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*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

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Focused Inspection

**St Therese of Lisieux Primary School
Belfast**

Inspected: September 2009

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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 Therese of Lisieux Primary Belfast** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 28/09/09**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 103-6132** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Year 1 Intake	68	59	63	67	61
Enrolments					
Primary	440	437	446	451	448
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): 96%

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): 18.7 0 0 0
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 23.96 NI PTR: 20.4
- iii. Average Class Size: 26
- iv. Class Size (Range): 20 to 34
- v. Ancillary Support:
 Number of Hours **Per Week**:
- | | |
|---|-----|
| i. Clerical support: | 72 |
| ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support: | 80 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 329 |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 2.68%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 18.30%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 8.48%
- x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2008/09 who attained level 4 and above at English and mathematics: **English** 79.69% **Mathematics** 82.82%

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Therese of Lisieux Primary School is situated on the Antrim Road in north Belfast. The majority of the children who attend the school come from the vicinity, a few travel from further afield. The current enrolment of the school stands at 448. Approximately 8% of the children are entitled to free school meals (FSM). The school has identified 18% of the children as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning.

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. In addition, the inspection report will make reference to the contribution of information and communication technology (ICT) in promoting and supporting learning. The school's arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection, were also evaluated.

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

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents and the teaching 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.

One hundred and thirteen questionnaires were issued to parents; approximately 50% of the parental questionnaires were returned to the Department of Education (DE). Thirty-five of the returns contained additional written comments. The responses from parental questionnaires indicated a high level of satisfaction with the quality of the provision in the school. In particular, the parents acknowledged the caring staff and the warm and friendly atmosphere that permeates the school. In addition, the parents highlighted the respect in which the school is held within the local community. An analysis of the questionnaires and the written comments and any issues raised by the parents were shared with the Principal and the governors.

Eighteen teachers completed the confidential online questionnaire; two teachers included additional written comments. All of the responses were affirmative of the work of the school; the comments made reference to the friendly and supportive atmosphere that exists.

The governors spoke of the very good working relationships between themselves and the staff of the school. In particular, they commented on how well the staff and governors work together to promote the children's welfare and learning.

The children talked enthusiastically about the many aspects of school that they enjoy. The discussions with the children indicated that they are aware of what to do if they have any worries about their safety and well-being.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is very good. The school has in place appropriate action plans for the ongoing development of the pastoral provision. These plans include the establishment of a student council as a means of involving the children more fully in the decision-making process about issues which affect them in school. The strengths of the pastoral provision include:

- the inclusive, caring and supportive ethos throughout the school which fosters a strong sense of community;
- the good quality of the working relationships; and
- the effective contribution made by the support staff to the children's well-being.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

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

1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives outstanding attention to promoting healthy eating. There is an effective healthy eating policy in place and meaningful links are established with outside agencies to encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles. The school has appropriate plans in place to provide further opportunities for the children to engage in physical activities.

1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The parents are kept informed about the life of the school through a range of means including regular newsletters and an informative website. They were also included in an effective consultation process during the recent review of the positive behaviour policy. The school has a range of meaningful links with other schools and agencies to support and enhance its provision. The children participate in a variety of useful educational activities and visits in the local and wider community. The school is developing additional links to benefit further the children's learning experiences.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

The majority of the children make appropriate progression in their knowledge, understanding and skills. They display a positive attitude to and enjoyment of their learning. When presented with challenging activities they demonstrate the ability to solve problems and complete investigations. The teaching and support staff need to take further opportunities to help the children to develop as independent learners, to encourage them to be flexible in their thinking and to raise further the standards they attain.

An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 assessment data over the past four years shows that in English, the school's performance is consistently above the Northern Ireland (NI) average. Compared with schools in a similar FSM category, the levels of attainment in English are above the average.

An analysis of the KS2 assessment data over the past four years shows that in mathematics, the school's performance is consistently above the NI average. Compared with schools in a similar FSM category, the levels of attainment in mathematics are, however, below the average.

Appropriately, the school has prioritised in the School Development Plan the need to continue to improve standards in literacy and numeracy, with a particular emphasis on the latter.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The quality of the provision for English and literacy in the school is good.

The literacy team, under the guidance of its enthusiastic and hard-working co-ordinator, has worked effectively to produce an appropriate action plan. A whole-school phonics programme was introduced in September 2008, with the aim of establishing consistent practice in developing the children's literacy skills. The impact of this action has still to be evaluated; policies, such as those on marking and spelling, will need to be updated in the light of this evaluation.

The annual schemes of work provide a good framework for progression. In the teachers' six-weekly plans, literacy across the curriculum including speaking and listening, reading and writing are integrated fully within the framework of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities are embedded within these plans and are developing well through a range of well-planned classroom activities.

In the foundation stage (FS) the children experiment confidently with letter and word formation through a range of enjoyable play-based activities. There are good examples of informal and emergent writing displayed in classrooms.

Written work, at a level appropriate to the children's stage of development, is marked regularly. In the best practice at KS1 and KS2, the children's extended writing is supported well and assessment is closely linked to the agreed success criteria. There is a need for staff to apply the agreed marking policy more consistently to raise further the standards the children attain.

In FS and KS1, the children acquire basic reading skills through the development of phonological awareness, as well as through shared and guided reading. During the inspection, the children were observed reading aloud from an increasingly demanding range of texts. They did so fluently and spoke enthusiastically about their enjoyment of reading. The children's standard of reading is good.

Activity-based learning at FS and KS1 is used effectively to promote the acquisition of the children's oral skills. At KS2, the effective use of clearly defined roles and responsibilities in group work enables focused and purposeful discussion and higher levels of engagement in the set tasks. The literacy co-ordinator, in co-operation with the senior leadership team, needs to identify and disseminate this best practice in order to raise standards further.

The effective use of ICT engages the children well and supports their learning in literacy.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The quality of provision for mathematics and numeracy is good.

The programme for mathematics provides the children with a wide range of experiences. In the FS, the children establish their understanding of mathematical concepts through a suitable range of practical activities. They had good opportunities to develop their mathematical language and discuss their thinking. There is a need for the staff to build consistently on this best practice.

In KS1 and 2 the children engage in a variety of problem-solving and investigative mathematics activities and work collaboratively with their peers in pairs and small groups. The teachers assess the children's work thoroughly and use their assessments to adapt their teaching to meet more effectively the needs of all the learners. In the best practice, mental mathematics activities are appropriately challenging and well paced; the teachers use effective questioning to challenge children's thinking and encourage them to explain their strategies. These approaches need to be applied more consistently across the school. The teachers need to continue to reflect upon their teaching to ensure that their expectations of what children can achieve and the pace at which they work are sufficiently high.

The numeracy co-ordinator is hard-working and enthusiastic. She leads effectively the monitoring and evaluation of the children's mathematical learning through, for example, sampling of the children's work, reviewing the teaching plans and analysis of the available data. A draft programme outlining progression in numeracy has been developed; this good work provides useful guidance for the class teachers to create their medium and short-term planning. A very effective numeracy action plan has identified the need to ensure that teachers employ a range of strategies to improve children's attainment in numeracy. It is important that in doing so they are given the necessary support and guidance to implement these strategies effectively.

During the inspection the children in years 4 and 7 demonstrated their ability to think mathematically across all areas of the numeracy programme. The majority of the children are able to talk with confidence about their experiences, have a good understanding of mathematical concepts and are able to work flexibly with numbers. By the end of year 7 the children achieve satisfactory standards in mathematics.

Information and communication technology is used very effectively to support learning in mathematics. The teachers make good use of computer programs, programmable devices, websites and learning platforms to develop the children's skills and understanding in mathematics. The year 7 children have participated very successfully in the Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment ICT Accreditation scheme.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The teachers prepare detailed medium and short-term planning documents that focus appropriately on what the children will be able to do, know, and understand at the end of a series of lessons. This good work is developing to include appropriate success criteria to measure the children's progress. The school recognises the need to develop further this work in the context of an agreed learning strategy that promotes opportunities for the children to apply their skills in increasingly challenging contexts.

3.2 TEACHING

Most of the teaching observed during the inspection was good or better. The features of the most effective practice included lessons that promoted meaningful active learning strategies. These lessons engaged fully the children in their learning and provided good pace and structure to the work. In addition, there was effective integration of ICT to support learning in both literacy and numeracy. The less effective lessons lacked challenge and included work that did not engage the children sufficiently to help them to remain on task.

The school has made very good progress in embracing the underlying principles of the NIC and this is reflected in the teaching observed during the inspection. To raise further the standards the children achieve, there is a need for the staff to apply more consistently a wider range of teaching strategies that build upon the children's interests and focus clearly on developing their learning.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

The school places appropriate emphasis on gathering assessment information on the children's progress. The teachers, guided by the hard-working assessment co-ordinator, use a range of standardised and end of KS tests to evaluate the children's learning. This performance data is analysed thoroughly and informs the setting of targets for improvement in aspects of literacy and numeracy. In addition, the data is used effectively to identify children who may require additional support with their learning. Further work needs to be done to link the analysis of the performance data to the evaluation of the effectiveness of classroom practice in order to lead to better outcomes for individual children.

The teachers implement strategies such as the sharing of learning intentions with the children and a good start has been made to the introduction of self and peer assessment. The teachers need to develop this work further through the use of shared success criteria to encourage the children to evaluate their own learning, become more independent and set meaningful targets for self-improvement.

The procedures for reporting the children's progress to parents are thorough. An annual meeting and written reports are provided and informal contacts all contribute effectively to the development of good links between the home and the school.

3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The school demonstrates an inclusive ethos which is characterised by the commitment of the staff to integrate and support children with a diverse range of needs. There is effective early identification of children who require additional intervention and good links have been made with staff from a broad range of outreach services. During the inspection, teachers and classroom assistants were observed giving sensitive and effective support to both individual and small groups of children. There is evidence of children being given access to all aspects of the curriculum, making progress and benefiting from the additional support being provided.

The children's Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are written and reviewed in consultation with the teacher, the enthusiastic and hard-working special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and the parents. The most effective IEPs are focused on clear, attainable and measurable targets for improvement. The children should be more involved in the target setting process in line with their age and stage of development.

The most recent special educational needs (SEN) action plan identifies a number of appropriate areas for continued development, including the need for the SENCO to lead the review and development of the SEN policy and to share it with the parents. In addition, the action plan focuses on the need to monitor and evaluate the most effective use of the 18 classroom assistants. The action plan should be amended to review and up-date the current system to ensure a more systematic approach to tracking individual children's year on year progress, to review the training needs of staff, and to inform classroom practice.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The school has had a number of significant changes in the senior leadership team in recent years. These changes have impacted upon the rate of change and development. During this period the leadership team and the staff have continued to work hard to develop aspects of the school's provision and are well-placed to embed and develop these further.

The Principal, who has led the school for two years, provides very good leadership and management of the school. In that time she has introduced and overseen a range of effective school improvement initiatives that are focused on improving the standards the children achieve.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The improvement process is clearly linked to the well-constructed school development plan (SDP). There are very good opportunities for consultation about the school development plan within the school community. Importantly, a culture of self-evaluation is developing well with policies and action plans in literacy and numeracy supporting effectively the process of school improvement. The school gives very good attention to, and meets fully the requirements of the SDP regulations (2005).

4.3 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The governors are fully involved in the strategic planning and policy development for the school and support effectively the Principal and the staff in the implementation of the SDP.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the very good leadership provided by the Principal;
- the quality of the strategic planning in promoting improvement and the effective support provided by the governors;
- the children's positive attitudes to their learning and their confidence in talking about their work;
- the high standards achieved by the children in their use of ICT;
- the good quality of most of the teaching observed during the inspection; and
- the inclusive ethos of the school.

5.2 The areas for improvement include the need to:

- raise further the standards the children attain in literacy and numeracy; and
- review and develop the SEN policy and share it with the parents.

5.3 In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided in this school is good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the school's progress on the areas for improvement.

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