numeracy sessions in every class in the main school ensure that key concepts and skills are systematically taught within a meaningful context; pupils respond with interest and enthusiasm to the lessons which are illustrated and informed by the effective visual timetables, targets and taskboards displayed in each of the classrooms. The teachers make effective use of a wide range of resources, including ICT, to support the learning and teaching; the lessons are well planned and structured with clear learning intentions, which are shared with the children; the children are encouraged to make choices and to reflect on their learning.

3.2 The teachers' planning throughout the school is meticulous, detailed and relevant. Planning at a whole-school level helps the children to develop and apply consistently their key skills and knowledge across a broad range of subjects; for example, in the literacy hour, the children participated enthusiastically in a variety of stimulating and engaging visual, kinaesthetic and auditory activities. The teachers use observation, checklists, records and discussions to inform planning and monitor the children's progress. The targets for improvement set in the IEPs are well constructed and realistic, and are shared with the children and their parents.

3.3 The use of ICT throughout the school is outstanding. The children demonstrate significant confidence in their use of a wide range of ICT applications, including imaginative animated films on aspects of their curriculum, and video-conferencing with two special schools in the Republic of Ireland.

3.4 The new school building has added significantly to the quality of the learning environment, and the capacity of the school to deliver outreach more effectively. The teachers have enhanced this environment further through the effective display of the children's work, which does much to celebrate the children's achievements and to consolidate key learning points.

3.5 There are very strong links with the parents. The school offers a number of courses to help the parents develop a wide range of skills to enable them to support their children's learning. The Learning to Learn programme, for example, supports, in particular, the parents of the younger children.

3.6 A significant strength of the school is its strong commitment to the promotion of international and cultural links and to Education for Sustainable Development. Over many years, the staff and children have participated in a range of activities, events, exchanges, visits and competitions and, in addition, have been successful in attaining recognised awards for their endeavours. These activities have broadened the knowledge and experiences of both the staff and the children and have enriched their learning and their lives; at the time of the inspection the children drafted and redrafted letters to their counterparts in Nepal and showed genuine interest and excitement about these international links.

OUTREACH PROVISION

3.7 During the inspection, the evaluation of outreach provision was based on the observation of 24 lessons, and on discussions with the school principals, special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs) and teachers. The quality of teaching in the outreach provision was always satisfactory and was very good or outstanding in 80% of the lessons observed. In all of the lessons the teachers set appropriately high expectations for the children. The schools in receipt of outreach support ensure that the targets set within the intervention plans, are incorporated into the school's own IEPs for the children. The good practice modelled by the outreach teachers is having a positive impact on the overall quality of the special educational needs provision, in particular the quality of the IEPs, within the host schools. In the best practice, the strategies employed by the outreach teachers to bring about improvement are shared with the teachers in the host schools. This good practice should be shared in a more systematic way in order to build further the capacity in the host schools. In addition, it will be important that Harberton School continues to work closely with the BELB to ensure that the part which the Harberton Outreach Support Programme plays in the continuum of provision for special educational needs in the BELB, and the management and effectiveness of it, are continually evaluated.

ETHOS/PASTORAL CARE

3.8 The ethos within the school and in the outreach service is outstanding. The children clearly enjoy their lessons and work well with all of the staff. The teachers and classroom assistants are all highly committed to the welfare of the children in their care and to the continuous improvement in academic standards and personal and social skills. A clear sense of team-work pervades the life of the school. The classroom assistants both within Harberton School and on the outreach provision promote and support effectively the children's learning. The outreach teachers work hard, with notable success, to establish strong professional relationships with the teachers in the schools they support.

3.9 The quality of the pastoral care within the school and on outreach is outstanding. The school has an inclusive and supportive ethos, and the working relationships within the school, including the multi-disciplinary co-operation, are exemplary. Appropriate cognisance is taken of the children's individual learning and behavioural needs ensuring that the quality of teaching engages the children very well. The children enjoy a coherent educational experience, which stimulates and progresses their learning.

3.10 The school has very good comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department.

3.11 The school gives outstanding attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity; there are, for example, fruit platters in every class and opportunities for the children to participate in nutritious cookery demonstrations and try new foods.

3.12 The inspection findings identified the following strengths in the quality of the provision for learning for all children:

- the broad and appropriate curriculum experienced by the children;
- the overall high quality of teaching in both Harberton School and outreach;
- the very good team-work observed between teachers, classroom assistants, therapists and ancillary staff;
- the effective and consistent use of highly structured and effective approaches to teaching literacy and numeracy;
- the supportive and effective links maintained with the parents; and
- the high level of the children's engagement in healthy eating and exercise opportunities.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 The leadership of the Principal is outstanding. He has a clear vision and plan for the strategic development of the school, informed by and shared with, all of the staff. There are very effective internal and external communication procedures and these are used well, for example, in sharing an agreed understanding of the school aims, mission and purpose. Clear roles and responsibilities have been identified for the senior, middle managers and class teachers within the school. The Principal gives regular affirmation to the work of the management teams, teachers and support staff. The teachers and the support staff are effectively and efficiently deployed.

4.2 The school places significant resources and emphasis on staff development led by one of the Vice-principals; for example at the time of the inspection all members of the school leadership team, and two teachers on the school management team had graduated through the Professional Qualification for Headship (PQH). In addition the school is a training centre for professional development and offers courses such as the Oxford, Cambridge and RSA (OCR) level 5 Dyslexia training certificate to help ensure that the staff regularly update their skills. These courses are also attended by teachers and classroom assistants from other schools. The school has also produced the Harberton Reading scheme, initially under the Dissemination of Good Practice Initiative; the scheme is being used successfully in Harberton School and across some 80 schools in Northern Ireland.

4.3 The system used for monitoring and evaluating the quality of learning and teaching throughout the school is a significant strength. The Principal, members of the management teams and co-ordinators monitor and evaluate teaching and learning in all classes and there is a strong culture of reflection, self-evaluation and affirmation of good practice, which has contributed significantly to ongoing improvement in teaching and learning.

4.4 The other Vice-principal leads effectively the outreach team and quality assures the provision to ensure consistency to the host schools. Roles and responsibilities are communicated clearly to all who are involved with the children's learning. There are good working relationships between the outreach teachers and the staff in the host schools, in particular with the SENCOs.

4.5 The school meets fully the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005. In addition, the school's strategic development plan is of a high quality and provides clear direction for key areas of future development; for example the school has appropriately identified numeracy support as an area for future development within the school and the outreach service.

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

- the outstanding leadership provided by the Principal, ably supported by the SMT;
- the effective empowerment of, and delegation to, all staff;
- the quality of the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of learning and teaching;
- the detailed, strategic development planning; and
- the high quality of professional development, linked appropriately to the school's strategic plan.

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 outstanding leadership of the Principal and the SMT;
- the consistently high quality of teaching in the school, and in the outreach provision, which is very good or outstanding in 80% of instances;

- the very effective multi-disciplinary work among management, teachers, therapists, classroom assistants, and ancillary staff;
- the high standards achieved by the children;
- the outstanding quality of the pastoral care of the children and the very positive ethos which pervades the life of the school; and
- the outstanding work of the school in the local, national and international community.

5.3 The inspection has identified that Harberton School and the BELB should continue to work closely, to ensure the effectiveness of the Harberton support programme within the continuum of provision for special educational needs within the BELB.

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.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2010

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the ETI website: www.etini.gov.uk

