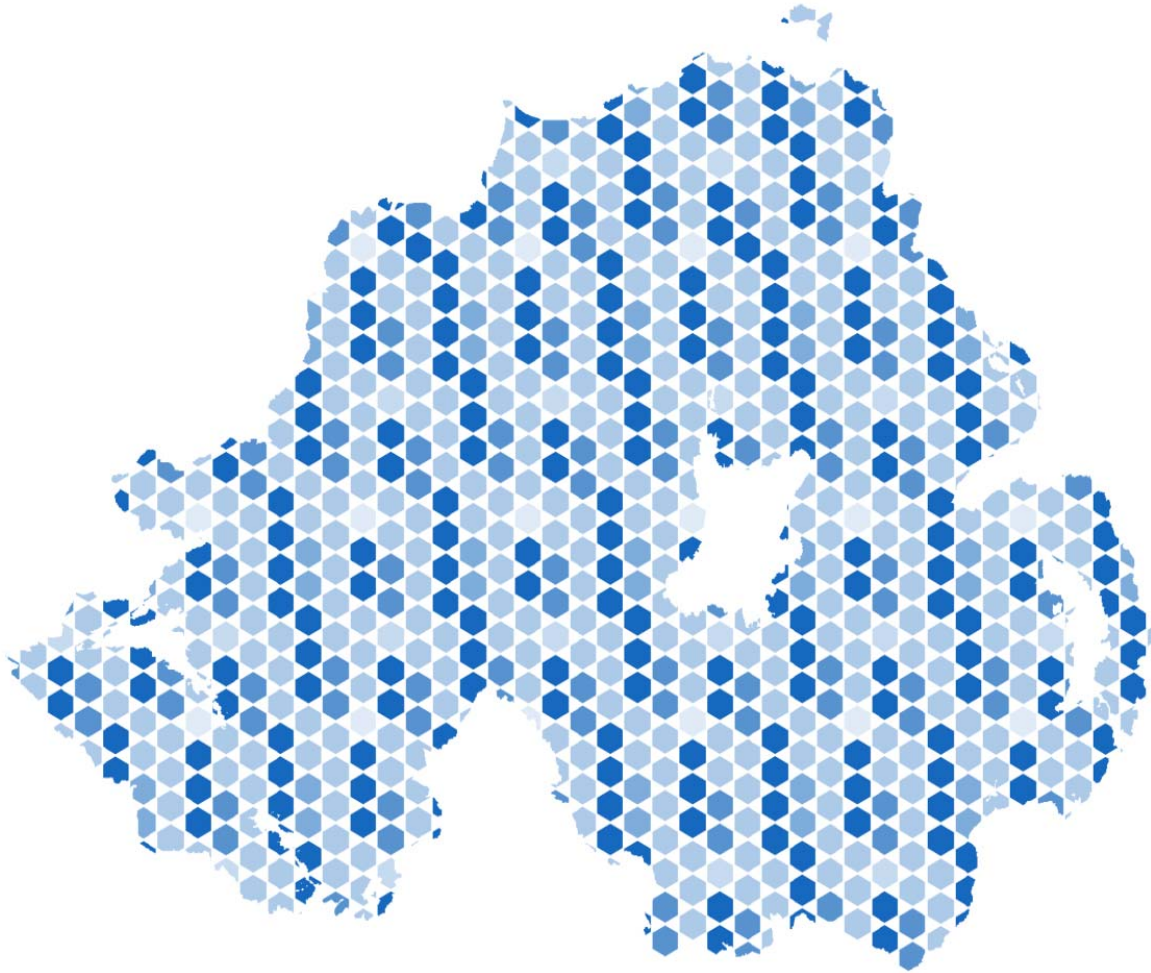


SPECIAL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Killard House School,
Donaghadee

Report of an Inspection
in January 2010

eti

*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



CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

CONTENTS

Section		Page
	STATISTICAL INFORMATION	
1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS	2
3.	QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING	4
4.	LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	6
5.	OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS	6
6.	CONCLUSION	7
	APPENDIX	

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

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Killard House School is situated in Donaghadee on the site of the former post-primary school and adjacent to the local primary school. The school provides education for 163 pupils; it also provides Outreach support for 24 pupils, aged between four and eleven years of age, as part of the South-Eastern Education and Library Board's (SEELB) support for special educational needs in mainstream schools.

1.2 The school consists of a Primary and Post-Primary Department. The Primary Department includes a diagnostic unit, three language and communication units and a social communication unit.

1.3 The Primary Department provides education for pupils with moderate, including complex, learning difficulties. The school also makes provision, in three class units for 35 pupils with language and communication difficulties. These pupils are statemented for specialist support for one to three years in the units. The aim of the provision is to provide comprehensive assessment and intensive support to improve the pupils' language skills and enable each to access the curriculum. The pupils transfer to the mainstream of the school, to a local primary school or to a mainstream language unit, following a final assessment of their progress. Ongoing support is provided for them by the speech and language therapists and therapy assistants, based full-time in the school.

1.4 The school also provides specialist teaching support in the social communication unit, for six pupils aged between four and eight years, who are identified as being on the autistic spectrum and who would benefit from an autism specific environment. The aim of the unit is to develop the pupils' skills to enable them to access the full curriculum and integrate with their peers. The unit also receives advisory support from the speech and language service and the SEELB's Autism Advisory Service.

1.5 The Post-Primary Department consists of five year groups. The pupils are taught an appropriately broad range of subjects across the Northern Ireland curriculum, including vocational courses at the South Eastern Regional College (SERC).

1.6 The Outreach Service provides support for 24 pupils with moderate learning difficulties, and language and communication difficulties in primary schools across the SEELB area. The aim of the Service is to assist the pupils to maintain their places in mainstream schools and improve their attainment levels.

1.7 The school has recently been relocated in the refurbished Donaghadee High School building.

1.8 The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents and the teaching and support 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 pupils from key stage (KS) 2 and KS4. One hundred and seventy-two questionnaires were issued to the parents of the pupils in the main school; 21 were returned to the Inspection Services Branch and eleven of these contained additional written comments.

The majority of the responses from the parental questionnaires indicated that the parents support the work of the school; particular reference was made to the high quality of education which the pupils receive, the dedication of the Principal, the teachers and the support staff, and to the caring and supportive ethos. The small number of concerns raised have been shared with the governors and the Principal. The governors expressed their support for the leadership of the school and for the quality of the teaching.

Eight teachers (20%) and two support staff (3%) responded to the staff questionnaires. Almost all of the returns expressed their support for the leadership of the school and the very good quality of the working relationships. A few of the responses, however, expressed the need for a more consistent approach to internal communication within the school and the need for additional resources.

The year 6 and year 12 pupils spoke with confidence about what to do if they have any concerns about their safety and well-being and reported that the teaching and support staff are always approachable and caring. They talked eagerly about their participation in classes, sporting activities and school trips and of their pride in the new premises.

Throughout the inspection, the pupils behaved extremely well and participated actively in all lessons; they have acclimatised well to their new school and enjoy their time in school.

1.9 The Inspectors observed a total of 50 lessons in the school. Interviews were also held with the Principal, the senior management team (SMT), co-ordinators, teachers, governors and pupils. The school's development plan (SDP), other related documentation and policies, the teachers' planning and the pupils' work were scrutinised. One inspector visited Outreach sessions in two primary schools and held discussions with mainstream staff and the Outreach teachers. An additional inspector visited the local further education college to observe the pupils from the school in an occupational studies session: he also discussed the provision with a member of the college staff.

1.10 The focus of the inspection was on the standards achieved by the pupils in the school, the quality of the provision for learning, the leadership and management of the school and the arrangements for child protection and pastoral care. The inspection also evaluated the quality of the teaching in the Outreach provision and considered the views of the mainstream school staff in respect of the external support provided to the school.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 Throughout the inspection, the pupils' standards of achievement were judged in relation to their prior educational achievements.

THE PRIMARY DEPARTMENT

2.2 Overall, the pupils make very good progress in their learning. The standard of achievement in literacy and numeracy is very good in relation to the pupils' previous attainment and their special educational needs. All of the pupils are motivated learners and suitably challenged and supported in their learning. Their individual learning needs are met successfully within each lesson. The pupils are involved actively in celebrating their success through displays of their work and the good quality of the recording of their achievements in their workbooks and using digital media.

2.3 Bearing in mind the pupils' language and communication difficulties and additional learning needs, they progress well in the language and communication units. They are interested and stimulated by their activities as well as by the very good interaction with staff and each other. They engage very well in learning, try hard and achieve the targets which are set in language and literacy, and numeracy. The majority of the pupils make sufficient progress from their starting points to enable them to continue their education in either a mainstream speech and language unit or in a primary school. A minority, assessed as having more significant learning needs, remains in the school and transfers successfully to the mainstream classes.

2.4 The pupils in the social communication unit respond extremely well to the visually structured classroom environment. They enjoy the learning activities, develop appropriate social skills and demonstrate improved behaviour and inter-action with the teacher and each other. The majority progress to mainstream schools or learning support units attached to mainstream schools with little or no additional support; a small minority continue to require specific support over and above that available from the class teacher.

THE POST-PRIMARY DEPARTMENT

2.5 By the end of KS4, the standards achieved in the Post-Primary Department are very good (See Appendix). The pupils gain accreditation in the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) entry level English, mathematics, science, art and design, and in occupational studies at SERC. (See 3.3 below for details) By the time they leave school the majority of pupils have secured a post-16 placement in a further education college or training organisation. Since 2009 the school facilitates the delivery of the Prince's Trust XL programme; the pupils spoke enthusiastically about the active learning experiences provided by the 'XL Club'. The XL programme is accredited by the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) and links appropriately with other curriculum areas, including personal development, young enterprise and learning for life and work.

2.6 The inspection found that the pupils demonstrate good standards in personal development; they work well together in groups and pairs and are developing notably their self-esteem and appropriate levels of independent work. The pupils make good progress in literacy and numeracy and are achieving standards commensurate with their ability.

2.7 The school has formed and maintains effective partnerships links with a wide range of appropriate external organisations. For example, the year 11 and 12 pupils attending the SERC for CCEA accredited entry level General Certificate of Secondary Education Occupational Studies classes work well with the college staff achieving the realistic and achievable course targets set for them. The staff reviews carefully and regularly the curriculum areas offered to ensure they suit the individual needs and interests of the learners.

OUTREACH PROVISION

2.8 Observation of the sessions indicated good quality inter-action between the teachers and the pupils. There is an appropriate focus on the shortcomings in the pupils' levels of performance in literacy and numeracy or language skills. The one-to-one sessions ensure that the pupils are becoming more secure in their learning and are developing the confidence to apply their learning more generally in class. The pupils' standards could be raised further if the Outreach work was more systematically monitored and evaluated in order to further support the role of the Outreach teachers.

2.9 The inspection findings identified the following strengths in the achievements of the pupils in both the school and Outreach services:

- the very good standards achieved by all the pupils;
- the pupils' developing self-confidence, independence and social and life skills; and
- the pupils' impressive level of accreditation and transition to further education and training courses.

3. QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 The quality of teaching throughout the school is always satisfactory and is very good or outstanding in 60% of instances.

THE PRIMARY DEPARTMENT

3.2 In the primary classes, including the language and communication and social communication units, the teachers provide skilful teaching and very good quality learning experiences well suited to the individual needs of the pupils and set appropriately high expectations for the pupils' social interaction and achievements. Throughout the Primary Department, the teachers consistent and effective use of the assessment for learning practices result in greater pupil involvement in the setting of their personal learning goals and their understanding of key concepts. The well-structured and differentiated literacy and numeracy sessions encourage the pupils to develop systematically their comprehension and mathematical skills. The teachers plan the children's learning in careful steps and are judicious in their asking questions to assist the children's understanding and to affirm their learning. The efficient use of the task board, as a classroom organisational tool, creates very good opportunities for the children to take charge of their personal learning environment and promotes appropriately independent and collaborative work. The purposeful educational field trips enhance the children's understanding and enjoyment of their locality and environment in real life contexts and make meaningful connections with other areas of learning.

THE POST-PRIMARY DEPARTMENT

3.3 In the Post-Primary Department, the teachers and classroom assistants support and challenge the pupils in a happy and secure environment. They plan thoroughly for the lessons and ensure that a full range of teaching and learning strategies is used. The pupils' learning is set in interesting and relevant contexts. In the most effective practice, the teachers respond well to the pupils' contributions and use them to recap previous learning or to lay the foundation for future work. On occasions, in literacy and numeracy lessons, the interactive whiteboard was used effectively to engage all the pupils in interesting and challenging work; the teachers also used structured number apparatus appropriately to extend the pupils' understanding of important number skills. The school has identified effective questioning as an area for development; the evidence from the inspection endorses this priority. In addition, the teachers of literacy and, particularly, numeracy need to build more on the contexts that arise in the pupils' day at the SERC in order to increase the relevance of the work for the pupils and reinforce their learning.

3.4 While the teachers prepare well for lessons and record in detail their planning and individual lesson evaluations, it is evident that the current Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are too narrowly described with a format and focus on short-term learning.

3.5 The use of information and communication technology (ICT) throughout the school is good. The school is currently undergoing the replacement of ICT equipment and at the time of inspection had recently been provided with interactive whiteboards in all classes. This resource provides a stimulating, motivating and effective strategy for teaching and a wide range of interesting learning contexts and activities.

3.6 The quality of the Outreach teaching is good and characterised by very clear and well planned lessons designed to raise each pupil's literacy and numeracy standards and enable them to engage more fully in their class work. Particular strengths are the teachers' detailed planning, target-setting and the one-to-one approach developed to cater for the needs of

each pupil. The teachers maintain good working relationships with the pupils and operate positive reward systems. While this is an important level of support, it is evident from discussion with the Principals of the mainstream schools, that the work between the Outreach and mainstream teachers is not sufficiently collaborative and informed by shared outcomes for the pupils.

3.7 The refurbished school building has added significantly to the quality of the learning environment. In a short space of time, the teachers have created a warm and inviting space which the older pupils enjoy and appreciate. The SEELB is to be commended on the provision it has made and on the high quality of the refurbished accommodation.

3.8 The ethos within the school and in the Outreach service is very good.

3.9 The quality of the pastoral care within the school is very good. The pupils' independence and personal confidence, are developed consistently by staff in a learning environment which promotes mutual respect and recognises the needs of each. In addition, the good range of sporting activities within the school and the community is successful in raising the pupils' self-esteem. The work of the School Council, involving pupils from year 7 to year 14, develops successfully the pupils' decision-making capabilities in relation to school life and increases their awareness of local and national issues.

3.10 The school has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding pupils. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued in the relevant circulars issued by the Department of Education. The areas which need to be addressed are: the updating of the child protection training provided by the SEELB for the re-constituted governors and the review and agreement of the child protection policy document to include the change in personnel and their associated responsibilities.

3.11 The school maintains good and regular links with the parents through homework books and news items; all of these are appreciated by the parents and are testament to the active commitment of the whole staff to ensuring that the parents are informed fully of their child's progress and achievements.

3.12 The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, opportunities are provided for practical cookery and there are productive links with food and health promoting organisations, which encourage the pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles.

3.13 The key performance indicators of the quality of teaching and learning are:

- the teacher's skills and experience of working with pupils with significant learning difficulties, particularly in the language and communication units and the social communication unit;
- the welcoming and friendly ethos which permeates the school and enhances the working environment;
- the broad and appropriate curriculum experienced by the pupils;
- the high quality of the teaching in the school and in the Outreach programme;

- the high level of the pupils' engagement in healthy eating and exercise opportunities; and
- the very good quality of the accommodation and resources.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 The leadership of the Principal is very good; he sets a very positive and reflective tone for the work of the school promoting continuously the school in the local community and ensuring that each pupil leaves the school with a secure post-school placement in a further education college or training centre. Recently, he managed successfully, with the support of his two vice-principals, the move to the new premises with minimum disruption for the pupils and staff.

4.2 The SMT works effectively and promotes positive working standards throughout the school; links between departments are developing well and should be further built on to consolidate current practice and improve the cohesion, for example in the system of planning, recording and evaluating of IEPs.

4.3 Staff development is given high priority in the SDP and the creation of small teams to address key priorities is an effective management approach to raising standards and promoting consistency and importantly to ensuring that all staff contribute to and benefit from the process.

4.4 The school gives very good attention and meets fully the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005.

4.5 The main performance indicators of the leadership and management of the school are:

- the very good strategic leadership provided by the Principal;
- the efficient management of day-to-day practices by the vice-principals and their strong promotion of standards in their respective areas of responsibility;
- the effective deployment of the staff in areas where they are most effective;
- the progress made in extending the curriculum and mapping transition to post-school placement; and
- the positive support provided by the governors.

5. OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

5.1 The school shows strengths in all aspects of the areas inspected. In particular the inspection has identified the following strengths:

- the very good leadership of the Principal, well-supported by his SMT;
- the consistently high quality of teaching in the school, and in the Outreach provision, which is very good or outstanding in 60% of instances;
- the very effective support provided by the classroom assistants;

- the good standards achieved by the pupils;
- the very good quality of the pastoral care of the pupils and the very positive ethos which pervades the life of the school; and
- the high quality of the resources and accommodation.

The inspection has also identified the need to develop further the cohesive links between the Primary and Post-Primary Department through the planning, recording and evaluating of IEPs at a whole school level

6. **CONCLUSION**

6.1 In the areas inspected, the quality of education and pastoral care provided by this school is very good. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the learners; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self improvement.

KILLARD HOUSE SCHOOL - KEY STAGE 4 ACCREDITED QUALIFICATIONS

- CCEA Entry level

Mathematics	Level 3	Level 2
2009	11	
2008	9	1
2007	8	3

English	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
2009	7	2	1
2008	5	2	1
2007	3	4	4

Art and Design	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
2009	7	3	1
2008	7	2	1
2007	7	4	

Science (single award)	Level 3	Level 2
2009	10	
2008	10	
2007	10	1

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