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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
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**Department of Education
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Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection

**St Joseph's Primary School Nursery Unit
Newry**

May 2009

FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF ST JOSEPH'S PRIMARY SCHOOL NURSERY UNIT, NEWRY, CO DOWN, BT35 7AW (503-6110)

The inspection in October 2007 highlighted strengths in the positive ethos in the nursery unit, the appropriate systems of planning, the support for the children identified as having special educational needs and the good links established with the parents and the local Sure Start group. The inspection also identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- to review and improve the organisation of the daily session to provide longer periods of uninterrupted play and to ensure that all time is used effectively to promote the children's learning; and
- to ensure that the planned programme is more appropriately matched to the needs and interests of the children, and provides more opportunities to develop the children's creativity and extend their thinking skills.

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

- a new teacher-in-charge was appointed to the nursery unit in January 2008; and
- the school invested in a soft play area and a large play house for the outdoor area, and additional new items of furniture and carpets were purchased for the playrooms.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) carried out a monitoring visit in October 2008 and a follow-up inspection on 11 May 2009.

The action plans produced by the nursery unit in response to the inspection findings were of very good quality and were adjusted appropriately in light of feedback given by the Inspectorate during the monitoring visit.

The primary school development plan has been adjusted in light of the inspection findings.

Very good progress has been made in the areas of improvement identified during the original inspection.

The following are the most important improvements since the inspection:

- the organisation of the daily session provides a good balance of free play and activities organised by the staff. The necessary routines provide valuable opportunities to promote language and learning as well as the children's independence and social skills;
- the children display a positive attitude to their learning and their behaviour is exemplary. During the inspection, there were many examples of purposeful and concentrated play when the children explored and enjoyed the full range of activities available;

- there are good opportunities for the children to learn in all aspects of the pre-school curriculum. The staff have worked hard to provide a broad and varied programme that progresses steadily throughout the year, and is tailored to meet the differing needs of the children. In particular, much emphasis is placed on developing the children's language, listening and creative skills;
- themes and topics are carefully planned to develop the children's curiosity and imagination and to enhance the quality of the overall provision; and
- the teacher-in-charge of the nursery unit is a good role model and is enthusiastic about her work. All of the staff are hard-working and demonstrate a strong commitment to the welfare of the children and to the ongoing development of the nursery unit.

Since the inspection, the staff 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 period contributed significantly to the improvements made, and helped the staff identify appropriately the priorities for future development. The inspection confirms that, through self-evaluation, the nursery unit has demonstrated clear evidence of improvement. Accordingly, the Inspectorate recommends that the processes for self-evaluation now in place are further developed.

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this nursery unit is now very good. The nursery unit is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the learners and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

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