

A series of stylized, colorful paper figures holding hands in a line, set against a dark blue background with a light blue and purple gradient. The figures are made of cut-out paper and are in various shades of blue, purple, and pink.

# Report of a Primary Inspection

St Joseph's Primary School and  
Community Nursery, Ederney

DE Ref No 203-6070

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Education and  
Training Inspectorate  
Empowering Improvement

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

# **1. INTRODUCTION**

## **A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

St Joseph's Primary School and Community Nursery is a Catholic maintained primary school serving the village of Ederney, County Fermanagh, and the surrounding rural areas. The overall enrolment in the school is 149 children which includes 28 children attending the part-time nursery session. There are five classes in the school, four of which are composite. Fourteen percent (21) of the children have been identified as having special educational needs (SEN) and a small number of these have a statement of SEN. Nineteen percent (29) of the children have free school meal entitlement.

The school has a longstanding partnership with two local controlled primary schools through Shared Education\* and the Department of Education's (DE) extended schools programme \* and has retained its Eco-Schools Green Flag\* award for the third consecutive time.

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

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) issued online confidential questionnaires to the children in year 7, all parents/carers and staff prior to the inspection. A summary of the questionnaire responses was shared with the principal and a representative from the board of governors.

All of the year 7 children responded to the questionnaire with a small number providing an additional written comment. In their responses all of the children indicated that they are treated with respect and care, and that they feel safe and happy in school.

Almost two-thirds (60) of parents responded to the questionnaire with a small number providing written comments. The parents highlighted: the importance of the school in the community; the wide range of learning opportunities for the children both in the classroom and beyond; the high levels of pastoral care; and how the child is at the centre of the shared vision.

All of the staff responded to the questionnaire; they all agreed that they feel highly valued and respected in their role and they benefit from relevant professional learning opportunities. A small number of written comments were provided by staff and these highlighted that the child is at the centre of all of their work and that the school is at the heart of the community.

Inspectors met with groups of children from years 3, 5 and 7 and with representatives of the school council and the eco-council. In conversation with inspectors the children talked about how they enjoy their shared education lessons and that they really appreciate the wide range of after-school activities available, including cookery, crafting and sports. The children also discussed their growing enthusiasm for numeracy as a result of increased opportunities to engage in practical mathematics.

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

ETI worked alongside St Joseph's Primary School and Community Nursery 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 define, celebrate and embed success; and
- grows and develops an inclusive community of learning.

## **2. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS**

- The whole school community is successfully “Learning, Caring and Achieving Together”, living out their vision daily in a child-centred, inclusive, happy and thriving school.
- The children are very enthusiastic, confident and imaginative learners, with well-developed communication skills; they live out the school's values in their behaviour, relationships and approach to learning.
- The staff team work collegially and with commitment to equip each child with life skills and values such as honesty, perseverance and respect.
- The robust, collaborative and wholly child-centred school development planning process promotes very effectively high-quality learning experiences that children enjoy and benefit from.
- All of the children in the nursery class are highly motivated, creative and curious learners who engage in imaginative and sustained play while exploring and investigating their natural surroundings.
- Throughout the school and nursery unit, the staff plan vibrant and dynamic learning experiences across the curriculum which foster curiosity, engagement and promote active participation.
- The high-quality provision in numeracy has been successful in building the children's confidence to apply their mathematical skills practically, making learning fun and contextual.
- All of the children identified with SEN are making good progress and are increasing in independence, through the use of engaging learning strategies, individualised support and effective application of the staff's research-informed professional learning.

- All of the children embrace diversity and accept and include others; they enjoy learning with children from different backgrounds through their shared education partnership.
- St Joseph's Primary School and Community Nursery is at the heart of the Ederney community, which values greatly the school's vital role in preparing the children to be responsible and active community members.
- 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

The recently reviewed school vision reflects clearly the current aspirations and values of the school community. The central values include respect, kindness, caring and perseverance and the fundamental goal for the children and school community is that everyone is **"Learning, Caring and Achieving Together"**. This is lived out consistently in all interactions during the school day and reflects clearly the voice of the children who were central to the vision review.

The one-year interim school development plan (SDP) is underpinned by robust consultation with the whole school community and values greatly the voice of the child in identifying the key priorities. Based on assessment data and in response to the children saying that they would like to learn mathematics in a more 'fun' way, the staff have developed a more practical and contextual approach to the teaching of numeracy across the school, designed to re-engage and excite the children. The school staff use effectively a wide range of evidence to identify the key priority areas for development. The associated action plans are detailed, focus clearly on impact and are monitored closely. The staff have identified clear priorities for their next cycle of school development planning which include a review of writing across the school and the provision of increased opportunities for connected learning.

The school governors are valued members of the school community, and they are kept very well informed about the life and work of the school. They express immense pride in their school and support the staff and children pastorally and professionally. The governors hold high expectations for the children's continued success and achievement and are proud of the school's central role in the community and the high regard in which it is held.

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

The children are learning in a vibrant, happy school environment where they are respected, valued and excited by their learning. The staff know and understand very well each child's individual talents, interests and areas for development and use this information considerably when planning for learning. As a result, the children are at the very heart of the detailed planning which guides consistently the learning and teaching across the broad, balanced and engaging curriculum. Vibrant and dynamic learning experiences are planned for daily in each class and the children investigate, challenge and explore, supported skilfully by all of the staff.

The high-quality learning experiences are characterised by active learning approaches that are stimulating and motivate the children. The recent development of the outdoor learning environment supports the creation and delivery of exciting numeracy lessons that enable the children to take risks through problem-solving and investigation while supporting their peers as they learn together. Cross curricular learning in the extensive outdoor environment is also developing well and the children are using natural resources to create imaginative collaborative artwork, for example, bookmarks made with flowers, and weaving with leaves, twigs and long grass.

Highly effective questioning is used consistently and skilfully by all of the staff to stimulate meaningful discussions, create opportunities for enquiry and exploration, and encourage the children to explain their thinking. The children respond with enthusiasm. They are extremely articulate and explain their reasoning for the decisions they have made; they can challenge their peers in a respectful manner.

The staff use skilfully their expertise to enable the children to experience positive well-being. Through their learning in personal development and mutual understanding (PDMU), the children have developed high-level personal, social and communication skills. The children explain confidently how they keep safe online and on the roads within their rural context, and they know the key principles of healthy friendships and relationships. By year 7, the children are prepared very well for life beyond the primary school classroom. The children have a clear understanding of eating healthily and enjoy growing vegetables in the polytunnel; this is enriched by practical cookery sessions attended by the children in the after-schools club. The school offers a wide range of physical education opportunities, including local football and hurling blitzes. In conversation with inspectors the children spoke enthusiastically about their participation in a “Game of three halves”, where they played rugby, Gaelic football and soccer with the children from the schools in their shared education partnership.

## **C. BUILDING EQUITY**

All of the children are **learning, caring and achieving together** through the well-embedded, inclusive, family ethos in the school. The staff identify promptly any barriers to learning that the children face through a well-planned range of assessments and observations, and collaborative engagement with parents and external agencies. In applying their research-informed professional learning, the staff enable the children with SEN to progress with increasing independence by using engaging learning strategies, high-quality resources, individualised support and ongoing praise, encouragement and feedback. The teachers and classroom assistants partner skilfully to ensure the children progress well and thrive. The children’s and parents’ views provide valuable insights to enhance the individual planning to meet the children’s needs. The teachers use effectively differentiated strategies, adjustments and advice from external partners to meet the children’s needs in the classroom in an inclusive way. The children choose when they want to use the creatively resourced nurture room, and this promotes their independence and self-management skills. This is managed sensitively by staff to ensure learning in the classroom is paramount.



The children enjoy learning with children from different backgrounds through their shared education partnership. They embrace diversity and accept and include others. As a Listening School\*, the children benefit from a range of ways to manage their emotions, behaviour and conflict. Consequently, the children are focused and purposeful learners and their behaviour is exemplary. To promote equity for all children the school provides an adult-led homework club funded by the DE extended schools programme. The specific skills that are developed help the children who attend to improve their organisational skills and concentration.

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

Through the inclusive curriculum, the school supports every child to succeed, living out the school vision that everyone is learning together. A key feature of success is how the children value, care for, and praise one another and build one another's self-esteem; this is reflected in the caring, inclusive peer relationships inside and outside the classrooms. The children have developed very positive attitudes and dispositions for learning. The supportive relationships at all levels, the happy learning environment and the high expectations for each child all contribute to the children's progress and success.

All of the children in the school are making good progress in literacy and numeracy. The staff monitor and evaluate closely the children's progress using a wide range of evidence; they use the information they gather strategically to enable success and achievement for each child. The children have a very good knowledge and understanding of key concepts across all areas of the mathematics curriculum. They apply a very good range of mathematical strategies to solve problems and use mathematical language confidently in their learning. The children's talking and listening skills, and their knowledge and use of grammar are highly developed and integrated seamlessly across all curricular areas. Almost all of the children in the nursery class are independent learners who engage in sustained collaborative play and have very well-developed language and communication skills. The opportunities to explore and investigate in a very creatively designed outdoor area enables the children in the nursery class to develop their imagination, curiosity, and their wider thinking skills, including problem solving.

The school demonstrates a positive and inclusive attitude to celebrating success which encourages motivation and adds to the sense of belonging among the children. For example, success is celebrated consistently through recognition of the children's personal achievements. Throughout the school day, the children are praised informally for modelling the school's values and they receive more formal acknowledgement at weekly assemblies. Celebration of wider success is shared publicly through the school's social media, beautifully presented wall displays, and regular communication with parents.

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

Professional learning for all staff is valued highly, aligns well with the school's priorities and is enhancing the staff's knowledge and skills to support the children effectively. The impact of recent professional learning in trauma-informed practice is evident in every classroom.

Positions for children on the school council and eco-council offer valuable leadership experience and are in high demand; the children are excited and determined to make their school the best it can be. For example, the children have reconfigured the zones of play outside so that everyone gets the opportunity to play in all of the areas. The eco-council is proud of retaining its Eco-Schools Green Flag and members who met with inspectors showed a sound understanding of the importance of looking after the planet. This principle is promoted by the eco-council throughout the school with the motto, 'Go green and the benefits will be seen'.

The school council works closely with the Parent Teacher Association, Gaelic Athletics Association and local community association to organise a wide range of successful fundraising activities that are supported very well by the wider community. The school council members who met with inspectors discussed very maturely how they share their ideas to spend the money raised on resources such as picnic benches, games equipment and end-of-year trips to develop the children's outdoor learning experiences.

All of the classes in the school participate fully in the opportunities provided through shared education and the extended schools programmes; these include sports, trips and a focus on curriculum areas such as the world around us and practical numeracy activities.

## **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**

The children in St Joseph's Primary School and Community Nursery are experiencing great excitement, joy and success in their learning. They are cherished and supported by highly skilled staff and thrive in a school community where they know they are valued. The school is working consistently and successfully towards its vision of a school where everyone learns, cares and achieves together.

ETI, through the work of the district inspector, will continue to work with St Joseph's Primary School and Community Nursery, including to share examples of highly effective practice from which others may learn. The aspects of practice which should be shared more widely are:

- the exemplary promotion of investigative and exploratory play across the pre-school curriculum in the community nursery; and
- the pastoral and consistent approach to inclusion which ensures all children feel valued and supported to participate in school life as fully and meaningfully as they can.



## 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

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#### **Shared Education**

Shared Education involves two or more schools, or pre-schools or youth organisations, working together to provide opportunities for children and young people from different religious and socio-economic backgrounds to be educated together.

#### **Department of Education's (DE) extended schools programme**

The Department of Education's extended schools programme aims to improve levels of educational achievement for disadvantaged children and young people by providing the additional support that they might need to help them reach their full potential.

#### **The Eco-Schools Green Flag award**

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

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#### **Listening Schools**

Listening Schools aims to offer children an alternative model to behaviour and alternative methods of responding.



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