



*The Education and Training Inspectorate -  
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**Department of Education  
Department for Employment and Learning  
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## **Education and Training Inspectorate**

### **Report of a Follow-up Inspection**

**Acorn Integrated Primary School  
Carrickfergus**

**May 2008**

## **FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF ACORN INTEGRATED PRIMARY SCHOOL, CARRICKFERGUS, CO ANTRIM, BT38 7JL (306-6568)**

The focused inspection in Acorn Integrated Primary School, Carrickfergus in May 2006 highlighted strengths in the good working relationships between the staff and the children, the behaviour of the children, the excellent pastoral care provision, the dedicated and committed teachers, the range and quality of the children's experiences using information and communication technology and the effective leadership of the Principal.

The inspection identified as areas for improvement the need to:

- develop further the practice in play-based learning; and
- develop further the leadership and management role of the co-ordinators to enable effective monitoring and evaluation of the children's learning experiences and attainments.

In the interval since the inspection, the following actions which affect the work of the school have taken place:

- the staff have engaged in sharing, discussing and disseminating their ideas and effective practice through regular staff meetings;
- the school has carried out an audit and drawn up a detailed action plan which focuses on extending the children's experiences through play-based learning which is being implemented;
- the layout within classrooms of equipment and resources has been reorganised to introduce learning areas to ensure that all the available space and time for the informal learning programme is used purposefully to promote the children's learning and thinking skills;
- the school has acquired additional resources for the foundation stage classrooms and for the outdoor learning environment;
- all the staff have received updated training in child protection;
- the teachers are planning for, and delivering, a broader range of learning experiences for the children;
- the outdoor play environment has been developed in the nursery unit;
- the school has allocated considerable time and resources to releasing co-ordinators from class on a termly basis to allow them to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate their area of the curriculum;
- school performance data is recorded and is being used more effectively to ensure that learning opportunities are appropriately targeted at individual children and groups within classes;

- the co-ordinators have introduced the setting of targets for improvement in the children's attainments in literacy and numeracy; and
- the teachers have introduced a monitoring system to begin to track individual children's progress throughout each year group.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) has carried out a series of inspection visits to the school as part of the follow-up process. A follow-up inspection took place on 14 May 2008. The school's development plan has been adjusted in light of the inspection findings.

The following are the most important improvements since the focused inspection:

- the teachers have introduced a greater variety of practical teaching approaches to involve the children more actively in their learning;
- the staff have introduced an appropriate range of strategies to promote the children's independence and thinking skills;
- the strong commitment by the school to the development and improvement of play-based learning and in particular, the good efforts made to liaise with the nursery unit in order to build on the children's previous learning experiences;
- the children are enjoying a wider range of experiences through play-based learning which provide good opportunities for challenge, investigation and the development of problem-solving and thinking skills;
- the ongoing development and implementation of more rigorous procedures to monitor and evaluate the work of the school. These have included the monitoring of planning and the children's work by the senior management team (SMT) and the curriculum co-ordinators; and
- the hard work of the Principal, the SMT and the staff who are committed to enhancing and promoting the work of the school involving all of the staff, parents and the local community.

Since the inspection, the school has evaluated the progress made in the areas for improvement identified in the original inspection. The promotion of a self-evaluative culture throughout the follow-up inspection has contributed significantly to the improvements made, and helped the school identify appropriately its priorities for future development. The inspection confirms that, through effective self-evaluation, the school demonstrated clear evidence of improvement. Accordingly, the Inspectorate recommends that the processes for self-evaluation now in place are maintained.

The school has made very good progress in the areas for improvement identified during the original inspection. The educational and pastoral needs of the learner are well met. The parents and broader community can have confidence in the effectiveness of the school's response to the findings of the inspection and its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

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