

Education and Training Inspectorate



An Evaluation of the Provision to Support Newcomer Pupils in a range of Primary and Post-Primary Schools

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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%

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In November and December 2008, the Education and Training Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) undertook an evaluation of the provision to support newcomer pupils¹ in a range of primary and post-primary schools. Two of the main recommendations in an evaluation carried out in 2005² were the 'establishment of a single service to manage the crisis response to the ongoing influx of pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) into schools' and 'the development of a shared understanding of what constitutes good practice in the whole area of EAL'. In April 2007, the Department of Education (DE) funded the setting-up of the Inclusion and Diversity Service (IDS), a regional service to build the capacity of schools to support newcomer pupils at various stages of their education. The North-Eastern Education and Library Board, on behalf of all the Education and Library Boards, appointed one of their senior officers with the task of bringing together the work in EAL, in setting up and leading the service. An officer from the Southern Education and Library Board's Curriculum Advisory and Support Service was appointed as adviser to provide day to day leadership of IDS.
- 1.2 The IDS works with approximately 100 primary and post-primary schools as part of the 'Diversity Co-ordinator Initiative' (the initiative). Each co-ordinator is responsible for, on average, nine schools in a geographical cluster and works primarily through a designated member of staff in each school. The evaluation focused on three of these clusters, as well as on a number of primary and post-primary schools not involved in the initiative.

2. METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 Inspectors visited twenty-five schools (see Appendix), and observed sixty-nine lessons across a range of subject areas. They held discussions with newcomer pupils and key personnel, including class teachers and classroom assistants who work with newcomer pupils, co-ordinators and teachers with responsibility for

1 In the context of this report the term 'newcomer pupil' is used to refer to a pupil whose first language is not English/who has English as an additional language.

2 Report of a Survey on the Quality of Learning and Teaching and the Standards and Outcomes Achieved by the Learners in relation to the Provision for English as an Additional Language: October–November 2005, Education and Training Inspectorate

newcomer pupils, and special educational needs co-ordinators. In addition, schools were invited, prior to the visit, to complete a self-evaluation pro-forma, which formed the basis for the discussions. The Inspectors also evaluated documentation which the schools considered relevant to their provision for newcomer pupils.

- 2.2 Inspectors met with the IDS regional adviser and a number of IDS co-ordinators to discuss the various roles and responsibilities within the initiative, their evaluation of the work done to date and further planned developments.

3. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

- IDS has developed a range of useful, effective strategies and resources to support schools. Almost all of the schools have accessed their support to improve the provision for their newcomer pupils.
- There are good working relationships between IDS co-ordinators and the schools participating in the initiative.
- There is a need to maximise the potential within, across and beyond the cluster groups to share what constitutes good practice and to encourage collaboration in addressing common areas for development.
- In most of the schools, clear roles and responsibilities are set out for the co-ordinator or member of staff with responsibility for newcomer pupils.
- In a minority of the schools, the role of co-ordinating the provision, and of monitoring and evaluating its effectiveness, is still at an early stage.
- Schools have identified key common priorities for improvement to meet more effectively the needs of newcomer pupils.
- The lack of information about the educational history of those newcomer pupils who have been to school in their home country inhibits initially the level of effective support which schools can put in place for these pupils.

- There is an increased confidence and capacity in schools to meet the needs of newcomer pupils.
- The quality of most of the teaching observed was good or better. In most of the lessons, the newcomer pupils demonstrated a positive attitude to learning.
- A priority of all of the schools is to ensure that newcomer pupils and their parents feel welcome and valued.
- Almost all of the schools report a general sense of achievement and overall progress by newcomer pupils.
- Almost all of the schools report that it is difficult to assess and track the progress of newcomer pupils.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

THE WORK OF THE INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY SERVICE IN SUPPORTING SCHOOLS

- 4.1 The IDS has developed a range of useful, effective strategies and resources to support schools in meeting the needs of newcomer pupils, including the 'Toolkit for Diversity in the Primary School' (the toolkit). All of the schools are aware of the support available from IDS and almost all have accessed its services to improve the provision for their pupils, either through using the toolkit, attending in-service training (INSET), using the material on the IDS website or by requesting help in a specific area of expertise. It is appropriate that the IDS is developing a post-primary toolkit, which incorporates the ideas and experiences of a few of the post-primary schools visited by the Inspectorate.
- 4.2 There is increased participation in the initiative, which is now in its second year, and there are good working relationships between the IDS co-ordinators and the schools. The schools appreciate the support provided and recognise the benefits to the pupils. In a small number of schools, the principals spoke of a general feeling of 'initiative overload', which had influenced their decision not to become involved in the initiative.

- 4.3 The key focus of the work of the IDS co-ordinators in primary schools is to implement the toolkit in a coherent and consistent way. As IDS monitors and evaluates the initiative and develops the post-primary toolkit, it will be important to consider if this model of support is sufficiently flexible to respond to each school's identified needs and priorities, and to exploit fully the experience and expertise within schools. In addition, there is a need to maximise the potential within, across and beyond the cluster groups to share good practice, encourage collaboration in addressing common areas for development and to inform future work.

THE SCHOOLS' PROVISION TO SUPPORT NEWCOMER PUPILS

- 4.4 In almost all of the schools, there is a clear commitment to developing the provision to support newcomer pupils. All schools in the initiative, and most of the other schools, have conducted a thorough audit of current practice and provision for the pupils. They have drawn up associated action plans and, through effective self-evaluation, they continue to review and amend policies where necessary. In a few instances, the work with newcomer pupils has influenced a review of the schools' policies for pupils with special educational needs and, appropriately, those schools are incorporating special needs into an inclusion policy.
- 4.5 In most of the schools, clear roles and responsibilities are set out for the co-ordinator or member of staff with responsibility for newcomer pupils. These include: monitoring the provision, reporting to senior management, leading staff development and liaising with additional support staff. In a minority of the schools, there is a need to define more clearly roles and responsibilities of staff to strengthen the co-ordination and monitoring of the provision.
- 4.6 Schools have identified key common priorities for improvement, including building the capacity of all staff to understand, and to meet more effectively, the needs of newcomer pupils. They recognise the need to develop more robust strategies to assess and track more effectively the progress of newcomer pupils.

5. QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

- 5.1 Most of the schools are making good use of the helpful information from IDS in relation to their initial contact with newcomer pupils and their families. The formal structures in place for this initial contact meeting help schools to prepare more effectively for the arrival of newcomer pupils, and inform the well-conceived induction programmes in almost all of the schools.
- 5.2 The lack of information about the educational history of those newcomer pupils who have been to school in their home country inhibits initially the level of effective support which schools can put in place for these pupils. In the majority of instances, there is good liaison and a helpful exchange of information between primary and post-primary schools in Northern Ireland.
- 5.3 All of the schools in the initiative, and most other schools, have produced useful, visual 'welcome booklets' to communicate key information to newcomer families. The booklets include helpful maps and photographs of the Principal, secretary and other key personnel. Schools also make good use of the various documents in other languages available on the IDS website to facilitate communication with parents.
- 5.4 There is an increased confidence and capacity in schools to meet the needs of newcomer pupils. Almost all schools report a growing awareness of materials to support newcomer pupils; they are able to make more informed choices and decisions when investing in new resources and adapting existing ones. A minority of the schools report that they have difficulty in finding structured reading schemes which are appropriate for both the cultural awareness and the level of understanding of the newcomer pupils.
- 5.5 The teachers in most of the schools adapt their planning appropriately to meet the needs of newcomer pupils more effectively. General planning for differentiation meets some of the needs of newcomer pupils. There are good examples of attractive visual resources and structured worksheets to allow pupils to demonstrate their understanding in non-verbal ways, and to develop their English at an appropriate rate.
- 5.6 Almost all of the schools report that the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding and Local and Global Citizenship elements of the Northern Ireland

Curriculum support their work in including more fully their newcomer pupils. These curriculum elements also allow for more meaningful intercultural work with all pupils.

- 5.7 The quality of teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding; most of the teaching observed was good or better. In the best practice, lessons were characterised by very good working relationships and the effective deployment of classroom assistants to support newcomer pupils. There was appropriate and effective use of paired, group and whole-class work. An emphasis on practical activities allowed the newcomer pupils to participate in the learning. In most of the lessons observed, the newcomer pupils demonstrated a positive attitude to learning. They integrated well into the class; they worked with confidence and enthusiasm alongside their peers; and their peers provided them with good support.
- 5.8 All schools make great efforts to ensure that newcomer pupils have access to the full curriculum as soon as possible. In the primary phase, it is appropriate that there is very limited withdrawal at the foundation stage (FS) and key stage (KS) 1. Generally pupils who arrive at KS2 are withdrawn for support to develop their English. In most schools, class teachers liaise closely and plan effectively with the teachers who take the withdrawal sessions to link the work to that of the class.
- 5.9 Post-primary schools offer a suitably reduced curriculum to a minority of newcomer pupils who arrive towards the end of KS3. In most cases, the schools use withdrawal sessions to support these pupils initially in learning English. Appropriately, through effective liaison with other teachers, they tailor the support to the subject-specific content.
- 5.10 A priority of all of the schools is to ensure that newcomer pupils and their parents feel welcomed and valued. Many of the schools report that the presence of newcomers and access to their culture and experience have enhanced and enriched the life and work of the school. Most schools use a 'buddy' system, assembly and discussions during Circle Time to promote an atmosphere of mutual respect.
- 5.11 Schools are working hard to encourage newcomer parents to contribute to their child's learning and to become involved in the life and work of the school. A

minority of schools has implemented useful strategies to support newcomer pupils and their families through their Extended Schools provision; these strategies include homework clubs, English classes for parents and classes for pupils in their first language. A small number of the schools report increased participation by newcomer families both in school and in local community activities.

6. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

- 6.1 Almost all of the schools report a general sense of achievement and overall progress by newcomer pupils. Progress is particularly evident in their speaking and listening skills, and in their comprehension. The newcomer pupils make an increased contribution in class; they interact well with their peers and teachers; they hold positions of responsibility, such as 'buddy', member of the school council and prefect; and they participate in extra-curricular activities. A minority of schools reports that poor attendance levels for some of the newcomer pupils are a cause for concern and greatly inhibit their progress.
- 6.2 Almost all of the schools report that it is difficult to assess and track the progress of newcomer pupils. This is particularly the case for those pupils for whom significant gaps in their understanding of English prevent them from accessing standardised tests. Schools are developing other assessment strategies; a minority of schools is using the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) to track the progress in English of newcomer pupils. It is appropriate that most other schools and IDS have identified the use of the CEFR as a key area for development.
- 6.3 Most of the schools are giving attention to promoting and encouraging the continued development of the first language competence of newcomer pupils and this good practice should be extended. Most post-primary schools encourage newcomer pupils to gain accreditation in their first language. In one of the IDS cluster groupings, post-primary schools are collaborating effectively to facilitate newcomer pupils taking examinations in their first language.
- 6.4 In a significant minority of the primary schools, the data shows that, in many instances, newcomer pupils are making good to excellent progress and attaining

at a level appropriate to their age. This is particularly the case when newcomer pupils have joined the school at FS and KS1.

- 6.5 Inspectors met pupils who had joined post-primary schools as late as year 11 with little English and who, as a result of their own endeavour and effective support from the school, are studying at General Certificate of Education Advanced Level. Post-primary schools also report that newcomer pupils have progressed into post-16 provision in other schools and to colleges of further education.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The strengths of the provision to support newcomer pupils in a range of primary and post-primary schools include:

- the range of useful, effective strategies and resources provided by the IDS to support schools and the good working relationships between IDS co-ordinators and the schools participating in the initiative;
- the schools' commitment to improving their provision for newcomer pupils and the identification of appropriate areas for development through effective self-evaluation;
- the successful induction and integration of newcomer pupils and the good standards achieved by many of these pupils;
- the increased confidence and capacity in schools to meet the needs of newcomer pupils at various stages in their education;
- the good or better quality of most of the teaching observed, which meets the needs of all of the pupils; and
- the well-conceived strategies to encourage newcomer parents to contribute to their child's learning and to become involved in the life and work of the school.

7.2 The areas for improvement include the need:

- to define more clearly the roles and responsibilities of staff to strengthen the co-ordination, and the monitoring and evaluation, of the provision for newcomer pupils;
- to develop further the means of assessing and tracking the progress of the newcomer pupils; and
- to disseminate good practice within and across schools to inform the means of addressing the key common priorities for improvement.

7.3 The overall quality of the provision to support newcomer pupils in the schools visited is good. The evaluation has identified areas for improvement which the schools and the IDS have the capacity to address.

SCHOOLS VISITED

Primary Schools

Dunmurry Primary School
Fort Hill Primary School, Lisburn
King's Park Primary School, Lurgan
Limavady Central Primary School
New Row Primary School, Castledawson
Round Tower Integrated Primary School, Antrim
St Anthony's Primary School, Craigavon
St Francis' Primary School, Lurgan
St Mary's Primary School, Draperstown
St Patrick's Primary School, Rasharkin
Termoncanice Primary School, Limavady

Post Primary Schools

Bangor Academy and Sixth Form College
Brownlow Integrated College, Craigavon
Lagan College, Belfast
Limavady High School
Lismore Comprehensive School, Craigavon
Newtownbreda High School, Belfast
Oakgrove Integrated College, Londonderry
Orangefield High School, Belfast
Parkhall College, Antrim
St Joseph's College, Belfast
St Mary's College, Portglenone
St Mary's Secondary School, Limavady
St Mary's High School, Lurgan
St Patrick's College, Belfast

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