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*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 Focused Inspection

**Sacred Heart Boys' Primary School
Belfast**

Inspected: October 2008

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BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Sacred Heart Boys' Primary School** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 13/10/2008**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 103-6471** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Year 1 Intake	27	35	22	27	23
Enrolments					
Primary	284	265	236	224	205
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):

92.5%

Primary & Reception	Nursery Unit	Special Unit
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- D. i. Number of Teachers
 (including the principal and part-time teachers): 12 0 0
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 17.08 NI PTR: 20.8
- iii. Average Class Size: 20.5
- iv. Class Size (Range): 15 to 24
- v. Ancillary Support:
 Number of Hours **Per Week**:
- | | |
|---|------|
| i. Clerical support: | 32.5 |
| ii. Official Making A Good Start Support: | 40 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 40 |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 2%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 34.6%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 39%

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Sacred Heart Boys' Primary School is situated in north Belfast. The majority of the children who attend the school live in the housing in the immediate vicinity of the school, a few travel from further afield. The enrolment has fallen steadily over the last five years and currently stands at 205. Thirty-nine percent of the children are entitled to free school meals. The school has identified 35% of the children as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning.

1.2 FOCUS

The inspection focused on the work in English/literacy and mathematics. In addition, the inspection evaluated the work in information and communication technology (ICT) in promoting and supporting learning and teaching in English/literacy and in mathematics, and the school's procedures for pastoral care, including child protection.

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 the Board of Governors (governors) and a group of children from year 6.

Approximately 21% of the parental questionnaires were returned from parents of children in the primary school and nine included a written comment. The responses indicated that the parents are very supportive of the work of the school; in particular, they value the school's approach to promoting the children's confidence and self-esteem.

Five of the teachers completed the on-line questionnaire and their responses are very positive.

The governors spoke highly of the school, the staff and the Principal. In particular, they value the links made between the school and a range of outside agencies that support the children's development.

The group of children who met with members of the inspection team spoke very positively about their experiences in school; they knew where to seek help if they had 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 provision for pastoral care within the school is good. In recent years, the teachers, led effectively by the Principal, have undertaken a review of the pastoral dimension of the curriculum to include the promotion of positive behaviour strategies. A school council has recently been introduced to encourage the development of personal responsibility.

Appropriate house and merit systems are in place and are valued highly by the children. There is clear evidence of the reward systems having a very positive impact on the children's motivation and work in class. The children are courteous and welcoming to visitors; they show a pride in their school.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department. There is a need for the school to continue to review and evaluate the policies and procedures for child protection, including the arrangements for vetting individuals working in the school in a regulated position and to ensure that there are sufficient governors trained in child protection.

1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives excellent attention to promoting health and physical activity, including opportunities for healthy eating and participation in a range of extra-curricular activities. There are effective policies and programmes in place, for example a breakfast club, the promotion of healthy breaks and packed lunches, which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles. An assessment of the nature and quality of the arrangements for health and well-being practices within the school should be included in the school development plan to comply with statutory regulations.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

The majority of children are keen and interested learners; they settle quickly to their activities and work steadily. By the end of key stage (KS) 2, most of the children have a mature attitude to their work and, when provided with opportunities, are prepared to attempt more difficult challenges.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The children are making satisfactory progress in English; by the end of KS2, approximately half of the children achieve or surpass the expected level of attainment in English, and very few achieve the highest level of attainment. This profile is generally lower than that of schools with similar free school meals entitlement.

There is a very wide range in the children's standards in fluency and comprehension in reading throughout the school; this reflects the wide range of ability in all year groups. By the end of KS1 and KS2, the majority of children read with fluency and an understanding of the text, commensurate with their age. A significant minority of children demonstrate difficulties in their reading which require additional support to help develop their reading skills. Most of the children demonstrate enjoyment of reading, listening and responding to stories during shared reading sessions, using big books and in well-managed guided reading

sessions. In the best practice, a good range of information books are accessible and selected by the children for reference and interest during class activities and the classrooms display a good range of text and written prompts to support children's reading. In the less effective practice there is insufficient availability, presentation and promotion of additional reading materials in the classroom.

The teachers need to ensure that they support more consistently the development of the children's reading skills across the curriculum through a broader range of approaches and with more specific planning for those children who require most support.

The children have opportunities to write for an appropriate range of audience and purpose as they progress through the school. Individual whiteboards are used very effectively by the children in most classes to promote their involvement in and enjoyment of writing. In the best practice, the children engage in writing activities which are stimulating and well matched to their ability and the children are supported effectively to discuss, plan, draft and read their stories. In these lessons, the teachers have high levels of expectation of what the children can produce and the children's written work is well presented. In the less effective practice, there is too much emphasis on completing worksheets with limited opportunities for more extended writing. In addition, the children require more focused support to improve their use of basic grammar, spelling and writing conventions. The youngest children require more opportunities to develop the fine motor skills required to develop their writing and further relevant opportunities to practise these skills.

Although many of the children display poor language skills they are encouraged and very well supported by the teachers in most classes to give oral responses during lessons; as a result they demonstrate confidence and high levels of motivation to contribute their ideas. The co-ordinators need to ensure there is consistent and effective promotion of the children's oral language during play and small group tasks. The children's phonological awareness is being developed systematically throughout the school using a specific phonics approach. The school has appropriately identified, in their action plans, the need to enhance this programme further and provide additional training. The children's listening skills are being developed effectively in almost all of the classes. At KS1, the teachers need to review the management of task time and the plenary sessions to ensure the children have sufficient time to develop, consolidate and review their learning.

The school has begun to identify targets to raise the overall level of achievement and has included a number of appropriate action plans to support teachers in bringing about this improvement.

There are useful opportunities for the children to use appropriate software programs in the classroom to support the development of their literacy skills. The school has identified the need to incorporate regular opportunities to motivate and support the development of the children's language and literacy skills through ICT.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

There are a number of strengths to the mathematics provision. A scheme of work for mental mathematics has been developed and is enabling the teachers to plan for, and develop, effective progression of the children's mental mathematics strategies. Daily and weekly class problems provide good opportunities for the children to develop their mathematical thinking,

and, in the best practice, the children are encouraged to show their reasoning and solutions on shared displays which allow the others to learn from the strategies being used. Many of the learning opportunities, especially in the foundation stage and KS1, make use of a broad range of practical equipment, for example, Cuisenaire rods and 'Bee-Bot' programmable devices. On occasions during the inspection, the children worked well in groups, sharing their ideas and reasoning to develop further their mathematical thinking.

During the inspection, a range of mathematical activities and experiences were being provided for the children, although there were lessons observed in which the children were insufficiently challenged by the mathematical thinking required to complete what was asked of them. When planning and teaching, the teachers need to build on what the children can already do, to link the activities more sharply on the intended learning and to extend the opportunities for the children to explain their mathematical reasoning.

While ICT is being used in KS1 to consolidate the children's learning and in KS2 primarily to display data graphically, its role to enhance the learning and teaching in mathematics requires further development.

By the end of KS2, a majority of the children achieve or surpass the expected level of attainment in mathematics, and a minority achieve the highest level of attainment. This profile is in line with other schools with similar free meals entitlement. During the inspection, the highest attaining children demonstrated their knowledge of important ideas and concepts, for example, place value and multiplication facts. However, the teachers need to develop further the children's ability to think mathematically by providing appropriately challenging activities matched to their abilities.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The teachers are hard-working and committed to improving the children's learning and development; they prepare half-term planning documents that focus appropriately on what the children will be able to do, know and understand at the end of the sequence of lessons. Many of the teachers have detailed daily planning notes. The half-term planning is monitored and evaluated by the Vice-principal.

While planning for mathematics through the mental mathematics scheme is ensuring appropriate progression in the children's mental strategies the teachers need to develop a broad and balanced whole-school scheme that they can use as guidance to ensure appropriate progression in the children's mathematical knowledge, understanding and skills.

The recently appointed literacy co-ordinators for KS1 and KS2 are reviewing the whole-school literacy scheme. They are working towards a more consistent approach to the planning and implementation of the scheme. The teachers need to ensure that the assessment information is used effectively to tailor the planning to ensure that the teaching approaches are matched more effectively to the children's abilities and stages of development.

3.2 TEACHING

Most of the teaching observed during the inspection was good or very good. In the best practice observed, the lessons were challenging and had appropriate pace; the teachers built skilfully upon the children's enthusiasm and interest. In addition, the teachers used effective questioning that developed the children's understanding and their ability to give extended responses. On the occasions when the teaching was less effective, the children's responses were not built upon effectively, the pace of the lesson was too slow and the work lacked sufficient challenge.

3.4 ASSESSMENT

The senior management team analyse a range of assessment outcomes, including standardised test results and the end of key stage results. The school has identified the need to make more effective use of their analysis of this data to allow the monitoring of the progress of teaching groups and to set appropriate targets for improvement. The staff are continuing to develop guidance on marking for improvement and on agreeing features of the children's work that demonstrate progress. In the best practice the teachers indicate, through comment and example, how the children may improve the quality of their work. The parents have opportunities to discuss their child's progress through parent/teacher consultations that take place annually. In addition, a written evaluation of the child's progress is sent home at the end of the school year. Importantly, the school has provided a very useful guide to parents to ensure that they make effective use of the parent/teacher meeting and find out ways to support their child's progress.

3.5 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The provision for special educational needs (SEN) is given a high priority within the school, and significant resources have been made available for this work. The learning needs of most of the children are identified at an early stage through a combination of teacher observations, standardised and diagnostic tests. Group withdrawal sessions are provided for the children most in need of additional help with aspects of their learning in literacy. In these sessions the special needs co-ordinator (SENCO) provides the children with good support and encouragement. In addition, assistance is provided for a number of children through the outreach and peripatetic support programmes provided by the Belfast Education and Library Board. Effective links have been established with a range of external support agencies.

The SENCO prepares individual education plans (IEPs) which identify targets and support strategies to promote improvement and to address each child's particular needs. There is a need for the IEPs to be viewed as a joint planning tool that supports all the staff in the identification of appropriate resources and effective strategies to meet the learning needs of all of the children.

In addition, there is a need for the staff to make more effective use of existing data to regularly review the effectiveness of SEN provision.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The Principal, who has been in post for two years, has a clear vision for the school and demonstrates a strong commitment to the children's pastoral care and to improving the standards they attain; she manages the school efficiently and provides effective leadership. She is well-supported by the Vice-principal and the other members of the recently formed school management team (SMT).

The leadership of numeracy is provided through two separate co-ordinators, one for KS1 and the other for KS2. They work well together and have identified appropriate targets for the three action plans, which are focused on mental mathematics, problem-solving and, importantly, meeting the children's numeracy needs. The school needs to develop further the co-ordinators' monitoring and evaluation role to ensure that there is appropriate progression in the children's mathematical learning and thinking.

The recently appointed literacy co-ordinators for KS1 and KS2 have both contributed to in-service training for the teachers on, for example, shared reading and the use of "We Are Learning To" (WALT) boards. The co-ordinators and SMT have identified the development of more effective strategies during the literacy hour as their current focus for improvement.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The school's focus for improvement is linked to the school development planning process and has a number of strengths. There is a developing commitment to monitoring and evaluating the children's attainments and the quality of their learning experiences. The areas for improvement include the need to develop further the arrangements for self-evaluation, in order to meet more fully the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the effective arrangements for pastoral care which promote the children's confidence and self-esteem;
- the high levels of motivation and engagement of the children in their learning;
- the hardworking and committed teachers;
- the quality of teaching observed in most of the lessons;
- the excellent behaviour of the children; and
- the effective management of the school by the Principal, ably supported by the Vice-principal and SMT.

5.2 The areas for improvement includes the need to:

- improve the planning and teaching strategies in order to meet more effectively the needs of all of the children and to raise the standards that they attain; and
- develop further the arrangements for self-evaluation, including monitoring and evaluation of the children's progress against the agreed targets for improvement.

5.3 In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this school is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in the standards the children achieve which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

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