



*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**



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Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection

**Strathearn School Preparatory Department
Belfast**

June 2009

FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOCUSED INSPECTION OF STRATHEARN SCHOOL PREPARATORY DEPARTMENT, BELFAST, BT4 2AU (162-0089)

The focused inspection in March 2007 highlighted strengths in the school's ethos, including the quality of the learning environment and the working relationships between the teachers and the children; the standards achieved by the children; the quality of much of the teaching observed and the commitment of the school to supporting the few children who have specific difficulties with their learning; and the quality of the leadership of the head of department. The inspection identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- to improve the quality of the teachers' planning and practice to ensure that the teaching strategies employed provide the children with appropriate challenge and develop their independence in a coherent and progressive manner;
- to develop a detailed, planned and progressive programme of learning through play which will ensure that the children have access to a range of stimulating and appropriately challenging experiences throughout the key stage; and
- to continue to update the pastoral care and child protection procedures in order to meet fully the requirements set out in the current Department of Education (DE) circulars.

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

- a new teacher was appointed;
- two new management posts were created and a school leadership team established;
- the department accessed support for play-based learning from the Belfast Education and Library Board's Curriculum Advisory and Support Service;
- the teachers visited a number of other schools to observe play-based learning; and
- the department acquired additional resources for play and developed an outdoor play area.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) carried out 2 monitoring visits and a follow-up inspection on 2 June 2009.

The action plan produced by the department in response to the inspection findings was of a very good quality and the department's development plan has been adjusted in light of the inspection findings. The department has prioritised the need to bring the development plan fully in line with the statutory requirements as set out by DE.

Very good 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 teachers' planning identifies appropriate opportunities for learning across the curricular areas and for the coherent development of skills;
- the teachers deploy a very good range of teaching strategies which provide challenge and promote independent learning, and the children respond with high levels of motivation;
- the teachers have worked together across the foundation stage and key stage 1 to develop a detailed, planned and progressive programme of learning through play, and there are appropriate monitoring arrangements in place for the ongoing development of play;
- the department has produced useful information leaflets for parents to communicate the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection; and
- there are increased opportunities for the parents and the children to contribute meaningfully to the review and design of relevant school policies and to the work of the school.

The department now has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by DE although the school needs to ensure that the designated member of the Board of Governors receives training in child protection procedures.

Since the inspection, the department 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 improvement made, and helped the department identify appropriately its priorities for future development. The inspection confirms that, through effective self-evaluation, the department demonstrated clear evidence of improvement. Accordingly, the Inspectorate recommends that the processes for self-evaluation now in place are maintained.

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

APPENDIX

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- There is a need for a risk assessment to be carried out with regards to access to the school grounds and building.

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