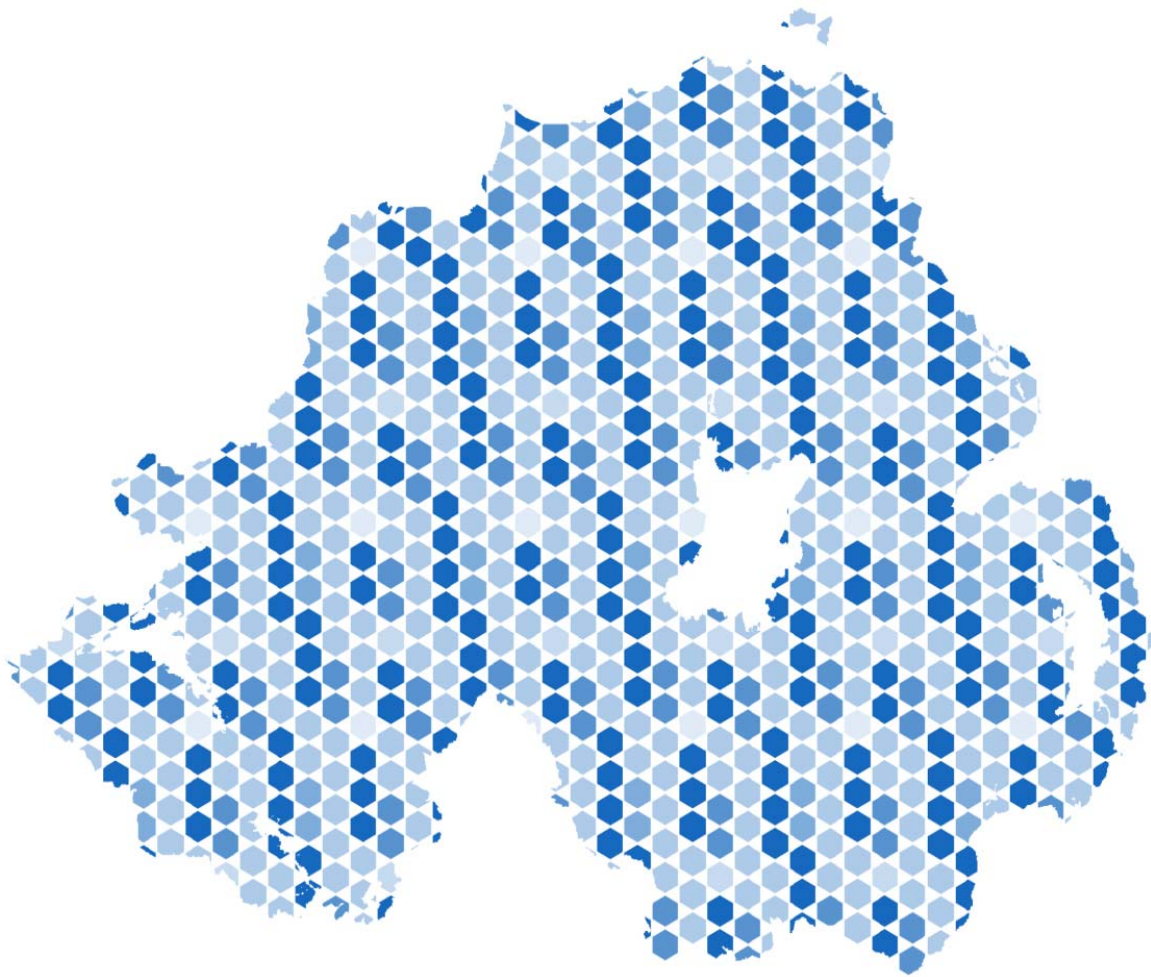


SPECIAL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Kilronan School, Magherafelt

Report of an Inspection
in May 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

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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, the Inspectorate relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Kilronan School is situated in Magherafelt. It is a purpose-built school, and provides education for 64 pupils aged 3 to 19 years who have severe learning difficulties. A specific nursery class was established in September 2009 as part of the North-Eastern Education and Library Board's Early Years Project; seven pupils currently attend this class. There have been significant staff changes in recent years; the Principal took up post in March 2009 and the Vice-principal in November 2009.

1.2 The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection, as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and with two groups of pupils.

1.3 Approximately one half of the parental questionnaires issued were returned to the Inspections Services Branch of the Department of Education, and 18 of these included a written comment. All of the parental responses were very positive and commented on the excellent support provided by the staff for their children.

1.4 Twelve teachers and 30 members of the support staff completed the confidential online questionnaire. Their responses affirmed the work of the school. The governors expressed their strong support for the Principal, their complete satisfaction with the work of the school and they outlined the many concerns they have about the lack of suitable post-school provision for the school's leavers. During the meetings with the inspection team, both groups of pupils reported that they feel safe and know whom to turn to if they have any concerns about their well-being.

1.5 The Education and Training Inspectorate has reported to the Principal and representatives of the governors the findings from the questionnaires and the discussions.

1.6 The focus of the inspection was on the standards achieved by the pupils, the quality of the provision for learning, the leadership and management of the school and the arrangements for child protection and pastoral care.

1.7 The Inspectors observed a total of 26 lessons. Interviews were held with the Principal, members of the senior management team (SMT), subject leaders, teachers, governors and pupils. The school's development plan, other related documentation and policies, the teachers' planning and the pupils' work were examined as part of the inspection.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

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

2.2 Kilronan School is a very good school in which all the pupils make good progress and engage positively with the school curriculum, which is appropriate to their needs. They achieve the targets set for them by their teachers in the individual education plans (IEPs). By the end of their time in school, the pupils have become more independent and confident; most can use their skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) within a range of contexts, both within and outside of the school. During the inspection, the pupils in all the classes were very well-behaved, courteous and friendly to each other and to visitors.

2.3 The school has worked hard in recent years to extend and develop good opportunities for those pupils preparing for transition from school to adult life. The pupils gain external accreditation and awards across a wide range of subjects and activities. The teachers indicated their disappointment at the dearth of suitable placements for the pupils when they leave the school.

2.4 The pupils from classes 7, 8 and 9 attend courses in construction in the Northern Regional College and pupils from classes 8 and 9 work alongside pupils from Sperrinview School, Dungannon in various classes at the South West College. Those pupils unable to benefit from these courses have alternative courses tailored to their needs, for example, pony riding and horticulture.

2.5 By the time they leave school, all of the senior pupils gain internal and external accreditation appropriate to their level of development and in a variety of life skills. The pupils currently access a range of accreditation including the Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations National Skills Profile, Heartstart, the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network Towards Independence, the Royal Society of Arts word processing, Open College Network Independent Travel, British Safety Council Work Hazard Awareness course and the Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment Occupational Studies. The school is continuing to explore further external accreditation opportunities.

2.6 The school gives outstanding attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, healthy breaks, the provision of healthy meals for lunch and the involvement of sports coaches for physical education classes; all of these encourage the pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles.

2.7 The inspection findings indicate the following characteristics in the achievements of the pupils:

- the good progress made by all the pupils in achieving the targets outlined in their IEPs;
- the exemplary behaviour of the pupils throughout the school;
- the promotion of the pupils' health and well-being;
- the culture of success within the school, where the achievements of all of the pupils are recognised and celebrated;
- the range of appropriate accreditation on offer to the pupils, and the very good quality of the school's programme for transition and leavers; and
- the dearth of suitable placements for the pupils when they leave school.

3. QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 The high quality of the teaching is an important strength of the school. Almost 90% of the lessons observed during the inspection ranged from very good to outstanding; almost 50% were of outstanding quality. The pupils learn well and develop self-esteem and levels of independence matched to their abilities. A range of well-planned and suitable sensory activities helps to develop the levels of awareness of those pupils who have complex learning needs.

3.2 The curriculum is broad and balanced and promotes progression. The staff has very high expectations for the pupils' participation in their lessons. The teachers' planning and their evaluations of the pupils' learning are thorough and focused on the individual needs of the pupils. All the teachers have worked hard over recent years to improve the overall quality of the provision for play for the younger pupils. The school has identified the need to develop further the provision for play, especially the outdoor areas, in order to offer a wider range of appropriate physical activities and experiences for all the children.

3.3 Classroom management is very effective throughout the school and impacts positively on the pupils, enhancing their learning and enjoyment. Teachers and assistants collaborate effectively to enhance the experiences of the pupils; the members of the support staff contribute significantly and skilfully to the pupils' learning experiences and their well-being. The very good collaboration between therapists and class teams facilitates the sharing of effective therapy techniques with the teachers and assistants, and improves further the progress made by the pupils.

3.4 Information and communication technology is used effectively throughout the school to enrich the educational experiences of the pupils. It is also used effectively in linking with other schools, for example, through the use of video-conferencing. Assistive technology is used well to provide access to the curriculum for those pupils who have physical disabilities.

3.5 The school has very good links with the mainstream schools across all the sectors, and is currently involved significantly in the Learning Partnership.

Pre-School Class

3.6 The staff has worked creatively to make effective use of all of the available space within the pre-school classroom to provide a stimulating and attractive learning environment. The pupils are happy and well-settled; they are familiar and secure in their routines and environment and they are making good progress in relation to their stage of development. Their personal, social and emotional needs are developed through the sensitive interaction of the teacher and the assistants. The staff members generate a sense of fun and enjoyment, and guide and support the pupils in their individual explorations. The staff is aware that the pupils require focused support to develop their language and communication skills and this is evident in the high quality of their interactions with the pupils.

3.7 The teacher has introduced a sound system for planning a comprehensive and balanced programme and a systematic approach to recording the pupils' responses to the activities. The staff members know the pupils well and link their assessments to effective planning to meet the needs and interests of the pupils. The staff in the nursery class has begun to establish good working links with a local nursery school; two of the pupils have recently begun to attend the nursery school one morning per week. This collaboration is to be commended.

3.8 Among the strengths of the pre-school provision are the excellent relationships and communication links established between the staff, the children and their families prior to the children starting school, and the good quality of the programme provided. A range of meetings held in the attractive Toy Library, along with home visits, encourage the parents of the pre-school aged children to become more actively involved in their children's learning and development at all levels.

3.9 The school has very good comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding the pupils across the year groups. These arrangements reflect fully the guidance issued by the relevant Department.

3.10 The provision for the pastoral care of the pupils and the staff in the school is outstanding. The members of staff are hard-working and dedicated. They promote strongly a positive climate of pastoral care and concern for the pupils. A caring, friendly and supportive ethos permeates the school and ensures very positive working relationships at all levels among staff and pupils.

3.11 The inspection findings indicate the following characteristics in the quality of the provision for learning:

- the outstanding quality of the pastoral care which creates a positive climate for learning and achievement;
- the high quality of the teaching throughout the school, with almost half of the lessons observed judged to be outstanding;
- the teachers' planning for learning and the comprehensive assessment and recording of the pupils' progress in all classes;
- the high quality of the provision in the pre-school class:
- the broad and appropriate curriculum and the very good use of ICT, including assistive technology to support and enrich the learning experiences of all the pupils; and
- the very good team work within the school which enables excellent collaborative practice within the classrooms, and effective inter-disciplinary collaborative working between staff and therapists.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 The leadership in the school is outstanding. The recently appointed Principal provides excellent strategic leadership and has a clear educational direction for the work of the school. She has done much in her short time in post; for example, she has undertaken a whole-school review involving parents, governors, staff and pupils and has introduced sound and effective procedures and policies to promote high standards. She has also encouraged a strong sense of teamwork throughout the school based on trust and mutual respect. The staff development programme is comprehensive and focused on developing the staff's expertise in meeting the needs of the pupils. The Principal is very ably supported by the recently appointed Vice-principal and the whole-school team. There is an emerging culture of self-evaluation in the school and the Principal and SMT recognise the need for its continuous development in order to further raise standards and promote best practice.

4.2 The improvement process is clearly linked to a very well-constructed school development plan (SDP). There are excellent opportunities for consultation about the SDP within the school community, with a thorough analysis of responses. The school gives very good attention and meets fully the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005.

4.3 The inspection findings indicate the following characteristics in the leadership and management:

- the high quality of the leadership of the Principal who provides very good strategic leadership and is very ably supported by her Vice-principal and senior management team;
- the effective staff development programme which provides very good opportunities for further training and professional development;
- the effective delegation of duties throughout the school and the role of the subject leaders in monitoring and evaluating the quality of the learning and teaching;
- the involvement of the members of the Board of Governors who are kept fully informed of the work of the school; and
- the emerging culture of self-evaluation and the need for its further development.

5. **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS**

5.1 The overall effectiveness of the school shows strengths in all aspects of the areas inspected.

5.2 The inspection has identified the following strengths:

- the outstanding leadership provided by the Principal;
- the warm, nurturing and family ethos, which permeates all aspects of the life of the school and the strong sense of collegiality between the Principal, Vice-principal, SMT and all the staff;
- the happy, secure and well-mannered pupils who are all benefitting from their time in school;
- the very high quality of the teaching and learning throughout the school, including in the nursery class; and
- the strong support of the parents and the members of the Board of Governors for the work of the school.

5.3 The inspection has identified the following area for improvement:

- the further development of the outdoor play curriculum.

6. **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 learners and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

APPENDIX

There is a need for the refurbishment of the Leavers' Room in order to include specific areas:

- to enable the promotion of the pupils' independent living skills; and
- to provide opportunities for further accreditation.

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