

eti

*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*



CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

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

**Newtownbreda Primary School
Belfast**

Inspected: May 2008

CONTENTS

Section		Page
	STATISTICAL INFORMATION	
1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	THE QUALITY OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK	1
3.	CONCLUSION	4

BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Newtownbreda Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 12/05/08**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 401-1610** iv. **Nature of Inspection: FI/SEN/Ma/ICT**

B.

School Year	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Year 1 Intake	24	20	16	12	9
Enrolments					
Primary	185	187	159	144	118
Reception	5	6	0	0	0
Nursery Class/Classes	0	0	0	0	0
Special Unit	0	0	0	0	0

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.

The calculations at C and D should be based on the total of the primary and reception enrolments only.

- C. Average Attendance for the Previous School Year
 (expressed as a percentage): 94.2%
- | | Primary &
Reception | Nursery
Unit | Special
Unit |
|---|--|---------------------------|-----------------|
| D. i. Number of Teachers
(including the principal and part-time teachers):
(Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours) | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): | 19.7 | NI PTR: 20.8 | |
| iii. Average Class Size: | 19.7 | | |
| iv. Class Size (Range): | 16 to 28 | | |
| v. Ancillary Support:
Number of Hours Per Week : | i. Clerical support:
ii. Official Making A Good
Start Support:
iii. Additional hours of other
classroom assistant support: | 1

15

36 | |
| vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: | | | 2.54% |
| vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: | | | 25.42% |
| viii. Number of children who are not of statutory school age: | | | 0 |
| ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: | | | 17.8% |

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Newtownbreda Primary School is situated in the Newtownbreda village area of South Belfast. Most of the children attending the school come from the streets and housing developments in the area. The enrolment has seen a gradual decline over the past five years and currently stands at 118. Approximately 18% of the children are entitled to receive free school meals and the school identifies some 25.42% of the children as having special educational needs.

1.2 The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents and teachers to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection, as well as meeting with a representative from the Board of Governors (governors) and a group of children from years 6 and 7. Eighty-nine questionnaires were issued to parents; approximately 60% were returned to the Department of Education (DE) of which 33 contained additional written comments. The responses from the parental and teacher questionnaires were very positive in their support of the school and, in particular, of the commitment of the Principal and the staff to the well-being and education of the children. Parents and teachers registered the concern caused by the uncertainty surrounding the future of the school; this and the very few other concerns raised by the parents have been discussed with the Principal and representative of the governors. The representative of the governors expressed confidence in the school and referred particularly to the hard work of the Principal and the caring attitude of the staff towards the children. The findings of the inspection endorse all of these views. It was also reported that uncertainties about the future have adversely affected staffing, curricular and other planning, financial matters, community perceptions of the school and the enrolment. The children indicated that they feel happy and safe in the school.

1.3 The inspection focused primarily on the work in numeracy and the effectiveness of the school's special educational needs (SEN) provision. In addition, the inspection evaluated the work in information and communication technology (ICT) in promoting and supporting learning and teaching in mathematics. The inspection also evaluated the school's procedures for pastoral care, including child protection and the support for the health and well-being of the pupils.

2. THE QUALITY OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK

2.1 The school provides a friendly and caring learning environment for the children; their work and achievements are celebrated in displays throughout the school. The children are courteous and friendly with visitors. In many of the classes observed, they were responsive and when given the opportunity, eager to contribute to class discussions; they were engaged and motivated and, on the few occasions observed, generally worked well together in group and paired activities. Relationships and behaviour are good; there are orderly routines and most of the children settle well to their work. During lunch time, the year 7 children take part in a Playground Buddy programme to ensure that younger children are supported in play activities. The teaching and support staff work closely as a team and the non-teaching staff make a valuable contribution to the life and work of the school.

2.2 The children's personal and social development is enhanced through their participation in a wide range of extra-curricular activities and after-school clubs including netball, football, scripture union, first aid and French. There are also regular school trips. The school has very strong links with the community and with neighbouring schools.

2.3 The school has shown commitment to communicating with parents on curriculum and pastoral matters with regular opportunities for the parents to consult with the teachers both formally and informally. The Principal and governors have worked hard to keep parents informed of plans and proposals that affect the future of the school. There is an active Parent Teacher Association: its fundraising, for example, helped purchase interactive whiteboards (IWBs) for the school and resources for the library.

2.4 The school's programme for the promotion of health and well-being has important strengths. Attention is paid to the development and implementation of healthy eating and physical activity programmes, for example Fruity Fridays, encouragement of water and links with external agencies and the wider community, which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles. The areas for improvement identified include the need to:

- explore ways to encourage a higher uptake of healthy breaks and packed lunches; and
- incorporate food-related health initiatives taking place in the school into a healthy eating policy.

2.5 The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection in the school is very good.

2.6 The school has procedures in place which implement fully the guidance outlined in the relevant Department of Education (DE) Circulars. The governors, staff, parents and children are aware of the school's procedures and have had the opportunity to contribute to a range of effective policies which guide the work of the school. Among the strengths are:

- the quality of the relationships throughout the school;
- the very caring ethos which promotes the welfare of the children, including the provision of counselling services through liaison with the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and initiatives such as the Playground Buddy programme;
- the high priority currently given to the health and well-being of the staff; and
- the recent review of the school's behaviour management policy and the effective implementation of assertive discipline strategies within the classrooms.

2.7 During the inspection, in most of the lessons observed, the quality of the teaching was good or better. In the best practice, the teachers had appropriately high expectations, good open-style of questioning encouraged children's thinking skills and they were provided with opportunities to talk about their learning. A good start has also been made to the sharing of learning intentions with the children. In the less successful practice there was a tendency towards too much teacher direction and closed questioning eliciting a limited response from the children.

2.8 The planning for mathematics provides clear outline guidance for the teachers and specifies a broad range of mathematical experiences for the children. In general, however, there is a need to review this planning to ensure greater progression particularly with regard to data-handling and shape and space and also to promote mental strategies as an integral part of the mathematics programme. The school has already identified the need for improvement in the standards in data-handling and shape and space.

2.9 In the early years, there is a strong emphasis on active, play-based learning; the children are developing early mathematical language, concepts and understanding appropriate to their age and ability. Through the use of games, rhymes, action songs, stories, well-chosen resources and effective questioning by the teacher, the children acquire a sound understanding of shape, length, number, time and sorting information. As the children progress through key stages (KS) 1 and 2, they often enjoy their mathematics and achieve success over a broad range of work. They maintain a good standard of presentation in their books, in response to the high expectations and the detailed and encouraging marking of the teachers. The children's skills in written calculation are mostly good. There is evidence that they are developing effective skills to work together in groups although this is at an early stage. There is however some variation in the standards achieved in mathematics and in the children's confidence and understanding of their work. In the best practice seen, the children are given appropriate time and encouragement to communicate and explain their mathematical thinking although this needs to be disseminated more consistently. In general, there is a need to provide greater challenge in the pupils' mathematical experiences. The children enjoy useful board games and other practical activities which give them opportunity to practice their thinking skills and strategies. These skills need to be promoted further in the children's class activities, for example, developing problem-solving strategies and communicating orally, to their peers, their ideas and understanding of mathematical concepts.

2.10 The mathematics co-ordinator monitors the children's work through regular sampling of their books; there is a need to develop this work more rigorously to promote improvement as identified by the school's own evaluation and confirmed by the inspection. The resources available in the early years have benefited significantly through the involvement of parents in the recent Family Numeracy Project, in co-operation with a neighbouring school and supported by the South Eastern Education and Library Board.

2.11 It is appropriate that the school has identified the greater use of ICT as a priority for improvement in the school development plan (SDP). In general, it is underdeveloped to support learning and teaching in mathematics. The teachers and the children are gaining in confidence and competence in the use of the IWBs; in the best practice seen, the children were engaged and challenged through their use. The children make reasonable use of a range of ICT applications including word-processing, data-handling packages and PowerPoint. The children are developing fair to good ICT skills.

2.12 The quality of the work of the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) is a strong feature of the school. Approximately 25% of the children are identified by the school as requiring additional support for learning. The current provision for the children is through normal class teaching, withdrawal sessions and specific peripatetic support. The SENCO liaises with class teachers to prepare individual education plans (IEPs) which are reviewed on a regular basis and the progress is reported to the parents. The short-term targets in the IEPs are sharply focused and measurable, address equally literacy and numeracy and assist the teachers in the monitoring and evaluation of the children's progress. Strong links have been established with a range of external support agencies, in order to meet effectively the children's needs; this includes those children with English as an additional language (EAL).

2.13 The acting Principal has been in post since September of last year. Together with the acting Vice-principal who has also been in post for a similar period of time, he has worked hard to promote the school within the community at a time of growing uncertainty surrounding the future of the school and has secured the support of the parents and governors. His leadership is both supportive and inclusive, encouraging all members of staff to become involved in decision-making processes and they have made a good start to evaluating quantitative data to inform future planning. There is a need to monitor and evaluate more effectively the quality of the children's learning experiences and develop effective strategies to bring about improvement in those areas identified by the school.

2.14 Although the SDP has identified important areas for development, it needs to be further adjusted to bring it into line with the legislation outlined in the relevant circulars.

2.15 The internal and external environs of the school are pleasant, safe and well-maintained; the standard of caretaking is excellent.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the well mannered and responsive children;
- the quality of the teaching which was good or better in most of the lessons observed;
- the high quality of the provision for those children who require additional support for their learning;
- the positive and supportive ethos in the school including the wide range of extra-curricular experiences provided for the children;
- the good standards of presentation of the children's work in response to the consistently high expectations of the teachers; and
- the hard work and commitment of the Principal in caring for his staff and promoting the school within the community at a time of uncertainty.

3.2 The areas for improvement include:

- the need for greater progression and challenge in the mathematics programme, giving a higher profile to the development of mathematical thinking and mental strategies; and
- the need for more rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the quality of the children's learning and experiences.

In the areas inspected, the school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified minor areas for improvement which the school has the capacity to address.

The school's progress on the areas for improvement will be followed-up by monitoring visits, conducted by the District Inspector.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2008

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 DE website: www.deni.gov.uk or may be obtained from the Inspection Services Branch, Department of Education, Rathgael House, 43 Balloo Road, Bangor, Co Down BT19 7PR.