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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



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Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Focused Inspection

**Sperrinview Special School
Dungannon**

Inspected: November 2007

CONTENTS

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

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Sperrinview School is a purpose built school on a spacious site situated on the outskirts of Dungannon, and provides education for pupils, aged three to 19 years, with severe learning difficulties. Fifty per cent of the teachers in the school are newly appointed and following beginning teacher, early professional development programmes or induction. The inspection took place during the week beginning 26 November 2007 on the Monday, Thursday and Friday due to ongoing industrial action called by the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance.

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 groups of pupils from across the school. The pupils reported feeling safe and secure in school and shared their appreciation of their teachers and classroom assistants. Of the questionnaires issued to parents, some 48% were returned to the Department of Education (DE) and 25 included additional written comments which commended highly the work of the school. The very few concerns were shared with the Principal. The governors expressed their strong commitment and support for the school. The governors, school management and parents raised concerns about the level of speech therapy provided for the school.

1.3 The focus of the inspection was on the quality of provision to meet the individual needs of the pupils and the arrangements for child protection and pastoral care.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 Sperrinview School is a very effective school with many good features enabling the pupils to achieve well and, where appropriate, to gain external accreditation for their learning. The pupils are well behaved and achieve high standards through a broad, balanced and appropriate curriculum and good quality experiences. The members of staff responsible for the Leavers Programme provide excellent opportunities for the pupils to develop independent, social and life skills through a rich variety of community links and partnerships with local schools, employers and the College of Further Education. The inspection team endorse the school's intention to extend the programme more fully to the pupils aged 14 years and over.

2.2 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, for example Boost Better Breaks, access to drinking water and cooking classes which encourage the pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles.

2.3 The inspection findings indicate the following achievements and standards:

- the high standards achieved by the pupils building on previous learning and experiences;
- the thorough knowledge of the pupils by all members of staff leading to an individual, appropriate programme for each pupil;

- the steady progress made by the pupils in line with their ability;
- the strong emphasis throughout the school day on the school community's well-being and healthy lifestyle; and
- the very high quality of the school's Leavers Programme and transition arrangements enabling pupils to achieve their full potential.

3. QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 There is a very high quality ethos in the school. The teachers are hard-working and committed to their pupils' learning and development. They know the pupils well and respond appropriately to their interests and needs. The teachers write and implement good individual education plans for their pupils. The teaching is of a consistently good quality with over 60% of the lessons being consistently good or better, and over 90% having many good features. There is effective dissemination of effective teaching practice throughout the school.

3.2 Well planned provision is made for a small number of pupils with additional more complex and demanding needs. The provision is characterised by detailed, varied and highly structured timetables, a caring ethos with strong commitment by the members of staff involved and immediate responsiveness to the needs of the pupils. The current accommodation for pupils with these needs is inadequate.

3.3 The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection in the school is excellent. The school has procedures in place which implement fully the guidance outlined in the relevant DE Circulars. The governors, staff, parents and pupils are fully aware of the school's procedures and have had the opportunity to contribute to a range of effective policies which guide the work of the school. Among the strengths are the very caring and supportive ethos, the quality of the working relationships throughout the school, the effective ways of communicating with parents and governors, the policy and procedures for addressing bullying issues and encouraging good relationships, the high priority given to the health and well-being of the staff and pupils and effective communication with other agencies.

3.4 The main strengths of the quality of provision for learning are:

- the teacher's very high quality of planning and assessment for learning including differentiated strategies which ensures that the teaching meets fully the needs of the pupils;
- the consistently good quality of teaching throughout the school;
- the support staff who contribute skilfully to the pupils' well-being and learning experiences;
- the good use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) by teachers and speech and language therapists in learning and teaching including the wide variety of resources to enable communication and access to the curriculum;

- the good use made of a wide variety of community resources including Dungannon Community Arts Studio and 'Everybody Online' for ICT with all local post-primary schools;
- the excellent multi-disciplinary team-work characterised by collaborative practice with therapists for planning, teaching and assessment;
- the active involvement shown by pupils in all aspects of their education;
- the effective dissemination of good practice throughout the school; and
- the bright, attractive learning environment maintained to a high standard by the caretaker, grounds man and team.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 The Principal is a consistently good leader and manager and shows strong commitment and dedication to all aspects of the school. She has developed strong links amongst the school, parents and local community. The Principal and senior management team make good use of the school accommodation; however the substantial increase in the number of pupils since the school was built has resulted in inadequately sized classrooms for some pupils. The Principal leads by example and has a thorough knowledge of the pupils. She ensures high standards in the classroom by a thorough and well-organised system of self-evaluation, observation and support throughout the school. The improvement process is clearly linked to a well-constructed school development plan (SDP). There are excellent opportunities for consultation about the SDP within the school community. Policies and programmes are in place which effectively supports a culture of school improvement. The school gives very good attention to and meets fully the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005.

4.2 The main strengths of the leadership and management of the school are:

- the very good leadership of the Principal, ably supported by the Vice-principal and the senior management team;
- the commitment of the Principal and her members of staff to promoting the highest standards of ethos, care, teaching and learning within the school;
- the good working relationships and collaborative practice established throughout the school;
- the well-established system of self-evaluation which permeates the work of the school;
- the effective system for staff development and the dissemination of good classroom practice throughout the school;
- the good quality and clearly defined SDP;

- the strong emphasis placed by the staff and the governors on involving the school in the local community which results in enriching experiences for the pupils; and
- the well informed, committed and supportive governors who are fully involved in the work of the school.

5. **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS**

5.1 The overall effectiveness of the school is consistently good.

5.2 The main strengths of the provision are:

- the consistently good leadership and management of the Principal and the management team;
- the consistently high quality teaching, assessment and planning;
- the steady progress and high standards achieved by the pupils in line with their ability;
- the excellent collaborative practice throughout the school;
- the well established systems for self-evaluation and dissemination of good practice; and
- the governor's active involvement and commitment to the school.

6. **AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT**

6.1 The inspection findings indicate the following area for improvement:

- the provision of therapy to the school varies and needs to be addressed if the needs of the pupils are to be fully met.

7. **CONCLUSION**

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

No follow-up inspection is required.

ACCOMODATION

- There is a lack of accommodation caused by the increased admissions to the school. This needs to be addressed by the school and the Southern Education and Library Board.

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