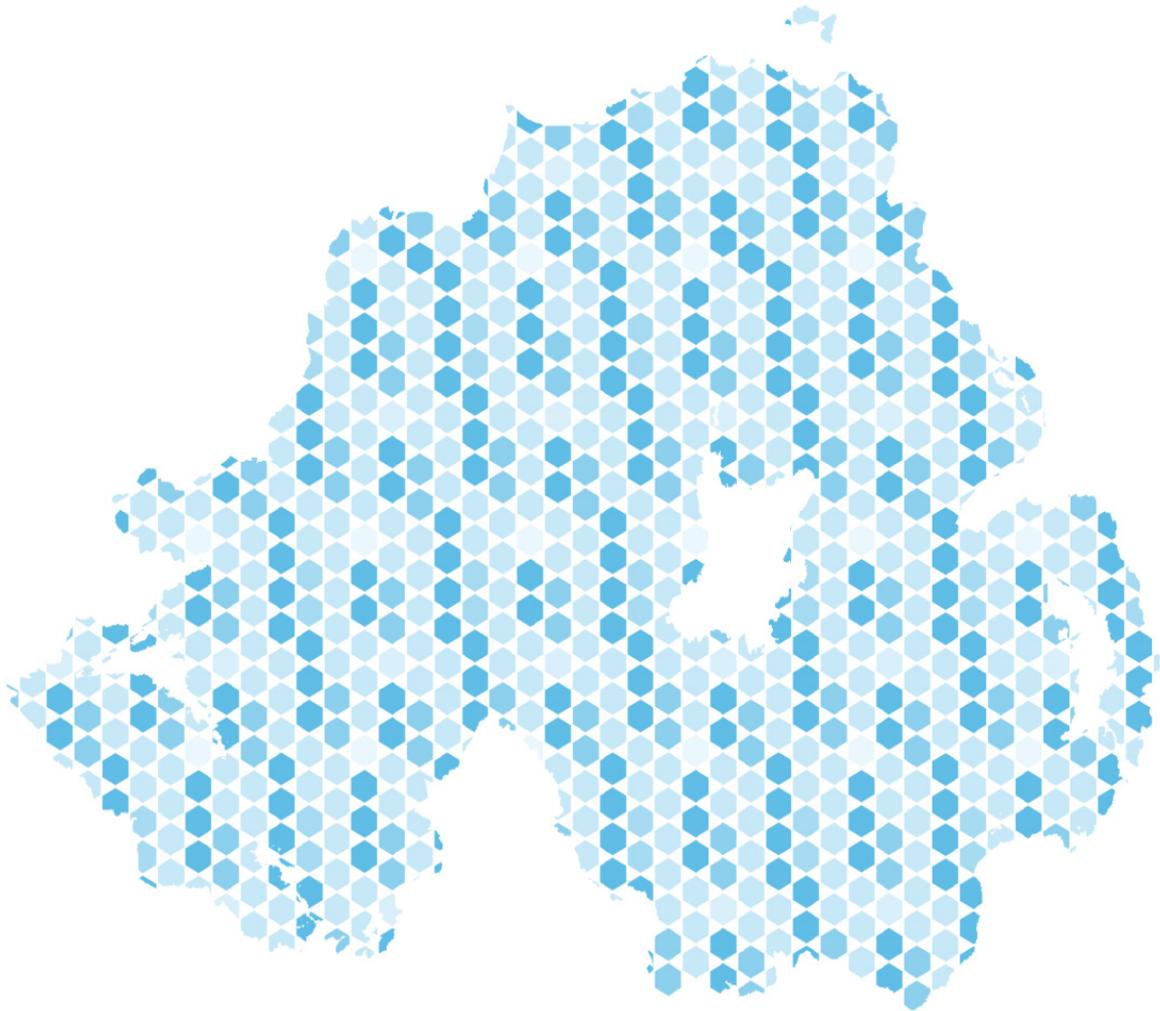


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Joseph's Primary School,
Belfast

Report of an Inspection
in May 2011



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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, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: St Joseph's Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 09/05/11**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 103-6621** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Year 1 Intake	25	31	28	37	24
Enrolments					
Primary	250	239	231	226	206
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Unit	0	0	0	0	0
Special Unit	0	0	0	0	0
Irish Medium 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):

92%

NI Avg Att: 94.9%

Primary & Reception	Nursery Unit	Special Unit	Irish Medium Unit
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- D. i. Number of Teachers
(including the principal and part-time teachers): 11 0 0 0
(Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 18.7 NI PTR: 20.7
- iii. Average Class Size: 21
- iv. Class Size (Range): 17 to 27
- v. Ancillary Support:
Number of Hours **Per Week**:
- | | |
|---|------|
| i. Clerical support: | 32.5 |
| ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support: | 50 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 50 |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 4%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 43%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 53.4%
- x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2009/10 who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics: **English** 51% **Mathematics** 44%

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Joseph's Primary School is situated at the junction of the Grosvenor Road and Cullingtree Road in West Belfast; it sits in the second most deprived ward in Northern Ireland in terms of multiple deprivation. Since the last inspection, in 2002, the overall enrolment has decreased steadily from 274 children to the current figure of 206 children. Over the last five years there has been a significant increase in the number of newcomer children who speak English as their second language; currently 20% of the school population. Almost 54% of the children in the school are entitled to free school meals and the school's special educational needs (SEN) register indicates that 43% of the children have been identified as having a wide range of special educational needs.

1.2 FOCUS

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy;
- the quality of provision for learning; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning, and the school's arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection were evaluated.

1.3 THE VIEWS OF THE PARENTS, TEACHERS, GOVERNORS, SUPPORT STAFF AND CHILDREN

The arrangements for the inspection 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 year 6. A small number of staff and a group of parents met with the reporting Inspector during the inspection to convey their views.

The parental responses all expressed a very high level of satisfaction with all aspects of the educational and pastoral provision being provided. In particular, they reported their appreciation of the work of the supportive teaching staff, the very strong sense of community and the very good opportunities for parents to be involved in the life and work of the school.

The responses to the teacher questionnaires and meetings with individual staff all indicated a strong commitment from the staff to meeting the educational and pastoral needs of the children. In addition, many staff indicated their appreciation of the pastoral approach of the Principal and the work of the Parent Support Co-ordinator (PSC).

The support staff questionnaires were wholly positive about the inclusive nature of the school, the work of the Principal and staff and the good opportunities for ongoing professional development and training. The governors also reported their strong support for the dedicated work of the Principal and the staff in meeting the needs of the children and their families. The small number of issues raised through the questionnaires have been discussed with the Principal and the governors and are addressed in the body of the report.

In discussion with a group of children from year 6, the children reported that they feel happy and safe at school and are aware of who to approach if they have any concerns. They talked about their enjoyment of a wide range of activities in the school including sport, drama and mathematics.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in this school is excellent. The strengths of the pastoral care provision include the inclusive, caring ethos leading to a very strong sense of community and the clear focus on helping children to surmount a wide range of barriers to learning. In addition, there is a highly effective approach to involving the parents in education and the life of the school, and there is a wide range of extra curricular activities, which enhance further the children's learning experiences.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

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

1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives excellent attention to promoting a healthy lifestyle through a range of initiatives such as a dental programme, healthy food policy and cookery classes. The children also engage in a wide range of physical activity through playground games, physical education and sports.

1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The excellent work with parents, developed over a sustained period of time, is a model of best practice which places the school at the heart of the community. Parents are kept well informed and their views are valued by the school. Health, education and parenting support services, including cross-community involvement, is managed together in a co-ordinated way under the effective management of the PSC. Evaluations carried out by the school demonstrate the effectiveness of this work through, for example, improvements in individual children's attendances, a reduction in suspensions and severe behaviour incidents and the increasing number of parents who have resumed their own education. Newcomer children and their families are provided with the opportunity to participate in an excellent induction programme.

The extra-curricular activities provide through the Extended Schools funding supports and enriches the educational and social experiences of the children, the parents and the wider community. Excellent arrangements are in place to ensure smooth transitions and inductions for the children coming from the local nursery, to primary school and local post primary schools. The school has developed outstanding links with the local nursery schools, for example, some of the classroom assistants from the foundation stage (FS) and the nursery school spend one day a week working in the other setting.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 assessment data over the past four years shows that in mathematics and English, the school's performance is consistently well below the Northern Ireland average. Compared with schools in the same free school meals category, the levels

of attainment in mathematics and English are also below the average. The schools internal data demonstrates that most of the children are working in line with their ability and there is evidence of improving trends in recent years; these improvements need to continue.

Most of the children appear happy and interested in their learning; they are generally well motivated and are confident to participate during lessons.

Most of the children can work well together in pairs and groups when provide with the opportunity to do so and given the appropriate support. The younger children show enjoyment and very good levels of sustained involvement as they engage in a wide range of learning during well resourced play sessions.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The quality of provision for English and literacy is good.

On entry to school, a majority of the children display difficulties with aspects of their learning; including speech and language difficulties. As they progress through the school, the majority of the children are making good progress and they are becoming more confident in expressing themselves orally. In the FS and KS1, play-based learning areas and activities are generally used very effectively to encourage the children to extend their vocabulary and communicate with their peers. As they progress through KS1 and KS2, the children's talking and listening skills are promoted effectively in most classes. In the best practice throughout the school, the teachers provide regular opportunities to promote the children's confidence in sharing ideas through discussion, group work and plenary sessions. In these classes, the teachers use open-ended questioning to challenge the children's thinking and they encourage the children to make extended spoken responses.

The school has a range of approaches to the development of reading skills, including a phonics programme as well as shared and guided reading experiences. The school is now identifying those children who are in danger of low or under-performance in reading; a range of intervention approaches are being used to boost the children's overall attainment, self-esteem and confidence. For example, the school has provided training for parents and classroom assistants in the delivery of the Reading Partnership programme; their involvement has brought about improvement in reading for the targeted groups of children. There needs to be a greater emphasis on the development of a book-rich environment throughout the school; the range of books within many of the classrooms needs to be extended and displayed more attractively by the teachers to encourage and promote the love of reading. The standard of reading observed and the school's performance data suggest that, by the end of KS2, most of the children are achieving in line with their ability.

In the FS, the children develop letter formation and word-building skills through simple recording, work sheets and shared writing activities. In addition, there are good opportunities for the younger children to develop confidence and motivation for writing in meaningful contexts and mark making during well-planned play-based sessions. As the children progress across KS1 and KS2, the teachers build on the children's emergent writing skills by teaching the structures and conventions of various writing genres. There is evidence to show that the most of the children are developing their craft as writers but these opportunities for extended writing are not evident in all classes. Most of the teachers need to provide a wider range of more appropriately matched activities to support the children experiencing difficulties and to raise further the standards achieved, particularly by the more able children who often require greater challenge with well-planned extension activities.

While the children have opportunities to use ICT to refine the presentation of their work and for research purposes, overall the use of ICT to support learning and teaching in English and literacy is under-developed.

The teachers need to tailor their existing planning formats to place greater emphasis on the differentiated experiences they provide for the children based on their previous assessments and evaluations of whether the learning has been achieved for individual children and groups of children.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The quality of provision for mathematics and numeracy is satisfactory.

The children experience a suitable range of opportunities to develop their understanding of number, shape and space, measures and data-handling. In the FS, the children use practical equipment, everyday materials and programmable devices to good effect as they develop their ability to sort, count, estimate and measure. In KS1, the children are posing their own number problems and using appropriate mathematical language associated with concepts such as measurement and area. In KS2, the children, when provided with the appropriate opportunities, are able to analyse and present meaningful data which is linked to their topic work and to work independently. Mental mathematics sessions, to consolidate the children's understanding and recall of basic number facts, were observed in all the classes. In the best practice, these sessions were well-paced and appropriately matched to the children's needs.

The teachers need to implement consistently more effective teaching and learning strategies to match the work more closely to the children's widely varying needs and abilities and promote higher levels of engagement. There is currently, at times, an over-emphasis on repetitive and routine calculations. When appropriate the teachers need to make more effective use of extension and problem solving activities to provide challenge, in particular, for the more able children.

In a minority of lessons the teachers use ICT effectively to support learning and teaching in mathematics. Overall the use of ICT to support learning and teaching in mathematics is under-developed.

The numeracy co-ordinator is enthusiastic and committed to improving the provision for numeracy. Together with the assistant numeracy co-ordinator, they have made a useful start to monitoring and evaluating the quality of the planning, learning and teaching of mathematics across the school. The analysis of performance data provided an informed evaluation of the standards achieved by the children, and identified appropriate areas for development. The co-ordinators have identified the need to plan more systematically for whole school development in mathematics. In particular, they need to ensure that whole-school planning for mathematics provides greater coherence and progression to guide the teachers. Additionally, there needs to be an increased focus on developing processes in mathematics and integrating the use of investigations into lessons to provide additional challenge and enjoyment for all the children.

The school is currently working with local schools to pilot a benchmarking tool to establish the numeracy capabilities of children in year 1 and year 2. This will provide useful information to help track more effectively the children's progress in mathematics and to identify, at an early stage, those children requiring additional numeracy support.

Most of the children achieve standards in mathematics that are in line with or above their ability. A minority do not, and this includes children across the ability range including those who have significant additional needs and require more intensive and targeted support. During the inspection, the highest attaining children in years 4 and 7 demonstrated a secure understanding across most areas of the numeracy programme; the year 7 children in particular were able to use effective mental strategies and demonstrate flexibility in their mathematical thinking.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The staff have reviewed and made useful amendments to aspects of their planning by highlighting, for example, whole-class learning intentions and success criteria. The teachers' planning for specific focus groups needs to be broadened and further developed to specify more precisely the learning intentions, teaching strategies and evaluation of learning for the full range of ability groups within the classes. In the best practice, the evaluations are clearly focused on the learning outcomes and the information is used to inform future planning.

3.2 TEACHING

The quality of the teaching observed during the inspection ranged from satisfactory to very good. All of the teaching observed was satisfactory with a majority being good or very good.

The staff place an appropriate emphasis on creating a positive climate for learning using a range of approaches to effectively promote the children's positive behaviour. They also encourage the children's confidence and self-esteem by valuing the children's contributions. In the best practice, teachers provide a creative, stimulating and well resourced learning environment which is used to foster interest and encourage independent learning. In addition, they use effective and appropriate questioning which promotes the children's thinking skills and develops their language through extended responses. The teachers regularly help the children to make connections in their learning through meaningful cross-curricular links. They reflect on their teaching strategies and adapt them to improve and develop the learning opportunities further.

In the less effective practice, there was an imbalance between whole class teaching and smaller group sessions restricting the opportunities for tailoring the teaching to the appropriate level of need and ability. When the pace of the lesson was too slow children became disengaged with their learning while, at other times, the children had insufficient time to complete tasks to a high standard. The teaching approaches, task set and levels of questioning were poorly matched by these teachers to the full range of children's ability and a wider range of resources could be used to foster independent learning. Teachers also had insufficiently high expectations of all of the children who lacked, at times, appropriate challenge and support.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

The school has made a useful start to collating performance data including standardised tests to help identify those children who are either under-achieving or are having difficulty with aspects of their learning. As a result, target groups have been created to support children who the teachers suggested were capable of higher standards. There is emerging

evidence that this is beginning to have a positive impact on the children's learning and the standards they achieve. The school needs to develop its evaluation through a wider range of first-hand evidence, including the more regular examination of samples of the children's written work, to complement the analysis of collated data.

The teachers generally mark the children's work regularly and supportively. In the most effective practice, they provide the children with appropriate comments on how their learning can be improved. The teachers need to ensure that the children have opportunities to respond to these comments in order to improve the quality of their work.

The children's achievements and standards are reported to their parents regularly through an annual written report, formal parent-teacher meetings and through informal contacts between teachers and parents. The written report provides the parents with an account of the children's strengths and areas for improvement across the curriculum.

3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The overall quality of the provision for children who require additional support with aspects of their learning is satisfactory.

The school's SEN register indicates that a high proportion (43%) of children have been identified as having special education needs. The school reports that increasingly these needs are becoming more complex while significant number of children also face other barriers to learning.

The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) who was also the former SEN withdrawal teacher, returned to full-time class teaching duties in September 2010; the in-school support for children with special educational needs is now met primarily through the work of the class teachers and support staff within the classrooms. Many of the staff have received a range of professional development on a range of SEN issues. The senior management team (SMT) needs to ensure that these training experiences and the 'good practice' within the school are disseminated throughout the school.

Children with language, social and learning difficulties benefit from well focused in-class support from trained classroom assistants. There are occasions, however, where a few children in classes become disengaged and require more individualised and focused support where the current programme is not meeting their individual needs.

Individual educational plans (IEPs) set out targets, which are reviewed regularly with the parents and the children. The targets need to be more sharply focused on outcomes, linked more closely to the individual needs of the child and used to indicate the effectiveness of the teaching support and the progress the children make. The teachers also need to include greater reference to individual IEPs, children's needs and differentiated work within their written planning.

The school values the wide range of external support being provided to individual children through withdrawal sessions. The school reports that the children with special educational needs make satisfactory to good progress overall.

The SENCO now needs to develop a better overview of the different forms of support available and the effectiveness of the support provision, closely co-ordinate and more rigorously monitor and evaluate the overall provision in order to demonstrate improvement in standards and achievements for all of the children.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The overall quality of leadership and management is satisfactory.

The Principal, who has been in post for 21 years, has very effectively developed the school to be a significant and valued focal point for children and families within the community. She has a deep understanding and concern for the wider needs of the children and families; she has provided a very good lead in demonstrating a holistic and strongly pastoral approach to meeting those needs. The Vice-principal, who has been in post for eleven years, has recently returned to classroom teaching; her role within the SMT needs to be defined and developed further.

All of the staff have taken increased responsibility for developing aspects of school life and the curriculum; many are in the early stages of developing these roles. It is timely that all roles and responsibilities within the school are due for immediate review. The governors, employing authority and Principal need to work together to ensure that all roles are more clearly defined and matched more closely to the needs of the school. In particular, the effectiveness of the management and leadership in curricular development needs to be more clearly monitored and evaluated to provide a sharper focus on enhancing the provision and raising overall standards further.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

Since the last inspection in 2002, the school has focused on, and developed successfully, the strategies for promoting positive behaviour and attendance and developing links with parents, the community and local schools. In addition, the school has, with varying degrees of success, implemented aspects of their training on the Northern Ireland Curriculum. The school has received intensive support over the last three years from the Belfast Education and Library Board, through the Achieving Belfast Initiative. The main area of focus has been on raising standards and achievements in literacy and numeracy through identifying target groups; there is some indication of improvement being made by these children. The Principal has valued this support.

Parent, staff, children and governors are all consulted to ensure that their views contribute to the school development planning process. The teaching and support staff have the opportunity for a wide range of ongoing staff development. The implementation and impact of this training, along with all ongoing initiatives, need to be more rigorously monitored and evaluated. This monitoring and evaluation by the SMT need to be more focused on the effectiveness of the teaching strategies being employed and the extent to which they are making a difference to the children's learning and the standards they are achieving. In addition, the school development planning process also requires more specific action planning, and more rigorous and focused monitoring and evaluation at all levels which focuses more clearly on outcomes for the children in order to improve standards further. The current school development plan should be amended to reflect the inspection findings.

4.3 ACCOMMODATION, RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The accommodation is good and there are adequate resources to support the children's learning. The building is well maintained and presented. The school has identified a number of appropriate priorities such as the development of the outdoor area and resources for learning outdoors. More consistent use could be made by the teachers of the library and books and computers within classrooms to support children's learning.

The governors report that they are kept well informed and are committed to the continued development of the school.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the excellent quality of the pastoral care;
- the sustained work to develop outstanding links with families, schools and the community;
- the good to very good teaching in a majority of the lessons observed;
- the children's good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning;
- the increased focus on raising standards and early indications of progress; and
- the key role of the Principal and the dedication of the whole staff team in supporting the children and their families.

5.2 The areas for improvement include:

- the need to develop more rigorous and focused monitoring and evaluation at all levels which focuses more clearly on effective teaching strategies and outcomes for all of the children;
- the need to review all roles and responsibilities in order to ensure consistent and continuous whole-school curricular development; and
- the need to develop further the planning and classroom practice to focus more sharply on the learning and teaching for the full range of ability groups.

5.3 In the areas inspected, the quality of the education provided by this school is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in standards, teaching and learning and leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all of the learners are to be met more effectively. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the schools progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

ACCOMMODATION

- There is only one toilet available for the female staff.
- The grills on the windows restrict the ventilation within the classrooms.
- The dual use of the playground to facilitate parents dropping off and collecting children limits the availability for pupil use to a more restricted timescale.

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