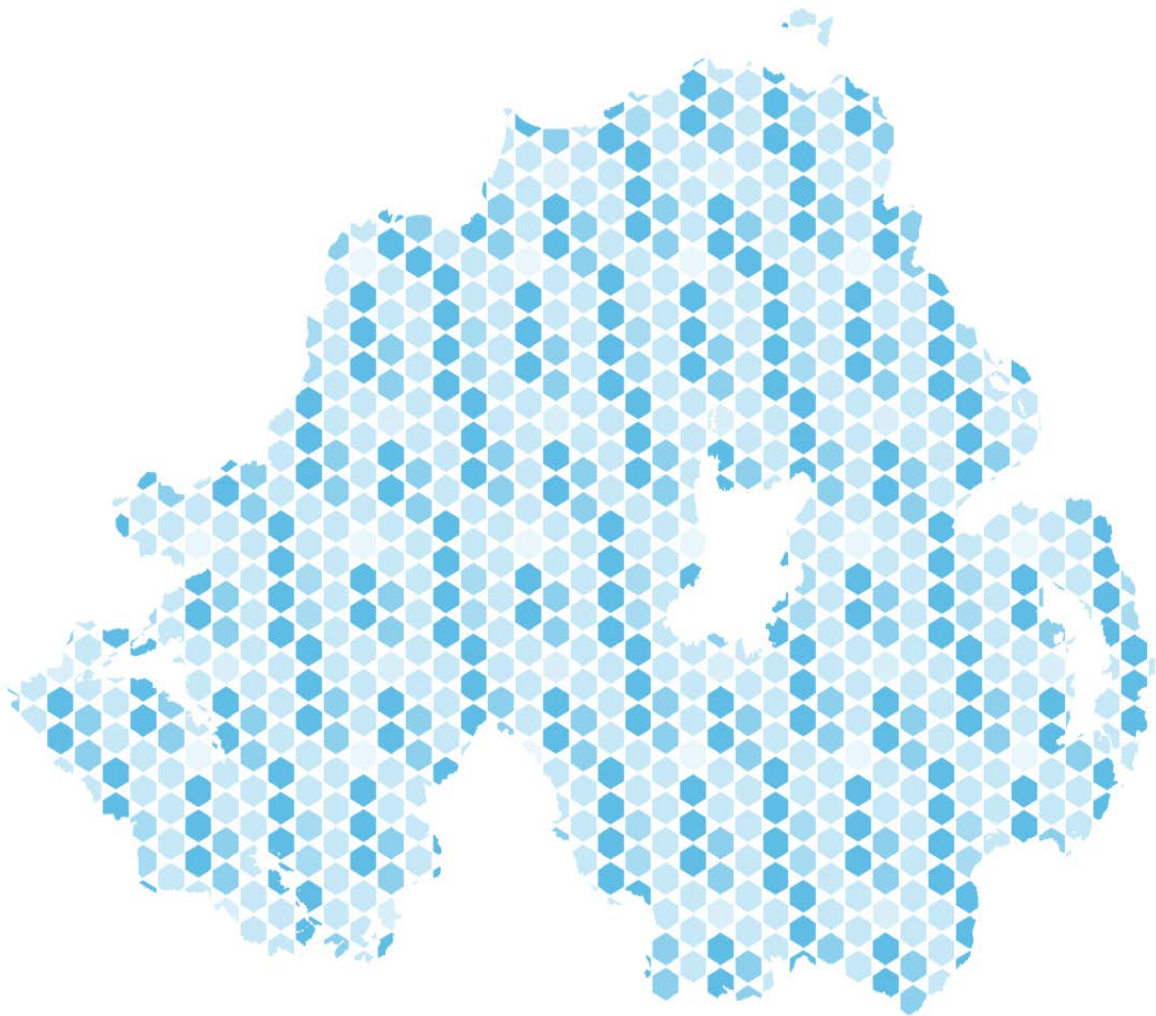


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Whitehead Primary School and
Nursery Unit, Carrickfergus

Report of an Inspection
in November 2012

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Whitehead Primary School and Nursery Unit is situated in the town of Whitehead. All of the children who attend the school come from the town and the surrounding rural area. The enrolment has steadily increased over the past five years and currently stands at 432, including 52 children in the nursery unit. At the time of the inspection, approximately 17% of the children in the school were entitled to free school meals. The school has identified 13% of the children as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning.

FOCUS

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy;
- the quality of provision for learning; and
- the quality of leadership and management, including the school's processes for self-evaluation leading to improvement.

OVERALL FINDING OF THE INSPECTION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school and nursery unit is very good. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

Achievements and Standards

The quality of the children's achievements and standards is good.

- By the end of key stage (KS) 2 most of the children achieve good **standards** in English and mathematics which are in line with their ability.
- The children express themselves with clarity and increasing fluency, participating well in group work and class discussion. They read with a very good degree of confidence. The school has identified writing as an area for development and the inspection findings would endorse this, for example to provide more opportunities for extended writing, in particular for the more able children.
- Most of the children apply well their mathematical knowledge in meaningful contexts. The school has identified appropriately the need to provide more open-ended opportunities for children to apply their learning in problem-solving and investigative work and, in a minority of classes, for the children to have more opportunities to engage in a wider range of mathematical activities.
- Most of the children with **special educational needs** make good progress in their learning in line with their ability.
- Almost all of the children in the **nursery unit** engage in purposeful and sustained play. The children are making very good progress, particularly in their early language and communication skills and in mathematical understanding.

Provision for learning

The provision for learning is very good.

- Almost all of the **children** are well motivated, enthusiastic, and engage actively in their own learning. The children interact well with one another in paired and group work; they are keen to demonstrate and apply their learning in a variety of contexts. As they progress through the school they develop a wide range of personal and social skills and are well prepared for the next stage of their education. The nursery unit has a very positive ethos and the working relationships at all levels are characterised by mutual respect which promotes the children's confidence, self-esteem and very good behaviour.
- During the inspection, the quality of the **teaching** observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding; with most of the lessons being good or better, and almost one-half of the lessons observed being very good or outstanding. In the most effective practice the teachers use a range of active and practical learning and teaching strategies to engage the children, to empower them to manage their own learning, to challenge their thinking, to extend their learning and to promote their oracy skills. The teachers also planned learning activities which were matched suitably to the individual needs and interests of all of the children.
- The provision for **special educational needs** is good. The children who have been identified as having additional learning needs are well-supported by the teachers and the learning support assistants. Assessment data is used well by the staff to both identify early the children who require additional support and to identify specific targets which are appropriate to the individual needs of the child: these targets are reviewed regularly and are used effectively by the teachers to inform classroom practice.
- The quality of the arrangements for **pastoral care** in the primary and the nursery unit is very good. There is an inclusive and supportive ethos in almost all of the classrooms. There are effective pastoral and curricular links between the school and the nursery unit to promote a smooth transition for the children as they move into year 1. As a result of the review of the school's anti-bullying policy, and in consultation with the parents, staff have received recently additional training in how to promote good relations and in how to mediate related issues: the outworking of this policy is very good. This is evident through the excellent behaviour of the children and the welcoming ethos. The school has created an atmosphere in which the children are valued and supported in their learning and their achievements are well celebrated.
- The children's personal and leadership skills are developed effectively, and their views are sought and acted upon, through their participation in the school council the Eco schools initiative and a peer mediation programme.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school and nursery unit have comprehensive arrangements in place for **safeguarding children**. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education

- The teachers make good use of **information and communication technology** (ICT) to support the children in their learning in both literacy and numeracy. During the inspection, there were good examples of the teachers using the interactive white boards to engage the children in their learning. When given the opportunity, the children use ICT effectively to develop and consolidate their understanding across the curriculum.
- The carefully planned programme in the **nursery unit** is broad and balanced and offers very good opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The quality of the interaction between the staff and the children is very good. The members of staff develop effectively the children's decision making capabilities and thinking skills. The daily timetable is well organised and provides an appropriate balance of free play and activities organised by the staff. The planning and assessment practices are very good. The staff evaluate effectively the children's progress and the information is used appropriately to inform the planning to meet the needs of all of the children.
- The school and nursery unit gives excellent attention to promoting **healthy eating and physical activity**, through, for example, the encouragement for the children to have healthy breaks and the extensive whole-school physical education and extra-curricular programmes.

Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management is very good.

- The Principal has been in post for six years and has paced appropriately the necessary changes to the development of the school. He leads by example and with the very good support of the Vice-principal, has developed an effective team spirit amongst staff and promotes a collegiate approach to decision-making within the school. He provides very good strategic leadership and communicates very effectively the shared vision. He has delegated appropriately key curricular responsibilities to the staff.
- The whole-school self-evaluation and school development planning (SDP) processes are very good. There is a well embedded culture of self-evaluation across the school in order to effect improvement; in particular the use of classroom observation to improve further the quality of the provision and the standards attained by the children. The school development plan (SDP) has identified a range of relevant priorities for the primary school and also the nursery unit supported by clearly focused action plans. Parents, children, staff and governors are given regular opportunities to contribute to the improvement process. Within the SDP, there is a strong focus on the provision for literacy and numeracy. The school is making effective use of performance data to identify priorities for development and has identified appropriately the need for the curriculum leaders to contribute more fully to monitoring and evaluating the quality of the provision and leading any change in their area of responsibility as the need is identified.

CONCLUSION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is very good.

The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON WHITEHEAD PRIMARY SCHOOL NURSERY UNIT

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending full-time	0	0
Attending part-time	26	26
Under 3 years of age*	0	0
With statement of special educational needs	0	0
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	0	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	1	0
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	0	0
With English as an additional language	2	3

* On 1 July.

** 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.	6%
Average attendance for the previous year.	95.6%

2. *Duration of Sessions*

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
-	2½ hours	2½ hours

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-Time	Part-Time
Teachers	1	0
Nursery Assistants (qualified)	2	0
Nursery Assistants (non-qualified)	0	0

Number of: ***	
Students	1
Trainees	0

*** Total placements since September of current year

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued	52
Percentage returned	32.7%
Number of written comments	8

BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Whitehead Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 05/11/12**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 301-0874** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Short**

B.

School Year	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Year 1 Intake	49	63	62	50	60
Enrolments					
Primary	348	362	384	378	380
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Unit	52	52	53	53	52
Special Unit	0	0	0	0	0
Irish Medium 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): 95.6% **NI Avg Att: 94.7%**

Average Attendance for those children on the Special Educational Needs Register: 93.6%

Primary & Reception	Nursery Unit	Special Unit	Irish Medium Unit
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- D. i. Number of Teachers (including the principal and part-time teachers): 20 1 0 0
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 27.14 NI PTR: 20.2
- iii. Average Class Size: 27.14
- iv. Class Size (Range): 22 to 31
- v. Ancillary Support:
 Number of Hours **Per Week**:
- | | |
|---|----|
| i. Clerical support: | 36 |
| ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support: | 80 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 70 |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 0.5%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 13.4%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 16.5%
- x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2010/11 who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics, and Irish (in Irish-medium schools):
- | | | |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------|
| English | Mathematics | Irish |
| 92% | 92% | N/A |

THE VIEWS OF THE PARENTS, TEACHERS, GOVERNORS, SUPPORT STAFF AND CHILDREN

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents, the teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection.

Of the 126 questionnaires issued to the parents in the primary school, 56 (44%) were returned to Inspection Services Branch including 33 which contained additional written comments. Most of the parents expressed high levels of satisfaction with the educational and pastoral provision in the school. Within the written responses in particular the parents acknowledged: the caring and supportive learning environment: the helpful and approachable staff: the schools commitment to meeting the needs of all the children: and, the importance of the school within the local community. They also appreciated the approaches adopted by the staff when providing evening workshops for the parents enabling them to become more involved in their child's education.

Of the 52 questionnaires issued to the parents in the nursery unit, 17 (33%) were returned to Inspection Services Branch including eight which contained additional written comments. Almost all of the parents expressed high levels of satisfaction with the staff's support for the children in settling them into the nursery routine, the children's developing confidence and growing independence, and the caring and enthusiastic staff dedicated to teaching young children.

Almost all of the teaching and support staff responded very positively to the staff questionnaires. They indicated that they are happy and proud working in the school, feel valued and supported by the management and appreciate the opportunities provided for staff to plan together and their involvement in the whole-school decision making process. The staff are totally committed to providing the best both academically, socially and pastorally for all the children.

The inspectors also met with a group of the children from year 6. They spoke enthusiastically about many aspects of school life including their enjoyment of learning, the kind, supportive teachers and their appreciation of, and participation in the wide range of extra-curricular activities open to them. They are aware of what to do if they have concerns about their safety or well-being.

The small number of concerns that were raised in the questionnaires have been reported to and discussed with the principal.

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