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CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

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**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

**Whitehouse Primary School and Nursery Unit
Newtownabbey**

Inspected: January 2008

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BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A.
- i. **School: Whitehouse Primary Newtownabbey**
 - ii. **School Reference Number: 301-0827**
 - iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 28.01.08**
 - iv. **Nature of Inspection: FI/En/ICT**

B.

School Year	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Year 1 Intake	46	51	37	46	46
Enrolments					
Primary	275	298	297	305	323
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Class/Classes	52	52	52	52	52
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):

94.97%

Primary & Reception	Nursery Unit	Special Unit
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- D. i. Number of Teachers
(including the principal and part-time teachers):
(Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)

17.92	3	0
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- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio):
- | | |
|-------|--------------|
| 18.02 | NI PTR: 20.8 |
|-------|--------------|

- iii. Average Class Size: 23.1

- iv. Class Size (Range): 20 to 27

- v. Ancillary Support:

Number of Hours Per Week:	i. Clerical support:	25
	ii. Official Making A Good Start Support:	30
	iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support:	91

- | | |
|--|--------|
| vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: | 0.02% |
| vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: | 17.96% |
| viii. Number of children who are not of statutory school age: | 0 |
| ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: | 21% |

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Whitehouse Primary School is situated on a spacious site on the Doagh Road, in south-east Antrim. The children come from a very wide catchment area within a radius of 15 miles. The school's enrolment has increased steadily over the last number of years and stands currently at 323. Approximately 21% of the children are entitled to free school meals.

1.2 The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the completion of questionnaires by a sample of the parents, as well as meetings with the Board of Governors (governors), and discussions with a group of children from year 6. Prior to the inspection, confidential questionnaires were issued to 109 parents; 36% of the parents' questionnaires were returned to the Department of Education (DE), and 14 included additional written comments. The parents and governors indicated, in nearly all cases, strong satisfaction with the work of the school. The governors expressed their appreciation of the work of the Principal and the staff; they highlighted the inclusive atmosphere in the school, its good standing in the local community and their commitment to, and support for, the ongoing development of the school. The teachers also completed confidential questionnaires; their responses were supportive of the school's management and all aspects of the life and work of the school. The children spoke very positively about their enjoyment of school and they are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety and well-being. The few matters raised by the parents in the questionnaires were discussed with the Principal and the governors.

1.3 The inspection focused on English, including information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum, the provision for special educational needs (SEN) and the school's arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection.

2. THE QUALITY OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK

2.1 The school provides a caring, orderly and supportive learning environment in which the children's contributions are valued. The children are welcoming to visitors and there is a strong inclusive ethos which promotes an atmosphere of mutual respect. The behaviour of the children is excellent, they show motivation and enjoyment in their learning and they are keen to talk about their work. The ancillary support staff make a very valuable contribution to the children's learning and development.

2.2 The teachers work hard to create an attractive and stimulating learning environment, despite the poor state of repair of the school. There are many attractive displays of the children's current and recent work in the corridors and classrooms; the high quality displays are used effectively to improve the children's understanding and learning across the curriculum.

2.3 The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection in the school is excellent.

2.4 Among the strengths are:

- the high quality of the working relationships throughout the school;
- the high priority given to the health and well-being of the staff and the children;
- the creative ways in which the children's views are considered with regard to pastoral matters;
- the awareness of governors, staff, parents and children of the school's work and organisation and the opportunity they have to contribute to a range of effective policies which guide the work of the school;
- the children's participation in the wide range of extra-curricular activities provided by the school; and
- the strong and effective leadership of the pastoral care team.

2.5 The school gives excellent attention to promoting health and well-being, including opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity. There are effective policies and programmes in place which encourage the children to adopt a healthy lifestyle, for example the healthy break provision, a water bottles in class scheme, a breakfast club and the high priority being given to participation in a wide choice of sporting activities.

2.6 The school offers an extensive range of extra-curricular activities and clubs for the children, including cookery, drama, music, athletics, football, netball and swimming. The school has established good links with parents; they are well-informed about their children's progress and about school life. They receive a termly newsletter; in addition, there are two formal meetings with teachers each year and one written report. The parents are encouraged to make use of the toy library facilities. The school has developed very effective links with the other local schools, including the post-primary schools to which the children transfer.

2.7 The teachers plan their work conscientiously in year groups, and there is a clear focus on the intended learning. The planning addresses differentiation, consolidation and progression. The teachers formally evaluate their planning and discuss this in their year groups and within the curriculum teams.

2.8 The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was always sound, consistently very good and at times outstanding. Lessons are well-structured and imaginatively resourced, often with materials that the teachers have prepared themselves. In the best practice, effective use is made of whole-class and small group work. The children engage enthusiastically in the practical work and the learning activities are well-matched to their abilities.

2.9 The co-ordinators have provided effective leadership in establishing a coherent policy and programme for play-based learning. The teachers plan thematically and comprehensively in the foundation stage (FS) and key stage (KS) 1. The children experience a wide range of stimulating and challenging activities through which they are encouraged to observe, investigate, be imaginative and creative. The programme promotes a strong focus

on the potential learning experiences offered and these progress appropriately across KS1. The children participate purposefully and enthusiastically, and with sustained interest. The staff interact effectively with the children, providing sensitive and helpful support, and extending the children's language, ideas and thinking skills. They have made a useful beginning to the collation and evaluation of the observational data about the children's play that informs their planning and enriches their interaction with the children.

2.10 A language and literacy team has been established recently and has worked hard to review this area of the curriculum. A comprehensive policy underpins the detailed long-, medium- and short-term planning which guides the work of the teachers. Literacy has appropriately been identified on the school development plan (SDP) and significant investment has been made in a range of resources to further enhance teaching and learning throughout the school. The teachers and children have created a language-rich environment with purposeful class and corridor displays, attractive class libraries including collections of children's writing and audio texts. Some of the resources have been produced by the staff and the children. The school actively encourages an interest in literacy by participating in an annual Book Fair, World Book Day, planned visits to the local library and using the expertise of local writers and dramatists.

2.11 The caring and supportive ethos in the school promotes and encourages the children to express themselves in a confident and articulate manner. The teachers provide many opportunities for whole-class, group work and paired discussion. Circle Time is a regular feature of the curriculum and is used to extend and develop vocabulary, as well as being a forum for discussing pertinent and relevant topics, such as the children's own sense of worth and respect for others. In the early years, during play-based activities, teachers and support staff interact effectively to enhance oral language and listening skills; the children also have opportunities for drama. In KS1 role play and topical discussion provide opportunities to extend the children's vocabulary. Plenary sessions are an effective strategy to provide opportunities for children to verbally share opinions, justify choices and suggest improvements. Good use is made of the expertise of teachers and individuals from the community to enrich the children's learning experiences.

2.12 An appropriate phonics programme, set within the broad language development framework, is used effectively in play-based activities and in more formal situations to promote word-building and word-recognition. The teaching of reading has recently been reviewed and new reading resources have been introduced throughout the school. In the early years, the children become familiar with a range of texts including Big Books, poetry and traditional tales. Teachers' questioning is used effectively to engage the children with the text and to promote understanding, fluency and expression. Reading skills are further developed in KS2 with the use of novels, often related to topic-based work in other areas of the curriculum. The children read confidently, demonstrate an interest in books and talk about favourite authors and themes. Running records of the children's reading are maintained in years 1 to 4 to monitor and review progress. Home-school liaison is encouraged with the use of regular correspondence to help parents support their child's stage of learning. A Reading Partnership programme is in place, with carefully planned activities and detailed progress records kept.

2.13 Throughout the school, the children have opportunities to write for a range of purposes and audiences, including poems, recipes, sequencing, fables, letters, narratives, recounts and newspaper reports that include designing display headings, labelling resources and producing signage around the school. At FS the children are encouraged to experiment with mark making, and more formal writing skills are introduced sensitively and imaginatively. Further opportunities for expression are presented through the use of shared writing and cross-curricular links are made effectively. The writing activities continue to build upon the children's talking and listening and reading skills. Appreciation of poetry is a particular feature of the school and the children are encouraged to express their ideas and thoughts. Examples of the children's written work are celebrated regularly in the school bulletin and in local publications. The school is currently introducing writing records to evaluate the consistency of standards and the quality of provision. A marking code has also been introduced and has been shared with parents. The use of peer assessment in a supportive environment provides feedback for children and enhances the quality of work produced. The quality of the children's handwriting and their presentation are generally of a good standard.

2.14 The development of ICT to support learning and teaching is identified appropriately in the SDP as a whole-school priority. Under the effective leadership of the ICT co-ordinators, a detailed action plan prioritising key areas for development has been agreed. The teachers use ICT to assist their planning; they are effectively integrating ICT into lessons to support the children's learning across the curriculum. The children benefit from a wide range of activities which enables them to make progress across all the ICT strands. Importantly, the co-ordinators play a valuable role in overseeing, monitoring and evaluating the provision within the school.

2.15 The children's work is marked regularly, often with supportive comments to provide helpful guidance on how their work can be improved. During the inspection, in a few classes, the teachers developed effectively the strategy of peer editing.

2.16 Teachers use a range of standardised and non-standardised testing to identify the children's learning needs and to inform their short-term planning. Information is received from the nursery unit and provides a valuable baseline from which to plan individual children's learning. A system of observing and recording the children's progress across the curriculum is currently being introduced in the FS and KS1 classes. There are clear arrangements in place for reporting to parents on the children's progress. The school has begun to develop its use of standardised scores and DE benchmarking data in order to set appropriate targets to further improve the children's levels of attainment. The further development of promoting individual achievement, particularly in written English, has been identified as a key issue in the SDP and an action plan has been agreed.

2.17 The school has identified 18% of its children as having special educational needs. Individual education plans (IEPs) are devised for each of these children with targets for improvement focused sharply on the child's identified needs. Support is provided on a withdrawal and class basis. The teachers provide appropriately differentiated activities which take account of the range of abilities within the class. They show a strong commitment to meeting the needs of the children in a sensitive and supportive manner. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) is very effective in her role. She leads the development of the SEN provision within the school, and has overseen the drafting of well-

focused annual action plans. The roles and responsibilities of teachers, classroom assistants, children and the parents are clearly set out and effectively implemented in relation to SEN in the school. There is evidence to show that actions taken have resulted in improvements in learning and teaching, for example, the contribution of the children to the 'class books', school productions and wall displays, the well focused IEPs, the effective links with the IEPs into individual class planning, lesson content and well-differentiated activities, and the Reading Partnership training. Good progress has been made in addressing the requirements of the special educational needs disability order within the school.

2.18 The Principal provides outstanding leadership and has a clear vision for the future development of the school. He places strong emphasis on school improvement, on high quality learning and teaching and the professional development of his staff. He inspires others with his vision for the future development of the new school, and has established effective working relationships with the local and international community. He is well-supported by the senior management team and the developing curriculum teams and he enjoys the full support of the teachers, governors and parents.

2.19 The staff have availed of a range of training opportunities in school and beyond to develop areas of professional interest and need, and to support developments in important curricular areas. There has been a very effective programme of school-based training delivered by members of the school's senior management team and curriculum co-ordinators in pastoral care and child protection, literacy and ICT. The school reports that the guidance received from the North-Eastern Education and Library Board's Curriculum Advisory and Support Service has been beneficial.

2.20 The school's process for improvement has many strengths. Much work has gone into the SDP which is comprehensive and sets out appropriate priorities. There is a developing commitment to action planning, monitoring and evaluation of the children's attainments and learning experiences. There are effective policies and programmes in place which support a positive learning environment. The areas for improvement include the need to use the school performance information and data more systematically to track progress year-on-year and to set targets for improvement, both at an individual level and whole-class level.

2.21 The school accommodation has a number of deficiencies. The school is in the process of preparing for the work to begin on the new school building. The standard of caretaking, and the support provided by the ancillary staff, are excellent.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the excellent pastoral care arrangements, combined with a respectful, inclusive and caring ethos which permeates throughout the school;
- the highly motivated, welcoming and well behaved children who demonstrate a sense of pride for their school community;
- the highly-committed, innovative and enthusiastic teaching staff and the quality of teaching which was always sound, consistently good and at times outstanding;

- the excellent range and quality of the children's learning experiences in English, which are effectively supported through ICT;
- the excellent provision for children who require additional support with their learning; and
- the outstanding leadership of the Principal in meeting the needs of the children, the staff, the parents and the wider community and in his vision for the future development of the school.

3.2 In the areas inspected, the quality of the education provided in this school is excellent. The educational and pastoral needs of the learners are being well met. The parents can have confidence in the school's capacity for sustained self-improvement.

No follow-up inspection is required.

4. THE NURSERY UNIT

4.1 The nursery unit is a double unit situated in the grounds of Whitehouse Primary School. It has moved temporarily to mobile classrooms while the building work for the new school is completed. Since the last inspection there have been a number of staffing changes. The children come mainly from the immediate area.

4.2 The parents and staff were given opportunities to express their views about the nursery through the inspection questionnaires. The responses indicated a high level of satisfaction with the quality of the provision; a small number commented on their disappointment that the current premises cannot facilitate a hot meal for the children.

4.3 The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection in the school is very good. The nursery has appropriate policies and procedures for child protection that comply with the Department of Education circulars and guidance. The inspection evidence indicates that these policies and procedures are implemented effectively and consistently to safeguard the children.

4.4 The nursery programme gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, and has effective policies and programmes in place to encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

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

- Most of the staff work hard to create an attractive and often stimulating learning environment which is enhanced by displays of the children's own art work. In the best practice observed, the addition of natural and authentic items of interest in the different areas of play helped sustain the children's play for considerable lengths of time.
- The daily timetable is well-managed to provide a good balance between extended periods of free play and enjoyable group sessions; the break routine promotes the children's social skills and independence.
- The staff continue to develop good links with the parents through the recent development of home visits and activities which aim to engage further the parents in their children's learning.
- During the inspection, many good examples of very good staff interaction were observed when the adults promoted the children's language, thinking and learning and promoted settled and productive play. In the best practice observed, the staff used effective questioning and effectively built on and extended the children's ideas which resulted in the children staying on task for lengthy periods.

- There are satisfactory to very good opportunities for the children to learn in almost all areas of the pre-school curriculum. Particular strengths noted included respect for each other and the available resources, the promotion of the children's own creative art work, their interest in early mark making, the effective use made of a range of visitors to the nursery and the quality of the children's imaginative play.
- The staff have attended a wide range of training events; in the main there is evidence of thoughtful reflection, individual commitment and hard work to enrich the children's experiences further and to appropriately develop aspects of the provision.

4.6 The inspection identified areas for improvement. The following are the most important areas that need attention.

- The nursery co-ordinator and staff need to ensure that the best practice observed is disseminated and built upon to ensure the quality of the teaching and learning is of a consistently high quality throughout the nursery.
- The staff need to continue to develop their systems for observation and record keeping to ensure that it is systematic and is used more consistently to match the programme and to support the children's individual interests and needs.

4.7 The nursery has a development plan with appropriate targets for improvement. This plan should be amended in light of the inspection findings. In most cases the staff are reflective in their work and are developing useful methods of self-evaluation; there is some evidence that the process has led to improvements in the children's learning experiences.

4.8 In the areas inspected, the nursery has strengths in many aspects of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified a few areas for improvement in important areas which need to be addressed to meet effectively the needs of all the learners.

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

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON WHITEHOUSE PRIMARY SCHOOL NURSERY UNIT

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending full-time	26	26
Attending part-time	0	0
Under 3 years of age*	0	0
With statement of SEN**	0	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4***	0	0
At CoP stages 1 or 2***	0	1
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.

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	19.23%
Average attendance for the previous year.	92.9%

2. Duration of Sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
4 ¾ hours	-	-

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-Time	Part-Time
Teachers	1	2
Nursery Assistants	2	0
Qualified Nursery Assistants	0	0

Number of: ****	
Students	1
Trainees	0

**** Total placements since September of current year

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

Number issued	52
Percentage returned	44.2%
Number of written comments	10

ACCOMMODATION (PRIMARY SCHOOL)

- The accommodation falls short of modern standards and restricts the opportunities to deliver aspects of the curriculum effectively.

HEALTH AND SAFETY (NURSERY UNIT)

- The tools being used in the workshop area need to be more closely monitored and supervised.

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