

**Report of a Primary Inspection**  
Termoncanice Primary School and Nursery Unit, Limavady

DE Ref No 203-2287

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## Contents

1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION .....	1
B. VIEWS OF PARENTS, CHILDREN AND STAFF .....	1
C. THE PROCESS OF INSPECTION .....	2
2. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS .....	2
3. MAIN REPORT .....	4
A. SETTING THE VISION: .....	4
B. IMPLEMENTING AND IMPROVING TO ACHIEVE THE VISION.....	4
C. BUILDING EQUITY .....	5
D. DEFINING, CELEBRATING AND EMBEDDING SUCCESS.....	6
E. GROWING A COMMUNITY OF LEARNING .....	7
F. CHILD PROTECTION .....	8
4. GOING FORWARD .....	8
5. APPENDICES.....	9
APPENDIX 1: QUANTITATIVE TERMS .....	9
APPENDIX 2: NOTES.....	10

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

# **1. INTRODUCTION**

## **A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Termoncanice Primary School and Nursery Unit is a Catholic maintained school in the town of Limavady. The current enrolment stands at 518 children, including 53 children who attend the two part-time sessions in the nursery unit. Twenty-nine percent (150) of the children have free school meals entitlement. Eighteen percent (94) of the children have been identified as having special educational needs (SEN). Since 2022, the school has established four specialist provisions in mainstream school (SPiMS) classes, creating provision for 18 of the children with SEN.

The school has undergone significant changes in senior leadership and staffing in recent years. The principal and the vice principal were appointed in 2022 and 2023 respectively, both having served in an acting capacity for an extended period of time, and six new teachers have been appointed since June 2024. The school offers wraparound care, a breakfast club and afterschool clubs, all of which are very well attended. It has a well-established Shared Education partnership with a local controlled school. The school has successfully attained a number of external accreditations including the TOPS Award\* 2022, the Forest Schools Award\* 2022, the Families First Gold Star Best Primary School Award\* 2022 and the Eco Schools Green Flag Award\* 2023.

## **B. VIEWS OF PARENTS, CHILDREN AND STAFF**

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) issued online confidential questionnaires to year 7 children, all parents and staff in advance of the inspection.

Almost all of the year 7 children responded to the questionnaire; a small number of whom provided written comments. All of the children who responded indicated that they feel safe in school and the teachers and other adults in the school treat them with kindness, care and respect. The groups of children who spoke with inspectors, indicated: a high level of enjoyment of school life; enthusiasm for the leadership roles they assume; and the immense pride they have in their school.

Thirty-nine per cent of parents/carers (122) responded to the online questionnaire, 61 of whom provided written comments. All of the parents/carers indicated their child is making progress in their learning and almost all agreed their child is happy at school and would recommend the school to others. In the written comments, the parents were overwhelmingly positive about their child's experiences at school. They commented, in particular, on the dedicated leaders, the warm caring staff and the community spirit within the school. To quote one parent, "From classroom learning to school plays and sports, along with the other extra-curricular activities, Termoncanice has it all".

Most of the teaching staff responded to the online questionnaire. They all indicated that they: are clear on the school vision; agree their views and ideas are sought, valued and acted upon; and have benefited from recent opportunities for professional learning. The 17 written comments received from the teachers were wholly positive and emphasised their pride and happiness around working in the

school, and how they valued the child-centred, pastoral approach and strong leadership. Most of the support staff responded to the questionnaire; a majority of whom provided written comments. All of them indicated that they feel their work is valued within the school and most of them enjoy their roles.

A summary of the questionnaire responses was shared with the principal and representatives of the board of governors.

### **C. THE PROCESS OF INSPECTION**

The ETI worked alongside Termoncanice Primary School and Nursery Unit 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**

- The unified and collective investment from the staff, governors, parents and children in the school's vision '**Be the best you can possibly be**' fosters a positive and motivating atmosphere that places equal emphasis on academic, spiritual, emotional and social development, ensuring that each child is nurtured in a well-rounded manner within a safe and very caring environment.
- Termoncanice Primary School and Nursery Unit is truly at the heart of the community and focuses successfully on caring for the needs of all. The school is deeply rooted in and promotes active community service and involvement, instilling in the children a sense of responsibility and compassion for others.
- The children are happy, confident and proud members of Termoncanice Primary School and Nursery Unit.
- The school development plan and associated action plans identify clear and appropriate targets for improvement. Senior leaders recognise the need to manage strategically the implementation of the school improvement work.
- The senior leaders have established curriculum teams with a view to enhance staff capacity and confidence in implementing effective monitoring practices, as well as the dissemination of areas of highly effective practice within the school.

- The current planning guides well the learning and presents the children with opportunities to progress and achieve within their capability. To improve the planning further a focus on clearer learning intentions, within meaningful and connected contexts, including the wider integration of digital skills, will support better the holistic development of all of the children.
- The school is beginning to incorporate outdoor learning opportunities as a vital part of the curriculum, recognising its numerous benefits for the children's physical and academic development and their engagement and concentration.
- The staff make significant efforts to ensure every child is seen, heard, valued and developed to their fullest potential. The exceptional pastoral care contributes to the overall wellbeing and development of all children and supports their engagement and success in learning.
- Across the nursery, SPiMS and mainstream classes, the children who have been identified as having special educational needs are at ease in their environment. They are supported well by a skilled, caring team, who work very effectively together to anticipate challenges and support them to overcome barriers to learning.
- The targeted interventions for the children identified as requiring additional support are having a significant and positive impact on the progress made by all the children.
- Almost all of the children, including those with special educational needs, make good progress from their varying starting points, with most achieving expected or above outcomes in literacy and numeracy.
- Music is highly valued throughout the school. It enriches the school community by promoting creativity, collaboration and self-expression while also enhancing the children's skills and confidence.
- The innovative and successful approaches to organising the children's breaktime and lunchtime play impacts positively on the behaviour, inclusion and happiness of 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.

#### Area for action:

- to provide more opportunities for the children to engage in high quality connected learning, including the wider integration of digital skills.

### **3. MAIN REPORT**

#### **A. SETTING THE VISION**

The visionary leadership at Termoncanice Primary School and Nursery Unit is a key driving force behind the school's success and growth. The unified and collective investment from the staff, governors, parents and children in the school's revised vision '**Be the best you can possibly be**' fosters a positive and motivating atmosphere that places equal emphasis on the child's academic, spiritual, emotional and social development. Together they have created a nurturing environment where every child feels valued, supported, and encouraged to reach their full potential. The recent establishment of the SPiMS classes has prompted a review of the whole school environment, aptly named 'Operation Refresh'. The children and the wider community contributed meaningfully to the refresh of all classrooms and learning areas and the creation of a bright and welcoming school environment.

Termoncanice Primary School and Nursery Unit is truly at the heart of the community, focusing successfully on meeting the needs of all. The school is deeply rooted in community service and involvement, instilling in the children a sense of responsibility and compassion for others. Their community-centred approach not only contributes to the children's happiness and confidence but also reinforces their pride in being part of the school, a sentiment that shone through in all discussions with the children.

The school's development plan and associated action plans identify clear and appropriate targets for improvement and the senior leaders recognise the need to manage strategically their implementation. By aligning these action plans with the school's vision and further embedding collaboration, the leaders should ensure that the improvement actions support effectively the overall growth and well-being of every child. Senior leaders have established curriculum teams to enhance staff capacity, build confidence in effective monitoring practices, and to identify and disseminate the highly effective practice within the school.

The skilled governors are vital to the school's success, providing expertise and diverse perspectives which enhance the decision making and strategic planning. The governors' commitment is evident in their support for initiatives such as: providing school funded music tuition for each year 5 child; employing a school counsellor; and providing the time for coordinators to monitor and evaluate the progress in key development priorities.

#### **B. IMPLEMENTING AND IMPROVING TO ACHIEVE THE VISION**

The school staff are committed to implementing and improving their educational practices in order to provide high-quality learning in an inclusive learning environment. Middle leaders, including newly appointed staff, are stepping into their roles with enthusiasm and are eager to take on responsibilities in coordinating curricular areas. They have reinstated monitoring and evaluation processes and recognise the importance of prioritising development areas and gathering first-hand

evidence to monitor the impact of key priorities on the children's learning. The senior leadership team has recently reintroduced observations of learning and teaching in literacy and numeracy and have identified the need to organise more formal opportunities to identify and disseminate the highly effective practice across the school. Teachers are committed to continuous improvement and exhibit a willingness to reflect on their practices and welcome feedback.

Long-term and medium-term planning is in place across literacy and numeracy which outlines progression and continuity. The staff are reviewing currently the planning across all curricular areas. A greater focus on learning intentions within meaningful and connected contexts, including the broader integration of digital skills, will significantly enhance the holistic development of all of the children. The staff have identified appropriately the need to seek the children's views on their learning experiences and incorporate more of their interests and ideas into the planning.

The children are attentive, engage respectfully with adults and peers and are comfortable and content in their learning environment. Where the learning is most effective, the teachers encourage the children to explain their thinking and reasoning and adapt the provision to support and extend the children's learning. Providing more opportunities for self- and peer- assessment will develop further the children's critical reflection on their own and others' learning. Across the school, the staff use specific literacy and numeracy language which supports effectively the children's understanding of the conventions of language, extends their vocabulary and deepens their understanding of mathematical terminology. The positive impact of the recent focus on handwriting is clearly evident from the high-quality presentation of the children's work. The staff are beginning to utilise more regularly the outdoor environment to enhance the children's learning.

The staff make significant efforts to ensure that every child is seen, heard, valued, and developed to their full potential. They place a high priority on the emotional wellbeing of each child and have created a nurturing environment and have established a positive school culture rooted in compassion, love and respect. The recent appointment of a staff member as a Wellbeing Champion, for both children and adults in the school, is further evidence of the school's commitment to ensuring that the needs and care of the whole school community is considered. The exceptional pastoral care provided by all staff contribute to the overall wellbeing and development of the children.

### **C. BUILDING EQUITY**

The commitment to inclusion and diversity within the school is reflected in the high expectations for each child and the dedication of staff to encourage all children to reach their full potential. Across the school, staff work together effectively to review the progress made by the children. They make very effective use of a range of assessment data alongside their observations of the children's learning and the pastoral information they gather from parents and outside agencies to plan specific interventions. Most of the children are making good progress from their individual starting points. Those who may be at risk of underachieving are identified quickly and appropriate support is put in place, including literacy and numeracy booster groups, which are impacting positively on their progress and self-confidence. The children with SEN are identified early and appropriate support is put in place.

The school is moving gradually from the use of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) to Personal Learning Plans (PLPs) to guide the provision for the children with SEN. The PLPs in the SPiMS classes and the IEPs across the school include appropriate targets which are reviewed regularly and are well-informed by evidence from the class teacher and the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator. The school's development of quiet spaces and sensory areas provides the children with a learning environment conducive to good management of their emotions and enables them to engage more readily in their learning.

The dedication to the development and celebration of the whole child is evident in the value placed on ensuring equitable access for all children to music and sport. All of the children have the opportunity to participate in the inclusive, well-organised lunchtime team sports and games which are having a highly positive impact on the children's confidence and self-esteem.

The schedules and PLPs for each child in the SPiMS are highly individualised which facilitate effectively the children's ability to access independently their learning. Transitions, such as dinner time routines, are thoughtfully designed to facilitate successful inclusion.

All staff are calm and respectful in their interactions with the children and are quick to praise and affirm children when they observe positive engagement and individual progress in learning. This modelling of respectful and affirming behaviour by all of the staff, together with programmes, such as 'Roots of Empathy'\* delivered to Year 4, help all of the children develop a healthy sense of respect for themselves and others.

#### **D. DEFINING, CELEBRATING AND EMBEDDING SUCCESS**

Across the school the children are well-mannered, courteous, and proud to be members of Termoncanice Primary School and Nursery Unit.

There are numerous opportunities for the children to develop their leadership skills; these are helping to build the children's self-confidence, independence, and communication skills. They take pride in their roles as 'Games Changers', helping younger children engage in play during break times and as 'Termoncanice Tech Titans', provide digital support to the other children and the staff. The children enjoy the well-planned wide range of playground activities and in particular 'The Lunchtime League' of football on the 3G pitch which culminates in the annual 'Termoncanice Mini World Cup'. The well considered lunchtime arrangements have led to marked improvement in the children's behaviour in the school. The school council is purposeful and makes a meaningful difference to the school. Senior staff and governors consider and act promptly upon children's suggestions, and the children spoke with pride about how the school council's decisions informed the ongoing school improvement work, including the development of the outdoor playground areas. In discussions with year 3 children, they expressed aspirations to become school council members due to the difference they feel it makes to school life. Through discussions with the children, they have a good understanding of how and why to care for the local environment.



The staff share and celebrate the children's successes and achievements with parents and carers through, for example, the digital platforms and the weekly newsletter. Regular assemblies recognise the children's progress in reading, handwriting, and numeracy, celebrating a 'Star of the Week' in each class. The children's external achievements in music, speech and drama at the Coleraine Speech and Language Festival, and sporting successes are also acknowledged and celebrated.

Music is highly valued by the governors, the staff and the children. All of the year 5 children receive music tuition, and the 'Musical Pathways to Learning'\* programme, delivered in other year groups, supports the children's music and language development. Both the junior and senior choirs welcome with enthusiasm the opportunity to perform at both school and local community events. The year 7 children perform in an annual show, written and produced by the school principal, who ensures that every child who wishes is given the opportunity to perform.

## **E. GROWING A COMMUNITY OF LEARNING**

Termoncanice Primary School and Nursery Unit is a welcoming school focused on caring for the needs of all through cooperative work in the classroom and active participation in the wider community. During the inspection, the school celebrated 'Catholic Schools' Week,' and the children were excited to welcome their grandparents to their classrooms and enjoy a social coffee morning. High levels of family engagement contribute to the vibrant community atmosphere across the school.

Parents are welcomed and encouraged to engage actively in their child's educational journey. Parental workshops provide valuable advice on how they can support their child at home, on areas such as writing, reading, phonics, and aspects of numeracy. Effective communication with parents through a communication app and social media platforms, keeps them well-informed about the life and work of the school. The parent teacher association, 'Friends of Termoncanice Primary School', organises a variety of well-attended family and community events throughout the year, including the 'Lantern Walk' around the town and the 'Summer Nights' event, which provide valuable community engagement and fundraising opportunities.

The HOPE summer camp, established by the school staff and local clergy in 2013, is a cherished community programme, valued by the Limavady parish, which provides a range of sport, art, music, and drama activities for 300 children aged ten and over. The programme which fosters cross-community engagement is financed through extensive fundraising efforts and is staffed by 100 adult volunteers from the school and local community.

The wide range of links with the local community, include sports clubs, youth clubs, businesses, and the Dry Arch Children's Centre\*. These connections are used to enhance the children's learning experiences and contribute to the ongoing development of the school. The children's social awareness is developed through participation in fundraising activities for local charities, such as the recent Christmas fundraising event, which provided vital support to the local food bank.

Transitions are well-managed across the school and nursery unit. Well-established links with the local Sure Start group aid the induction of some children to the nursery unit. The school principal visits regularly with the nursery and engages with children during 'Toast on Friday'. This involvement is a key part of the planned transition programme, and together with visits from year 1 teachers and weekly engagement with year 7 'Reading Buddies' ensure children feel part of the whole school and facilitate a smooth transition to year 1. The well-established connections to local post-primary schools and the creation of personalised transition plans, where required, support effectively the transition for year 7 children to year 8.

The organisation by the senior leaders of the professional learning for staff throughout the school year, in line with development priorities, is well-considered and managed effectively. The staff in the school and nursery unit also engage in cluster groups with other local schools and nurseries, sharing practices and benefiting from professional learning facilitated by external providers.

## **F. CHILD PROTECTION**

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

## **4. GOING FORWARD**

Termoncanice Primary School and Nursery Unit is built on a strong foundation of community engagement, genuine inclusivity and a focus on the holistic development of every child. By continuing to foster a culture of reflection and continuous improvement the school is well positioned to empower every child to reach their full potential and thrive in a nurturing environment that truly embodies its vision of being **'the best you can possibly be'**.

Inspectors identified aspects of highly effective practice from which others may learn. The aspects of practice which should be shared more widely are:

- the innovative, strategic approach to the transformation of the outdoor play area focuses on enhancing opportunities for purposeful and engaging play during break and lunchtimes. This initiative is promoting positive behaviour, happiness and inclusion of all children by creating spaces and activities tailored to encourage collaboration, creativity and active participation among all children.
- the school's proactive engagement with the community through innovative practices fosters an inclusive environment where every child is recognised and supported, enhancing both educational outcomes and community ties.

Termoncanice Primary School and Nursery Unit is well placed to take forward the area for action detailed in this report.

## 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

#### **Taking Outdoor Play Seriously (TOPS) Award**

An award given to schools in Northern Ireland for their commitment to outdoor play. The award is presented by Playboard NI.

#### **Northern Ireland Forest School Award**

The NI Forest School Awards have been created to encourage local schools to take an innovative, educational approach to outdoor play and learning, encouraging and inspiring children through positive outdoor experiences.

#### **Families First Quality Award**

The Families First Quality Award is a framework that helps organisations, including schools, demonstrate their commitment to creating a supportive and inclusive environment for children and their families.

#### **Eco Schools Green Flag Award**

The Eco-Schools Green Flag is an internationally recognised award for excellence in environmental action and learning.

### Page 6

#### **Roots of Empathy**

Roots of Empathy is an evidence-based, classroom-based social and emotional programme designed to help children develop empathy by observing and interacting with a baby who, along with their parent, visits the classroom throughout the school year.

### Page 7

#### **Musical Pathways to Learning**

The Musical Pathways to Learning is a scheme which enables children to develop through music. The programme ensures that all children can access high quality weekly music lessons and participate in performance opportunities.

#### **Dry Arch Children's Centre**

Dry Arch Children's Centre offer a range of programmes and services including wrap-around childcare provision, youth mentoring and programme support, family support, outreach support and home visiting services for children, young people and their families.

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