

Report of a Primary Inspection
Moira Primary School and Nursery Unit

November 2024

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Throughout the report the use of an asterisk * denotes further information included at Appendix 2.

1. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Moira Primary School and Nursery Unit is a controlled co-educational primary school and nursery unit located in the heart of the village of Moira in County Down. The enrolment has risen steadily over recent years and currently stands at 435 children, including 26 children in the nursery unit. Most of the children come from the local village and the surrounding area. Twelve percent of the children have been identified as having special education needs (SEN) and just over 9% have free school meals entitlement.

The school provides a breakfast club and an afterschool “M” club for the children, both are well attended. The school is involved in a well-established shared education partnership with a local primary school.

The school is a Rights Respecting School* and has achieved several awards and external accreditations that include: the Eco School’s ‘Green Flag’*; Northern Ireland Forest School*; Renaissance Champion School*; Dyslexia Friendly School*; Digital School Northern Ireland*; and Autism Impact* Awards.

B. VIEWS OF CHILDREN, PARENTS/CARERS AND STAFF

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) issued online confidential questionnaires to year 7 children, all parents/carers and staff in advance of the inspection. A summary of the questionnaire responses, including a small number of issues raised, was shared with the principal and the chair of the board of governors.

All the year 7 children (56) responded to the questionnaire and the majority (71%) provided additional written comments, their responses were very positive. The children enjoy and are happy in school; they appreciate the care and help they receive from all the staff and the opportunities provided for them to participate in a wide range of extracurricular activities and educational visits. The children also like the way that the school acknowledges and rewards their achievements. They are extremely proud to belong to the school community.

In discussions with inspectors, the children said that they enjoyed learning most when it was practical and fun. They appreciate the helpful support they receive from adults in the school and enjoy taking part in extra-curricular activities and school trips, all of which are impacting positively on their confidence and developing their social skills. The older children also spoke enthusiastically with inspectors about the very good opportunities they have to develop their leadership skills through the various roles they undertake, as representatives in the school council, as eco warriors and digital leaders.

Seventy-one percent (203) of the parents/carers responded to the online questionnaire, 39% (79) of whom provided additional written comments. Nearly all of the responses were extremely encouraging about all aspects of the provision in the school and nursery unit. In the written comments, the parents commended: the “forward-thinking” principal and the dedicated approachable staff; the effective

communication between the school and parents; the lovely atmosphere in the school where every child is nurtured and celebrated; the care and support afforded to the children; the excellent learning activities provided for the children; and the extensive range of opportunities for learning and development beyond the classroom.

The teaching and support staff responses were wholly positive. They have a clear understanding and ownership of the school's vision, and feel valued, supported and respected. They also highlighted the wonderful sense of community within the school and their enjoyment of working in an inclusive environment. They feel privileged to be part of the Moira Primary School team.

C. THE PROCESS OF INSPECTION

The ETI worked alongside Moira Primary School to consider how well the school:

- has identified and articulates its vision;
- prioritises actions to achieve the vision;
- overcomes the main challenges it faces;
- monitors and reviews progression to identify, celebrate and embed success; and
- grows and develops an inclusive community of learning.

2. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- Moira Primary School's vision for "**the relentless pursuit for excellence to maximise the potential of every child within a caring and stimulating learning environment**", aligns well to their 'Rights Respecting' ethos and enables everyone in the school community to "**soar to success**".
- The leaders have high expectations for all which is reflected in the robust and rigorous self-evaluation processes in the school.
- The children embrace and enjoy the wide range of stimulating and connected learning experiences across the curriculum that develop their critical thinking, reflection and inquiry and equip them with the strategies to become lifelong learners.
- The children in the nursery class are engaging in purposeful, imaginative and sustained play in the calm, inclusive and naturally resourced indoor and outdoor learning environment.
- The development of the children's cross-curricular skills, including their digital skills, thinking skills and personal capabilities are prioritised and developed across a range of connected, engaging and contextualised World Around Us themes and topics which are competently planned and regularly reviewed by the highly skilled staff.

- The innovative team approach to developing connected learning and a skills-infused curriculum throughout the school is supported by strategically aligned opportunities for professional learning and is monitored and evaluated robustly resulting in high quality learning experiences.
- Exemplary SEN provision within the school demonstrates how targeted and innovative interventions are having a significant positive impact on the progress made by all the children.
- At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by the school demonstrates that the arrangements for child protection align to the current statutory guidance.

3. MAIN REPORT

A. SETTING THE VISION

Moira Primary School's vision, "the relentless pursuit for excellence, to maximise the potential of every child within a caring and stimulating learning environment", aligns well to their 'rights respecting' ethos and permeates all aspects of school life. The children have high levels of respect for one another, are supported to be critical thinkers, to work to the best of their ability and achieve their potential, enabling them to live out the school motto of 'soaring to success'. Excellent relationships at all levels create a positive nurturing environment for all members of the school community and allow the children to learn, develop and experience success.

The school has robust processes in place to monitor and evaluate effectively the impact of actions to bring about improvement in the quality of the provision and the outcomes being achieved by the children. The culture of openness, reflection and shared practice is a key feature of the school and supports the vision.

The governors are highly committed, dedicated and provide invaluable support to the school. They have a clear understanding of the school vision and work in close partnership with all members of the school community to implement successfully the vision.

B. IMPLEMENTING AND IMPROVING TO ACHIEVE THE VISION

The children are motivated, curious, and have positive attitudes to their learning. They delight in the wide range of approaches used by their teachers to create stimulating and connected learning experiences across the curriculum.

A key strength of the work of the staff is their ongoing commitment to robust monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school. The leaders have high expectations; leading by example and fostering a culture of openness, reflection and shared practice across the school.

Curriculum planning has been an on-going priority for the staff and demonstrates their relentless pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their work. Connected and contextualised learning opportunities are provided for the children in the themes and topics of the World Around Us area of learning. The successful thematic approach to planning is flexible, adaptive and responsive to the needs of the children. Planning is coherent and is monitored and evaluated rigorously to ensure that the children have consistently high-quality learning experiences which are relevant to their needs and interests and support progression in their learning. Throughout the school, a key characteristic of the effective practice is the opportunity provided for the children to discuss their learning through well-planned group work and problem-solving activities, enabling them to develop their critical thinking skills and personal capabilities. At key stage (KS) 2, teachers provide children with helpful feedback on their learning, which supports them well in evaluating their progress against their individualised personal targets.

The children in the nursery class are engaging in purposeful, imaginative and sustained play in the calm, inclusive and naturally resourced indoor and outdoor learning environment. The very good progress made by all the children across the pre-school curriculum is underpinned by detailed planning, informative observations and skilful staff interaction.

The school is very well resourced with a range of digital devices; all teachers have Apple Teacher* status and confidently use an extensive range of digital technology to support learning and teaching. The school has received the Digital Schools Award and is currently working towards achieving the National Association for Education Technology (NAACE) award*. The children's digital skills are very well developed through well-planned and meaningful learning opportunities, and they use adeptly digital communication tools across all the areas of learning. The children in year 7 are confident and skilled in the use of digital technology to capture their learning and understanding in class and to demonstrate progress against their individual targets.

The staff prioritise the health and well-being of the children. A well-conceived personal development and mutual understanding programme and the consistent use of 'zones of regulation' strategies throughout the school helps the children to understand and manage their emotions and feelings. Healthy eating and active breaks are encouraged. In the outdoor break and lunch areas the addition of "buddy boxes", with an assortment of appropriate age-related play equipment, increases the children's activity levels and contributes positively to their well-being.

C. BUILDING EQUITY

The school has a profound commitment to building equity, is relentless in addressing the diverse needs of the children and works diligently to remove barriers to learning. The research informed, cohesive and collaborative approach to supporting children with additional needs is exemplary. Through meticulous analysis of a wide range of assessment and pastoral information, the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are identified at an early stage and highly effective support which is responsive to their needs is in place. The children benefit from an

extensive range of successful intervention strategies such as ‘Literacy Lift Off’*, ‘Barking Buddies’*, ‘Time to Read’* and bespoke booster sessions for literacy and numeracy, leading to improved outcomes. The timely interventions provide the children and highly effective, personalised and targeted support, tailored to their individual needs, enabling of most them to make a very good progress in their learning and equipping them to succeed.

D. DEFINING, CELEBRATING AND EMBEDDING SUCCESS

Aligned to the vision, success for every child is at the centre of all the work in the school. The highly committed staff work in partnership with the children to set personal learning targets for them; the children’s progress in meeting these targets is monitored robustly by the staff. The children are reflective learners and evaluate their work confidently. The whole school focus on the development of thinking skills is successfully equipping the children with strategies to become lifelong learners. All the children are making good progress in line with their ability and all staff have high expectations for each child to achieve success. The children are articulate, confident and respectful, qualities that are modelled consistently by all the staff. They are all proud of their school, yet modest in talking about their progress and success.

There is consistent recognition of the achievements of the children through, for example, the ‘pupil of the month’ award, aligned to their work as a Rights Respecting School*, the in-class reward systems and an array of certificates for meeting personal targets. All the children’s achievements are shared and celebrated at the weekly assemblies. The detailed weekly newsletter and the school website keep parents and the school community very well informed of the successes of the children, the staff and the wider school community. Extra-curricular opportunities, sporting successes, school drama productions and the opportunity to be a part of the vibrant school choir all celebrate and highlight the talents and achievements of the children.

The school has achieved the silver award as a Rights Respecting School among many other external awards including; Dyslexia Friendly School Award and the British Broadcasting Association’s (BBC) 500 words competition*. The Education Authority (EA) are showcasing the schools’ innovative approaches to reasoning and problem solving on its website.

E. GROWING A COMMUNITY OF LEARNING

A culture of openness, respect and sharing creates a dynamic, vibrant community of learning within the school. The children are provided with meaningful opportunities to work independently, and collaboratively in pairs and in groups enabling them to learn from each other. The sharing of good practice is well embedded in the school; all staff work effectively together in teams, sharing their expertise, skills and knowledge, resulting in consistently high quality, connected learning for all the children.

The leaders of the school place a high priority on the ongoing professional learning of all staff to further their capacity to meet the needs of the children. The staff value highly the range of professional learning opportunities provided within the school. They also avail of professional learning provided by external bodies. The learning is informed by the needs of the children and aligns well to the key priorities of the school, empowering staff to bring about improvements.

The school and governors recognise the important role played by parents in supporting the children's learning at home. The regular curricular workshops and the information seminars provided for the parents equip them well with strategies to support their child's learning at home. Strategic and highly effective use is made of the weekly newsletter and school website to keep the parents updated on the learning taking place in the school and to share the children's learning experiences.

The school is very appreciative and immensely proud of its excellent reputation in the local community. The well-established, effective partnerships with local businesses, churches, sports groups, and other organisations enriches the provision and supports all children 'to become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens', as set out in the school's mission statement.

F. CHILD PROTECTION

At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by the school demonstrates that the arrangements for child protection align to the current statutory guidance.

4. GOING FORWARD

Moira Primary School and Nursery Unit is effectively achieving its vision for nurturing happy children who are critical thinkers, work to the best of their ability and achieve their potential in a child-centred, respectful, inclusive learning environment where all members of the school community are empowered to 'soar to success'.

The ETI will continue to work with Moira Primary School and Nursery Unit including, to share examples of highly effective practice from which others may learn. The aspects of practice which should be shared more widely include:

- the innovative, strategic approach of the leadership teams in securing meaningful connected learning across the curriculum; and the exemplary SEN provision.

5. APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: QUANTITATIVE TERMS

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%

APPENDIX 2: NOTES

- Page 1** **Rights Respecting School**
The UNICEF (UNICEF UK) Rights Respecting School Award recognises a school's achievement in putting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into practice within the school and beyond.
- Page 1** **Eco Schools Green Flag**
The Eco-Schools Green Flag is an internationally recognised award for excellence in environmental action and learning.
- Page 1** **Northern Ireland Forest School**
The NI Forest School Awards have been created to encourage local primary schools to take an innovative, educational approach to outdoor play and learning, encouraging and inspiring children through positive outdoor experiences.
- Page 1** **Renaissance Champion School**
Renaissance Accelerated Reader is a commercial reading program that helps teachers support and monitor children's reading practice.
- Page 1** **Dyslexia Friendly School**
The Dyslexia Friendly Quality Mark is issued to schools that can demonstrate that they provide high quality education and practice for dyslexic individuals.
- Page 1** **Digital School Northern Ireland Award**
The Digital Schools Awards Northern Ireland is a national awards programme which promotes, recognises and encourages best practice use of digital technology in primary schools.
- Page 1** **Autism Impact Award**
The Autism NI Impact Award for Education is a professional development certified training package that supports schools to provide an inclusive and welcoming environment for autistic children and staff.
- Page 4** **Apple Teacher status**
Apple Teacher is a free professional learning programme designed to support and celebrate educators using Apple products for teaching and learning.

- Page 4** **National Association for Education Technology (NAACE) Award**
NAACE Mark is an award available to schools that have achieved at least level 2 across all elements of the NAACE EdTech Review Framework
- Page 5** **Literacy Lift Off**
Literacy Lift Off is an intervention that gives children lots of opportunities to read books at their own level of competency and gradually lift the complexity of what they can do in both reading and writing.
- Page 5** **Barking Buddies**
The Barking Buddies programme improves children's reading and communication skills by employing a powerful method: reading to a dog.
- Page 5** **Time to Read**
A volunteering initiative developed by Business in the Community Northern Ireland (BITCNI) and supported in recent years by the Department of Education. Local volunteers from across Northern Ireland read on a one-to-one basis with children, fostering a love of reading, supporting their progress, encouraging confidence and social skills, and giving students an insight into the world of work.
- Page 5** **BBC 500 words competition**
A story writing competition for children. The children need to write a story that they would love to read which is no more than 500 words.

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