



*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

## **Education and Training Inspectorate**

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

**Blythefield Primary School  
Belfast**

**May 2009**

## **FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOCUSED INSPECTION OF BLYTHEFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL, BELFAST, CO ANTRIM, BT12 5HX (101-6207)**

The focused inspection in January 2007 highlighted strengths in the school's ethos and the commitment of the hard-working staff. The inspection identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- to develop a shared understanding of effective teaching and learning strategies and to disseminate this good practice throughout the school; and
- to focus more clearly on learning outcomes and classroom activities to ensure that the needs and abilities of all the children are met effectively.

In the interval since the inspection, the following action which affects the work of the school has taken place:

- the school's nursery unit closed on the 31 August 2008;
- the primary school's enrolment has continued to decline, from 111 in 2007 to the present figure of 96;
- a number of staffing changes and a subsequent re-allocation of roles and responsibilities have taken place, including the roles of special educational needs co-ordinator, literacy co-ordinator and pastoral care/child protection co-ordinator;
- a new Vice-principal was appointed, and immediately took up post as acting-Principal in September 2008;
- the school entered the Achieving Belfast Programme in September 2008, with a key focus on the development of numeracy;
- the pastoral care, and child protection policies and training for staff, have been updated; and
- the staff have undertaken a wide range of in-service training including linguistic phonics, drama to develop language and literacy, information and communication technology to support reading, and visits to other schools to observe effective practice.

The Education and Training Inspectorate carried out two monitoring visits in January 2008 and January 2009 and a subsequent follow-up inspection on 20 May 2009.

The action plan produced by the school in response to the inspection findings was of a satisfactory quality.

The school's development plan has been adjusted in light of the inspection findings. The development plan meets the statutory requirements as set out by the Department of Education.

Satisfactory progress has been made in the areas for improvement identified during the original inspection.

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

- the staff have engaged in a considerable range of professional training and development which has been disseminated effectively throughout the school; the quality of the teaching observed on the day of the follow-up inspection visit ranged from satisfactory to very good and was more consistently effective than during the original inspection;
- the teachers' short-term planning for literacy and the classroom practice observed are more clearly focused on meeting the intended learning outcomes;
- considerable effort has been made to improve the children's reading, for example; the introduction of a reading room is enabling children to access a greater range of reading materials suitably matched to their stage of development, parents are engaging as reading partners;

- there has been a strong focus on the continued development of linguistic phonics and there are early indications that, as a result of this, the children are beginning to demonstrate increased confidence and competence in their abilities to write independently and to decode unfamiliar words;
- parents have much better opportunities to be involved more fully in the life and work of the school and their children's learning through, for example, the range of classes organised by the parents' worker, newsletters, questionnaires and school events;
- a range of useful initiatives have been introduced to promote the children's positive behaviour both during class time and in the playground; these include Golden Time, activities and games in the playground and special assemblies; and
- the school's outdoor area has been developed and is being used much more effectively to provide valuable teaching and learning experiences outdoors.

The areas identified for further improvement include:

- the need to develop the children's writing further through the provision of more opportunities for them to engage in extended writing across all areas of learning within the curriculum; and
- the need to carry out more rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance data in order to inform school developments, and to raise further all the children's attainment in literacy and numeracy.

The school is beginning to develop and implement processes to self-evaluate its provision. During a period of significant challenge for the school, the absence of a Principal in a permanent capacity within the school has had an adverse impact on its ability to address systematically and more effectively the issues identified in the initial inspection and to effect further improvements particularly in the standards the children attain. The significant changes in leadership and staffing since the last inspection, the subsequent re-allocation of roles and responsibilities, and the introduction of a wide range of initiatives and programmes has resulted in a slower rate of progress in the past year. However, the acting-Principal and staff maintain a conscientious approach and commitment to the children. The inspection confirms that, through self-evaluation, the school has demonstrated some evidence of improvement. Accordingly, the processes for self-evaluation now in place need to be developed further.

In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided by this school remains satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The school has demonstrated some evidence of improvement but key areas for improvement in standards, learning and teaching and leadership and management remain to be addressed if the needs of all the learners are to be met effectively. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the school's progress in addressing these areas for improvement.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2009

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](http://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.