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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**

**St Joseph's Primary School and Nursery Unit  
Carryduff**

**Inspected: November 2008**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Joseph's Primary School is located in Carryduff, just south of Belfast. After some fluctuation following changes in the catchment area, the enrolment has now stabilised and stands at 389. At the time of the inspection, approximately 2.3% of the children were entitled to free school meals and 13% of the children were on the special educational needs register.

### FOCUS

The inspection focused 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.

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

One hundred and thirty four questionnaires were issued to parents; approximately 25% of these were returned to the Department of Education (DE). Eighteen returns contained additional written comments. All of the responses indicated a very high level of satisfaction with the provision in the school. In particular, the parents highlighted the caring, happy learning environment, the opportunities afforded to the children to fulfil their full potential, the leadership of the Principal and Vice-principal and the hardworking teaching and non-teaching staff. In addition, they valued the school's involvement in the community. The parents and nursery staff were also given opportunities to express their views about the nursery through the inspection questionnaires. The responses here were also highly positive with parents commenting on the learning opportunities in the nursery and its integration with the main primary school.

Five teachers completed the online questionnaire. Their responses were highly affirmative of the work of the school.

The governors spoke very positively about the welcoming atmosphere within the school, the commitment and professionalism of the Principal and Vice-principal and the staff's hard work in the interests of the children and the wider community. They also referred to the urgent need for the proposed new building to begin construction as soon as possible. The inspection team endorses this view.

The children in year 6 reported that they feel happy and safe in the school, that they enjoy being in the playground and that they know who to speak to if they have any concerns.

## PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is excellent; the Principal and the staff are dedicated to the children in their care. The positive relationships at all levels foster an inclusive and supportive ethos throughout the school and within the local and wider community. The children are friendly and courteous, and respond well to the staff's expectations; their behaviour is excellent. The school regularly awards achievement incentives to encourage the children's sense of self-esteem and self-confidence. The children make a valuable input to the life and work of the school; their views and opinions on a range of issues are sought and valued. A large number of children benefit from the opportunity to participate in a wide range of extra curricular activities which include a morning club and music, drama and sporting activities. In addition, their learning and social development are enhanced through regular visits to places of educational interest and visitors to the school. The school contributes to selected charities and an appropriate emphasis is placed on the importance of caring for others in the wider community.

## CHILD PROTECTION

The school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by DE.

## HEALTHY EATING/PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives outstanding attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example a healthy eating policy, displays and the promotion of healthy breaks and lunch boxes, which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

## 2. **ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS**

### LEARNING

In all year groups, the children are highly motivated and engaged in the learning process; they enjoy the many opportunities to interact with each other in group and paired work and there is appropriate promotion of independent thinking and learning skills. In class discussions, the children are responsive and articulate.

The majority of the children make very good progress in their learning. In almost all cases they experience a range of appropriately challenging tasks and activities.

By the end of year 7 the majority of the children achieve high standards in both English and mathematics. This is supported by the school's analysis of the internal and external performance data of the children's attainment.

### ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The quality of provision for English and literacy is excellent. The literacy co-ordinator provides highly effective strategic leadership and has a clear vision for the development of this area of the school's work. Regular meetings, staff training sessions, collaborative planning and consistent and thorough monitoring and evaluation of the pupils' learning contribute to the high standards achieved across the school in English.

In all key stages, the children are motivated and keen to talk about their work. They express their thoughts and ideas confidently and articulately. The effective use of active learning strategies and the emphasis on well-planned opportunities for the children to interact with teachers and with peers encourage the development of very good talking and listening skills across the school.

In the foundation stage (FS) and key stage (KS) 1 the children are provided with a stimulating and language-rich environment and are exposed to a range of different genre; this promotes their interest in books and the written word. The effective use of practical equipment, for example, individual whiteboards and magnetic letter shapes supports the development of word recognition, while shared and guided reading encourages the acquisition of basic reading skills. Phonological awareness is developed through a customised phonics and spelling system.

In KS2 the children experience a variety of approaches, including shared, guided and independent reading. By the end of KS2, the majority of the children are reading with fluency, understanding and pleasure. In the best practice, guided reading takes place in small groups where the children have the opportunity to discuss texts and work collaboratively on challenging and interesting tasks. Independent reading skills are developed through the excellent 'Night Read' programme, which engages children in a variety of activities to develop both their reading skills and their ability to manage their own learning. The school has identified appropriately the need to promote boys' interest in reading and is implementing strategies to address this issue.

The standard of written work achieved by the children is very good and is celebrated in attractive displays throughout the school. Information and communication technology is effectively integrated into the classroom activities and the children employ it judiciously as a tool to improve the quality of their written work. The children are provided with opportunities to write for a variety of purposes and audiences and the use of real-life contexts makes this work more meaningful to the pupils. The current focus on implementing key aspects of assessment for learning such as the use of learning intentions, success criteria, self and peer assessment is impacting positively on the quality of the written work achieved by the children throughout the school.

## MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The provision for learning and teaching mathematics is a significant strength of the school. The co-ordinator has a clear vision for the development of mathematics and she provides effective leadership. She supports her colleagues in implementing the programme through regular meetings and through monitoring and evaluating the children's mathematical learning, in areas such as problem-solving and mental mathematics.

The scheme of work provides helpful guidance on progression in the children's mathematical learning. In the FS, the children are given many good opportunities to establish their understanding of number through, for example, play-based learning. The teachers build upon this solid foundation throughout KS1 and KS2 by employing a wide variety of teaching strategies which capture the children's interest. Active teaching approaches, including problem-solving and investigations are used extensively; effective mental approaches stimulate the children's thinking and encourage the use of precise mathematical language.

Information and communication technology is used widely in mathematics lessons to develop important mathematical skills such as manipulating data and practising routines. The children enjoy their mathematical experiences and benefit from group sessions where they learn from one another. The task board approach is often used to broaden the children's experiences and to promote independence in their learning. The children are aware of the learning outcomes of their lessons and are developing their skills in using success criteria to evaluate the extent of their learning. They are beginning to use mathematics in a range of different contexts across the curriculum.

Special events such as the 'World Maths Day' and 'Maths Week' are used creatively to expand further the children's interest in mathematics.

During the inspection, the children demonstrated their ability to think mathematically at an appropriate high level. By the end of KS2, most children achieve or exceed the expected level of attainment in mathematics, and a significant number regularly achieve the highest level of attainment.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNERS**

#### **PLANNING**

There is very effective and consistent planning, with teachers working collaboratively in year groups. There are clear links between the long-term and medium-term planning and the School Development Plan (SDP). The school has also adopted a Planning for Connected Learning format to address the requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. The teachers evaluate well in order to inform future planning and to meet the needs of all the children.

#### **TEACHING**

During the inspection, the majority of the teaching observed was very good or better with a significant minority of the lessons observed outstanding. This effective practice included the well-paced and structured lessons, the promotion of independent learning among the pupils, the effective integration of ICT to support learning in both literacy and numeracy and the progression and continuity achieved from nursery to KS2. The school has made excellent progress in embracing the underlying principles of the Northern Ireland Curriculum and teachers employ a wide range of teaching strategies to develop active learning.

#### **ASSESSMENT**

The teachers mark the children's written work regularly. In the majority of cases the marking is of a supportive nature with extended and evaluative feedback provided. There is also regular monitoring of pupils' work by co-ordinators and senior management and samples of work are also viewed by the governors.

## SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN)

Approximately 13% of the children have been identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning and behaviour. The school is strongly committed to meeting the needs of these children and the inclusive approach emphasises the education of children with special educational needs alongside their peers in the classroom.

The arrangements for special educational needs (SEN), under the very competent leadership of the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO), are systematic and effective. The class teachers liaise with the SENCO to develop detailed individual education plans (IEPs) which set out realistic targets and strategies to address each child's needs. These targets are reviewed regularly and shared with the parents and, where appropriate, with the individual child. The teachers show a strong commitment to meeting the needs of the children in a sensitive and supportive manner, providing suitably differentiated activities which take account of the range of abilities within the class.

Withdrawal sessions are provided for some of the children. In the work observed, the children were supported very effectively by the teacher using a variety of strategies, including multi-sensory approaches, to develop and support the children's learning. Good links are maintained with various external support agencies and these provide valuable assistance to individual children. The school efficiently deploys and utilises the excellent support provided by the classroom assistants.

The Principal, SENCO and teachers monitor and review the children's progress on a regular basis. There is evidence to show that actions taken have resulted in improvements in learning and teaching.

## 4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

### LEADERSHIP

The Principal provides outstanding leadership and has an appropriate vision for the school with a clear understanding of how to achieve this. He sets high standards for himself and the whole-school community and is thoroughly committed and dedicated to providing the highest possible standards of education for all the children in his care. He takes a personal interest in the work of each class and the progress and development of individual children from nursery upwards. In addition to class visits and monitoring of the children's books, the Principal uses quantitative data to monitor the children's progress and to set targets for further improvement. He is highly reflective in his work and fosters a culture of self-evaluation leading to improvement. The hard-working Vice-principal is highly professional and well-informed in her work. Both the Vice-principal and the Senior Management Team ably support the Principal in his work and contribute to the overall effectiveness of the school. This is further reflected in the SDP which meets fully the requirements of the Department of Education School Development Planning Regulations/Schedule 2005/19.



## 5. CONCLUSION

The strengths of the school include:

- the high quality of the pastoral care;
- the high standards achieved by the children in literacy and numeracy;
- the excellent use made of the quantitative data for monitoring, evaluating and target-setting as an integral part of the school's self-evaluation process;
- the quality of the teaching, with a significant minority of the lessons observed being outstanding;
- the arrangements for SEN; and
- the outstanding leadership of the Principal, ably assisted by his Vice-principal.

In the areas inspected, the quality of the education provided by this school is outstanding; the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. The school has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

## 6. THE NURSERY UNIT

The main strengths within the nursery's educational and pastoral provision are as follows:

- The nursery has a very positive ethos based on excellent relationships at all levels. There is a very happy, caring atmosphere; the staff treat the children with care and respect and provide a secure, supportive environment which helps the children grow in confidence and independence. The children respond well to the staff's expectations and their behaviour is excellent. The learning environment is attractive and stimulating; good use is made of the children's own art work and topical displays to enhance the learning environment.
- The daily timetable is well-organised and provides a good balance of free play and activities organised by the staff. Appropriate time is given to story and physical play sessions.
- The staff make conscientious preparation for their work. The planning outlines a broad and balanced programme for the children, designed to foster their all-round development and to ensure enjoyment in learning. The planning takes into account the individual needs of the children and outlines how each area of play progresses throughout the year. The programme offers very good opportunities for learning in all areas of the curriculum. The careful attention given to the development of the children's personal, social and emotional development is evident in the children's ability to make independent choices of activity and to sustain high levels of concentration in their play. The promotion of the children's language development is a particular strength of the programme.

- Very good provision is made for the children with special educational needs. The staff provide very good levels of support for the children and encourage as much integration and independence as possible. The staff liaise with relevant agencies and draw up detailed plans containing clear and realistic steps to support the child's development.
- There is a strong sense of team-spirit among the hard-working and dedicated staff; they have a caring approach and clearly enjoy their work with the children. The teacher-in-charge is an excellent role-model and sets high standards for the work in the nursery. The Principal is very supportive of the nursery's work. Excellent arrangements have been developed to ensure that the children from the nursery make a smooth transition to year 1.
- The staff have developed an effective approach to self-evaluation and have brought about improvement in important aspects of their work.

## **CONCLUSION**

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this nursery is outstanding; the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. The nursery has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

**STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON ST JOSEPH'S PRIMARY SCHOOL NURSERY UNIT, CARRYDUFF**

**1. Details of Children**

<b>Number of children:</b>	<b>Class 1</b>	<b>Class 2</b>
Attending full-time	0	0
Attending part-time	26	26
Under 3 years of age*	0	9
With statement of SEN**	2	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4***	2	0
At CoP stages 1 or 2***	0	0
With English as an additional language	0	0

\* On 1 July.

\*\* Special Educational Needs.

\*\*\* The stages refer to those set out in the Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs.

<b>Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.</b>	0
<b>Average attendance for the previous year.</b>	96.5

**2. Duration of Sessions**

<b>Part-time: am</b>	<b>Part-time: pm</b>
2½ hours	2½ hours

**3. Details of Staff**

<b>Number of:</b>	<b>Full-Time</b>	<b>Part-Time</b>
Teachers	1	0
Nursery Assistants	0	1
Qualified Nursery Assistants	2	0

<b>Number of: ****</b>	
Students	1
Trainees	1

\*\*\*\* Total placements since September of current year

**4. Parental Questionnaires (to be completed by Inspection Services Branch)**

Number issued	52
Percentage returned	17.3
Number of written comments	4

**ACCOMMODATION**

- The security of the mobile classrooms and access areas around the school needs to be reviewed as a priority. A thorough risk assessment of these areas should be carried out.

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