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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
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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 Focused Inspection

Carrickfergus Central Primary School

Inspected: January 2009

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BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Carrickfergus Central Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 26.01.09**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 301-0841** iv. **Nature of Inspection: FI/En/Ma/ICT**

B.

School Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Year 1 Intake	19	24	21	14	18
Enrolments					
Primary	217	195	190	160	149
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Class/Classes	0	0	0	0	0
Special 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):

92.9%

Primary & Reception	Nursery Unit	Special Unit
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- D. i. Number of Teachers
 (including the principal and part-time teachers): 8.52 0 0
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 17.49 NI PTR: 20.8
- iii. Average Class Size: 21
- iv. Class Size (Range): 14 to 26
- v. Ancillary Support:
 Number of Hours **Per Week**:
- | | |
|---|----|
| i. Clerical support: | 25 |
| ii. Official Making A Good Start Support: | 35 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 45 |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 1%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 28.1%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 22.8%

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Carrickfergus Central Primary School is situated in Thomas Street in Carrickfergus. The majority of the children come from the Carrickfergus area. The school's enrolment has decreased steadily over the last five years to its present figure of 149. At the time of the inspection, approximately 22% of the children were entitled to free school meals and 28% of the children were on the special needs register.

1.2 FOCUS

The focus of the inspection was on the quality of the children's experiences in literacy and numeracy and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in promoting and supporting learning and teaching. 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 the children from year 6.

One hundred and eleven questionnaires were issued to the parents; approximately 40% of these were returned to the Department of Education of which 22 contained additional written comments. The majority of the responses indicated a high level of satisfaction with the school. In particular, the parents highlighted the welcoming, caring and positive ethos, the approachable, hard-working and dedicated staff, the regular information provided about the life and work of the school, and the additional opportunities for the children to develop their personal and social qualities. A minority of the parents who responded would like more information on school policies and procedures, aspects of the school's arrangements for extra-curricular activities and more guidance on how to support their children's learning. The challenges experienced by the one-way traffic system during the arrival and departure arrangements were also raised.

Seven teachers completed the online questionnaire and commented supportively on the work of the school.

The governors spoke very positively about the welcoming atmosphere within the school, the good working relationships which exist at all levels and the continuous hard work of the Principal and the staff in the interests of the children, their families and the wider community.

The group of children which met with members of the inspection team spoke positively about their experiences in school. They talked enthusiastically about the support and care provided by the teachers and classroom assistants and indicated that they feel safe and know who to turn to in the event of a concern.

The views of the parents, the teachers and the children have been shared with the Principal and the governors.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is very good. The Principal and the staff are dedicated to the children in their care. Concern for the children's safety and well-being, their learning, and their personal and social development pervades the life and work of the school. The staff have prepared a good range of policies to guide the pastoral provision in the school. Among the strengths are the policy and procedures for addressing bullying issues, the supportive ethos and the appropriateness of the Positive Behaviour Policy. The support staff contribute significantly to promoting and maintaining a pleasant learning environment for the children. The children's learning experiences are further enriched through the Extended Schools programme, and through their participation in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. The School Council ensures that the children's views and opinions on a range of issues are sought and valued.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

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

1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example fruit breaks and healthy food provision in the dining hall, which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS

The Principal and the teachers are developing effective links with parents to ensure they work together for the benefit of the children. The communication with the parents is well established and maintained through a regular newsletter which informs them about school events and arrangements that affect the children. Valuable links have been established with feeder pre-school settings and with the post-primary schools to which the children transfer.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

Most of the children generally demonstrate good levels of motivation and enjoyment in their learning. In the best practice, the children take responsibility for aspects of their own learning; they co-operate well with one another, work effectively in pairs and groups and undertake independent tasks with confidence. A minority of children find it difficult to stay on task and persevere with the work.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The overall provision for literacy is satisfactory. The school's own analysis of the school performance data indicates that most of the children in key stage (KS) 1 achieve the expected level of attainment in English, and highlights the need to maintain and improve on these

standards throughout KS2. The school is participating in the North-Eastern Education and Library Board's (NEELB's) Raising Achievement Programme and this has informed the action plans to support teachers in bringing about this improvement.

The strengths of the provision include the opportunities provided to promote and support literacy across the curriculum, including the effective use of ICT, and the identification of opportunities for parents to contribute to and support their child's learning in reading. It will be important to review the school's policy and scheme for language and literacy to reflect more accurately current practice.

The children are keen and able to talk about their learning. In the best practice, the teachers provided opportunities to promote the children's talking and listening and develop their confidence in sharing ideas with others through effective pair and group work and plenary sessions. On occasion, routine question and answer sessions limited the children's oral responses.

Throughout the foundation stage (FS) and KS1 the children enjoy listening to stories and show an interest in fiction and non-fiction books. In KS2 the children develop their reading skills through shared and guided reading. During the inspection a significant number of children in the lessons observed, lacked confidence and appropriate strategies to tackle new words. The school has identified the need to raise the standards in reading and has recently introduced a new phonics programme and the banding of books from a variety of reading schemes.

In the FS the children develop their letter formation and word building skills through shared writing activities. In KS1 the children are introduced to a range of writing forms and are beginning to develop more independence in their writing. In KS2 the children write in a variety of styles and for different audiences. In both KS1 and KS2, there is a need to develop the children's skills and strategies to become more confident and independent. The teachers draw well on the children's own experiences and the children generally present their work well.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The overall provision for mathematics is satisfactory. By the end of KS1 most of the children achieve the expected level of attainment; however, less than half of the children achieve the expected level of attainment by the end of KS2.

The strengths of the provision include the opportunities for the children to use mathematics in relevant contexts across the curriculum, the development of 'maths trails' using the school environment and the appropriate use of practical equipment, in particular, at KS1. The numeracy co-ordinator has identified appropriately the need to review and update the current policy and schemes of work.

The school has focused on promoting the quick recall of number facts during mental mathematics activities which the children in general, participate fully in and clearly enjoy. In the best practice observed the children also explained their mathematical reasoning and thinking.

In the FS the children are able to sort, order numbers, make patterns and handle data through a combination of suitable oral and practical work which is well matched to their interests and needs. They consolidate their language, concepts and understanding through a range of relevant play activities. As they move into KS1 most children demonstrate progression in their mathematics; for example, in their understanding and use of number, data-handling and measurement.

By the end of KS2 the highest attaining children demonstrated their knowledge of important ideas and concepts, for example, place value and number facts.

Although the children have experience in all areas of the mathematics curriculum as they progress through the school, more needs to be done to ensure sufficient emphasis is given to the development of their mathematical processes and understanding of shape and space.

Information and communication technology is used regularly throughout the school to support the learning and teaching of mathematics. The children make good use of relevant computer software programs as an integral part of their learning.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

In the best practice, the teachers' planning identifies clearly the learning intentions in terms of key knowledge and skills, the teaching strategies and practical resources to support the learning and differentiation by task and outcome, as appropriate. There is a need for a more consistent approach to planning across the school.

3.2 TEACHING

The quality of the teaching observed ranged from inadequate to very good; almost all of the teaching observed was satisfactory or better, and just over half of the teaching observed was very good. In the more effective practice, good classroom management ensured an appropriate pace to the lessons, the teachers were clear about and shared with the children the intended learning, and used effective questioning and plenary sessions to promote extended responses from the children. In the less effective practice, the lessons lacked pace and challenge for the more able children or adequate support with appropriate differentiated tasks for those children who require additional help with aspects of their learning. The teachers need to plan and implement teaching strategies which are better matched to meet the needs of all of the children.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

The parents are kept well informed of their children's progress through regular parental interviews and written reports.

The teachers mark the children's work regularly, and there are examples of good marking for improvement and positive comments to encourage the children and help them improve their work. Some further development is needed in order to ensure greater consistency throughout the school in agreeing success criteria with the children and taking more account of marking for improvement.

It is timely that the school is reviewing how to use performance data more effectively in order to identify trends and set realistic and appropriate targets for improving the standards achieved by all of the children in literacy and numeracy.

3.4 SPECIAL/ADDITIONAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The school strives to promote a strong sense of inclusion in which each child is valued. The school's planning for special educational needs highlights appropriately the importance of early identification of those children who experience difficulties in their learning and is linked closely to the pastoral care policy.

The children's needs are met through additional support teaching in withdrawal sessions involving individual children and small groups. During these sessions, the learning support teacher is highly supportive of the children and uses a good range of teaching strategies to enhance their literacy skills. The children respond positively to the encouragement given to them by the learning support teacher.

The learning support teacher liaises closely with the class teachers in the writing of educational plans which identify specific targets and support strategies for each child. The special educational needs co-ordinator monitors the children's progress regularly, targeting help where it is needed. The children who make satisfactory progress in the additional learning support sessions are appropriately discontinued, but continually reviewed. Peripatetic support from the NEELB is also available for a small number of the children.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The Principal has been in post for eight years. He is dedicated and hard-working with a clear commitment to the pastoral needs of the children and the staff. He has established good routines and communication systems for the organisation and administration of the day-to-day running of the school.

There is a need to establish a more rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluating the quality of the learning as an integral element of the work of the teachers. In addition, the co-ordinators need to agree and implement clear strategies for raising further the standards achieved by the children, and disseminate the very good practice that exists within the school.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The school development plan is based on consultation with the staff and the governors and sets priorities for the development of a range of important issues. While it meets the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005 it should now be revised to ensure that the action plans are well targeted on raising attainment in literacy and numeracy across all classes. There is a need for the management team to develop a more formal process of self-evaluation and monitoring procedures within the

school in order to evaluate more strategically the quality of learning and teaching. In addition, the co-ordinators need to agree and implement clear strategies for raising further the standards achieved by the children, and disseminate the very good practice that exists within the school.

4.3 ACCOMMODATION

The quality of the accommodation and the standard of caretaking in the school is very good.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the strong commitment of the staff to the care, health and well-being of the children;
- the quality of the teaching which in the majority of the lessons observed was good or better;
- the good progress made in the early years in encouraging the children's independence and active participation in their learning;
- the many opportunities provided for the parents to contribute to their child's learning and to become more involved in the life and work of the school;
- the meaningful links established with schools and other organisations to support smooth transitions and the children's all round development; and
- the valuable contribution to the life and work of the school made by the learning support staff, the members of the Board of Governors and the parents.

5.2 The areas for improvement include the need:

- to plan and implement teaching strategies which are better matched to meet the needs of all of the children; and
- to establish a more rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluation to raise further the standards achieved by the children in literacy and numeracy.

5.3 In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this organisation is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh the areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in standards, learning and teaching and leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively.

5.4 The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

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