

***An Evaluation of  
the Implementation of the  
Delivering Social Change:  
Improving Literacy and Numeracy  
Signature Programme***

JUNE 2015

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## Foreword

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) provides professional evaluation services for a number of government departments: this report on the implementation of the *Delivering Social Change: Improving Literacy and Numeracy Signature Project Programme*<sup>1</sup> is the result of commissioned evaluation work undertaken at the request of the Department of Education (DE).

The Education Authority (Western region) and DE have conducted ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the implementation and delivery of the project by schools and the Education Authority. A Post Project Evaluation (PPE) of the processes for delivery of the programme will be conducted by DE officials<sup>2</sup> once the programme has concluded. It will assess for example, the final project costs and financial accountability; project methodology used; project deliverables and an assessment of benefits.

### The purpose of the report:

- i. To provide for DE an independent evaluation of the success of the programme to date, including an assessment of the quality of the outcomes for the pupils targeted and the quality of the work of the teachers provided with employment during the project.
- ii. To identify the key strengths and areas for improvement of the programme in the areas of:
  - achievements and standards;
  - quality of provision; and
  - leadership and management

for both the pupils targeted and the teachers provided with employment, as identified by ETI in the schools visited as part of this evaluation.

- iii. To put forward a set of recommendations at this interim stage to promote improvement in the interest of all learners.

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<sup>1</sup> Delivering Social Change is an Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMdfM) framework that seeks to co-ordinate key actions across government departments to take forward work on priority social policy areas. The details of the programme can be accessed at <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/delivering-social-change/signature-programmes/improving-literacy-and-numeracy.htm>

<sup>2</sup> The use of OFMdfM common metrics, including the use of a pupil questionnaire, will form part of the evaluation of the Signature programmes by OFMdfM, but did not form part of the ETI evaluation.

## 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%

## Performance levels

The ETI use the following performance levels in reports:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

## 1. Introduction and context

1.1 The importance of raising the standards attained by our young people in literacy and numeracy is recognised by all educational stakeholders in Northern Ireland (NI). The attainment of good standards in literacy and numeracy at all key stages is vital if pupils are to access fully and confidently all areas of learning within the NI curriculum. In adult life, these standards are associated strongly with potential higher income, better health, increased social cohesion and positive participation in civic and political activities.

1.2 Literacy and numeracy are seen as vehicles to provide the foundation for all learning so it is understandable that we pursue relentlessly the aim of equipping all pupils with the literacy and numeracy skills needed to fulfil their personal, social, emotional and academic potential. A priority for the NI Executive set out in its *Programme for Government*<sup>3</sup> is to address the issue of persistent underachievement, particularly in areas of social disadvantage. Numerous policies and initiatives have been developed in recent years to support this objective.

1.3 The overall aim of *Every School a Good School*<sup>4</sup>, DE's main policy for school improvement, launched in April 2009, is to raise the quality of pupils' achievements and standards so that 'every child will leave compulsory education with appropriate standards of literacy and numeracy'.

1.4 In March 2011, DE issued a literacy and numeracy strategy, *Count, Read: Succeed – a strategy to improve outcomes in literacy and numeracy*<sup>5</sup>. The aims of the strategy are to:

- support teachers and school leaders, including governors, in their work to raise overall levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy among young people; and
- narrow the current gaps in educational outcomes.

1.5 The Northern Ireland Audit Office report *Improving Literacy and Numeracy Achievement in Schools 2013*<sup>6</sup> stated:

***'...low levels of literacy and numeracy are not an intractable issue - they can be addressed – (if) the potential of existing services (is) unlocked to allow them to reach the most vulnerable pupils and, importantly, their parents to support their literacy and numeracy'.***

It also stated:

***'It is important that schools and teachers are encouraged to continually evaluate the learning needs of their pupils and that they are consistently expanding their repertoire of strategies to personalise literacy and numeracy learning for pupils'.***

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<sup>3</sup> 'Programme for Government 2011-2015' report, Northern Ireland Executive (2011). This can be accessed at: <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/pfg-2011-2015-final-report.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> This can be accessed at: [http://www.deni.gov.uk/esags\\_policy\\_for\\_school\\_improvement\\_-\\_final\\_version\\_05-05-2009.pdf](http://www.deni.gov.uk/esags_policy_for_school_improvement_-_final_version_05-05-2009.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> This strategy can be accessed at: [http://www.deni.gov.uk/count\\_read\\_succeed\\_a\\_strategy\\_to\\_improve\\_outcomes\\_in\\_literacy\\_and\\_numeracy.pdf](http://www.deni.gov.uk/count_read_succeed_a_strategy_to_improve_outcomes_in_literacy_and_numeracy.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> NIAO Improving Literacy and Numeracy Achievement in Schools (2013). The full report can be accessed at: [http://www.niauditoffice.gov.uk/literacy\\_and\\_numeracy\\_2.pdf](http://www.niauditoffice.gov.uk/literacy_and_numeracy_2.pdf)

1.6 In October 2012, the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMdfM) announced the *Delivering Social Change: Improving Literacy and Numeracy Signature* programme. This programme is one of eleven programmes initiated by OFMdfM which aims to address the challenges of disadvantage and inequality that afflict society by improving literacy and numeracy levels among all school leavers, with additional support targeted at underachieving pupils. It also aims to provide valuable teaching experience for recently graduated teachers who are not currently in employment.

***'An additional 230 recent graduate teachers who are not currently in work will be employed to deliver tuition, where appropriate, for children in primary and post-primary schools who are currently struggling to achieve even basic educational standards'.<sup>7</sup>***

OFMdfM made available £14.7m over two years to support the programme. Additional funding of £2m was provided by DE to fund an expansion of the programme in specific schools. At the time of this ETI evaluation, approximately 290 newly qualified or recently qualified teachers were in post to support the outworking of the programme.

1.7 To oversee the effective development and implementation of this programme, a Strategic Oversight Group, led by the Education Authority (Western region), was established with membership from the employing authorities, teaching unions and other educational stakeholders. (See Appendix 1 for membership of the Strategic Oversight Group.)

1.8 In addition to the Signature Programme a number of other initiatives to raise the standards achieved by pupils in literacy and numeracy were being undertaken by schools across NI including: 'Achieving Belfast' and 'Achieving Derry – Bright Futures' programmes; 'Extended Schools' and 'Full Service Schools' programmes; the outworking of DE's 'Special Educational Needs Resource File'; the ETI's 'Promoting Improvement in English and Mathematics' programme; the ETI's dissemination of best practice events post publication of the ETI's *Survey of Best Practice in English and Mathematics in Post-primary Schools* and *The Chief Inspector's Report 2012-2014*; and the increased focus being placed on whole-school staff development and support in effective literacy and numeracy by the Curriculum Advisory and Support Services (CASS) of the Education Authority and other employing authorities.

## **2. Methodology**

2.1 The evidence for this evaluation was collated and analysed in the period September 2014 to January 2015 and comprised:

- over 80 inspection visits to a stratified<sup>8</sup> sample of 80 primary and post-primary schools<sup>9</sup> involved in the programme;
- over 200 lesson observations in primary and post-primary schools;

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<sup>7</sup> A full transcript of the OFMdfM statement can be accessed at: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/official-reports/written-ministerial-statements/oct12/written-ministerial-statement-ofmdfm-10-10-12.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> The stratified sampling of the primary and post-primary schools was representative of phase (primary and post-primary), geographical/EA regional spread, size, sector (controlled; catholic maintained; controlled integrated; grant maintained integrated; and, voluntary) and recruitment method (centrally recruited by Education Authority (western region) or recruited by school).

<sup>9</sup> The schools visited as part of this evaluation are listed in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 of the report.

- analysis of the schools' own documentation, including relevant performance data for the pupils targeted for support, teachers' planning, samples of the pupils' work, each school's action plan and its self-evaluation report for the academic year 2013/2014; and
- discussions with pupils, co-ordinators and heads of departments, teachers and principals, representatives of the Education Authority, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) and other stakeholders including, for example, representatives and members of professional organisations who sit on the Strategic Oversight Group.

2.2 The ETI undertook the inspection visits in November 2014. Throughout the visits, inspectors took into consideration the varying contexts and priorities of the schools and discussed with the key stakeholders in the schools the actions that they felt promoted improvement and any barriers to improvement they had encountered during their participation in the project.

2.3 The school visits involved:

- discussions with the principal and other senior leaders on the arrangements and effectiveness of the programme;
- two or more lesson observations of the support sessions for the pupils identified whose attainment was identified as at risk of falling short of the expected level in literacy and/or numeracy;
- observation of a lesson taken by the Signature funded teacher if this teacher was used to 'release' a more experienced teacher to deliver the support classes (referred to as 'backfill');
- analysis of the schools' own documentation, including relevant performance data for the pupils targeted for support, teachers' planning, samples of the pupils' work, each school's action plan and its self-evaluation report for the academic year 2013/2014;
- discussion with the pupils who are receiving the additional support; and
- discussions with the Signature funded teacher, the teacher providing the support (if different) and, in some cases, the school's special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO), literacy or numeracy co-ordinator and/or head of English or mathematics.

2.4 The ETI held discussions with key stakeholders including CASS officers from the Education Authority and representatives from the employing authorities.

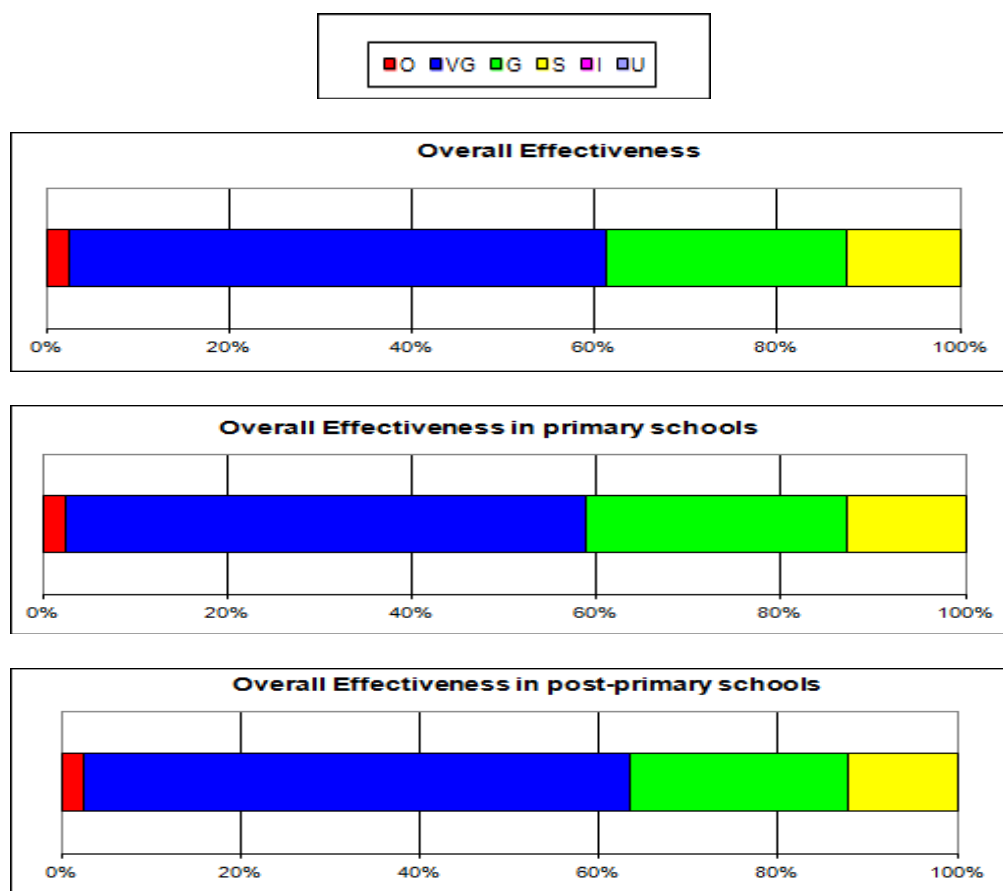
2.5 The ETI had access to the Northern Ireland Signature Project for Numeracy and Literacy (NISPLAN) website. This website includes an online support system co-ordinated by the Education Authority (Western region) to support schools involved in the programme in the development, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of their programme. Access to the NISPLAN website enabled the ETI to see each school's action plan, performance data for the pupils targeted and, importantly, the school's own self-evaluation of the progress for the academic year 2013/14 prior to the inspection visit.

### 3. The key findings

#### 3.1 Overall effectiveness

3.1.1 The overall effectiveness of the programme in the schools visited ranged from satisfactory to outstanding, with 88% being evaluated as good or better and 61% being very good or outstanding. The overall effectiveness was evaluated as outstanding in two schools, one primary and one post-primary.

3.1.2 In primary schools, the overall effectiveness of the programme was very good or better in 59% of schools. In post-primary schools, the programme was very good or better in 63% of schools.



3.1.3 Highly effective practice in supporting pupils at risk of underachievement was evident in the majority of the schools visited. These schools reported a range of specific improvements as a result of their involvement in this programme, including:

- more effective use of a broad range of data to identify more accurately the pupils at risk of underachieving;
- the development of good quality individual 'learning plans' to support the learning of the pupils identified as needing support;
- active involvement of the pupils in setting personal targets which improves their awareness of what they are learning and why;



- meaningful involvement of parents and carers in the programme (in line with the aims of the DE campaign, 'Education Works'<sup>10</sup>, which highlights the vital role of parents in their child's education) to help parents with practical advice on how they may support their child's learning so that they understand better the nature of the support being provided for their child and, in a small number of schools, the use of parental expertise to support learning ; and
- the importance of planning for the dissemination of the good practice developed as a consequence of the school's participation in the programme, with the inclusion of a clear focus in school development planning and the allocation of appropriate staff development resources to the dissemination process. The sessions help to develop the capacity of other teachers within the school to provide effective small group support for the pupils in their classes.

3.1.4 A significant strength of the programme has been the impact it is having on bringing greater cohesion to the other initiatives operating currently in schools to effect overall improvement in the literacy and numeracy standards attained by the pupils.

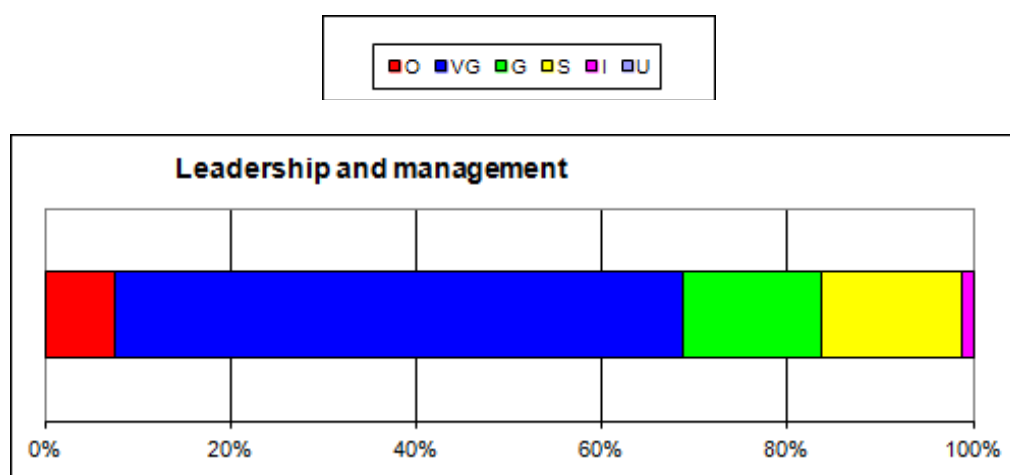
### 3.2 Leadership and management

*'Given the school's budget restraints, I could never have afforded to staff literacy and numeracy intervention in this manner, without impacting too negatively on other pupils. My real challenge is how do I ensure we learn as much from this opportunity as we can so that, when funding ceases, the school is in a better position to maintain the improvements in the standards achieved.'*

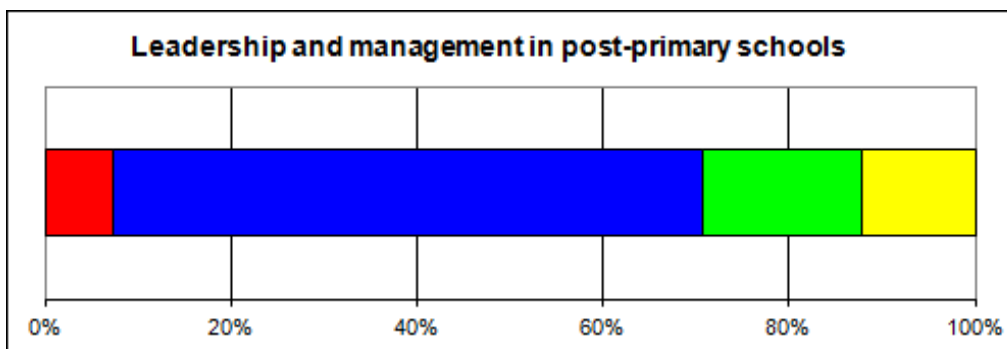
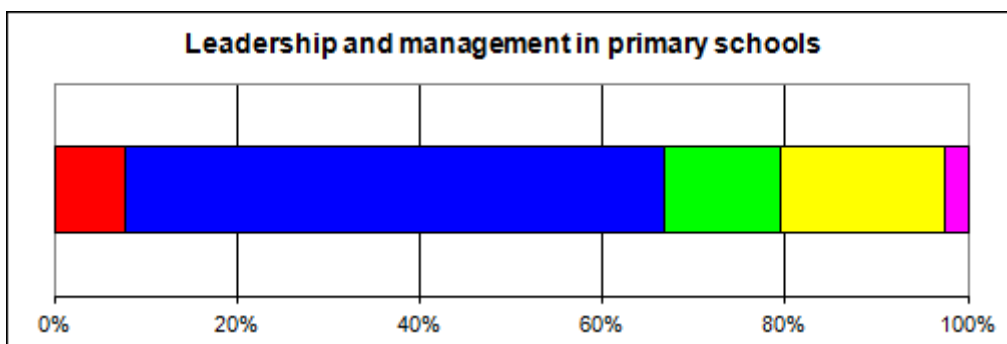
Comment from a principal who is leading the Signature funded intervention in the school.

#### For the pupils targeted

3.2.1 Overall, the quality of leadership and management of the programme was satisfactory or better in almost all schools visited, and good or better in 85% of the schools visited.



<sup>10</sup> Details of the *Education Works* campaign can be accessed at: <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/education-works>



3.2.2 A significant factor in the success of the programme was the quality of teaching observed during the support sessions. In the best practice observed: the teacher is clear about the strengths and potential learning difficulties of each individual pupil and plans appropriately for progress in learning; and, an appropriate variety of teaching strategies are used to tailor the specific intervention to meet the pupils' needs, interests and abilities. Given the highly positive findings of the report, it is evident that almost all of the schools who chose to employ either an experienced teacher from the existing staffing to undertake the support, or the Signature funded teacher, selected a teacher who was skilled in providing high quality teaching and, frequently, had prior experience of providing small group support. These skilled practitioners were proficient in assessing incremental learning and were able to provide excellent pastoral support. Importantly, they had the capacity to engage well with parents and other staff.

### For the teachers

3.2.3 Most of the Signature funded teachers involved in the programme spoke very highly of the programme. In particular, they spoke of the professional development opportunities which they were able to access. In a minority of schools, where the work of the Signature funded teacher was identified by senior leadership as being exemplary, the schools sought actively to support the professional development of the teacher by providing appropriate access to external training for aspiring middle leadership. On a small number of occasions, the Signature funded teacher was not participating in the 'Beginning Teacher Induction' programme or the 'Early Professional Development' programme for recently qualified teachers; failure to participate in these programmes is a missed opportunity by senior leaders to provide appropriate support for the development and future career progression of these teachers. Senior leadership play an important role in providing all staff with appropriate opportunities to undertake continuing professional development; and to then evaluate its influence on learning and teaching, and share best practice.

3.2.4 All of the Signature funded teachers reported that they feel they have developed their pedagogical skills which should help them to attain employment at the conclusion of the programme. In addition, almost all of the teachers spoke favourably about the recruitment process which they felt was a very useful learning experience. A small number of teachers reported that it had provided them with the opportunity to return to Northern Ireland to pursue their teaching career. The support given to the Signature funded teachers within the school was reported to be extremely beneficial to their professional development and they were particularly appreciative of the guidance from the Signature leader, SENCO and learning from other colleagues on issues such as planning, teaching, and assessment.

3.2.5 The members of staff of the Education Authority, in particular, the Western region, have played a crucial role in the successful implementation of this programme. A significant strength of this work was the development and dissemination of relevant and appropriately challenging quality indicators to aid schools in the self-evaluation of the programme. The close monitoring of the project in schools by all of the CASS officers and the timely intervention, particularly with regard to personnel issues regarding deployment and the sharing of the teacher resource by two or more schools, were identified as particular strengths in most of the inspection visits. In most cases, the schools spoke highly of the advice and support provided by the CASS officers, particularly how the good practice identified by the CASS officers was shared across schools. A minority of schools commented that the training was provided too late to be of maximum benefit for principals and the Signature funded teacher. They also identified the lack of training provided for the Signature funded teachers who were not recruited through the central pool as being a matter of concern. A number of schools felt that more could have been done to encourage clustering arrangements and collaboration across schools. Some schools also identified inconsistencies across the regions of the Education Authority in the advice given on how the schools could deploy the Signature funded teacher. At the end of the first year of the programme, the CASS officers undertook robust self-evaluation of their work which led to the identification of appropriate priorities for development.

3.2.6 The school visits identified some variation in the extent to which teachers and principals found the NISPLAN website to be a useful resource. They spoke positively about the well-timed requirements for planning and evaluation of the programme, but raised concerns about the nature of the digital platform which some felt was not 'user-friendly'. When asked about the use of the OFMdfM questionnaire<sup>11</sup>, most schools spoke positively about the support provided by the CASS officers as to how to harness the pupils' views but they spoke negatively about the age-appropriateness of the statements within the questionnaire.

3.2.7 The strategic planning by the Strategic Oversight Group led by the Education Authority (Western region) for the implementation and the regular review of the effectiveness of the programme have ensured that the interests of the pupils accessing the programme, and of the teachers participating in the programme, have been given due consideration at each stage of the implementation process. This has helped ensure that the learning outcomes have been maximised for both the Signature funded teachers and the pupils involved in the programme. Given the significant challenges faced by the implementation team to enable the full implementation and regular review of the programme, such as the appointment, training and deployment of such a large number of newly and/or recently qualified teachers, the Strategic Oversight Group has carried out its duties to date with a high level of competence and effectiveness.

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<sup>11</sup> The use of OFMdfM common metrics, including the use of a pupil questionnaire, will form part of the evaluation of the Signature programmes by OFMdfM, but did not form part of the ETI evaluation.

3.2.8 Two-thirds of schools elected to deploy an experienced member of their teaching staff to support the targeted pupils and to appoint a recent graduate teacher to fill the post of the experienced member of staff. The remaining schools opted for the Signature funded teacher to be recruited centrally by the Education Authority (Western region) to provide the support for the targeted pupils. Of the one-third of schools who opted for the teacher recruitment to be overseen by Education Authority (Western region), less than two-thirds of the teachers were in position prior to January 2014 due to recruitment difficulties. Even though a majority of the teachers were in post for a relatively short period of time at the time of the inspection visits, significant improvements are evident in the quality of the pupils' learning experiences and their outcomes.

3.2.9 A significant aspect of the programme which did lead to uncertainty amongst all stakeholders was, and remains to be, the lack of clarity in the extent to which the funding to support the project would be made available. There is uncertainty about whether all of the teachers who have been recruited will benefit from two full years experience. Due to operational and administrative issues, a significant minority of teachers were not appointed until well after the project had started and, at the time of this evaluation, schools were still not clear whether these teachers would be able to avail of the full two years experience or if their contracts would be terminated at the end of the current academic year, 2014/2015. Should these contracts all be terminated at this time, it would not only lead to variation in the experience gained by the teachers across the schools but it would also lead to a very large number of teachers arriving on the employment market at the one time. Whilst this latter impact was always likely to happen, it could be alleviated to some extent by allowing all of the teachers to remain in post for the full two years.

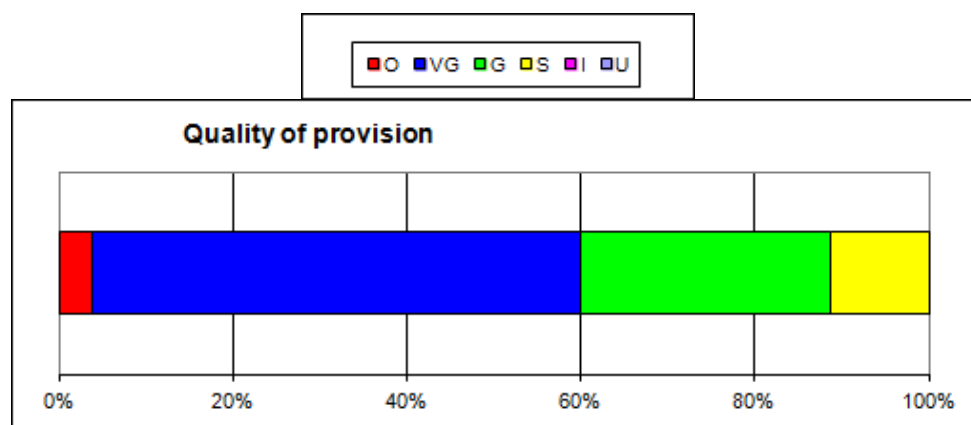
### 3.3 Quality of provision

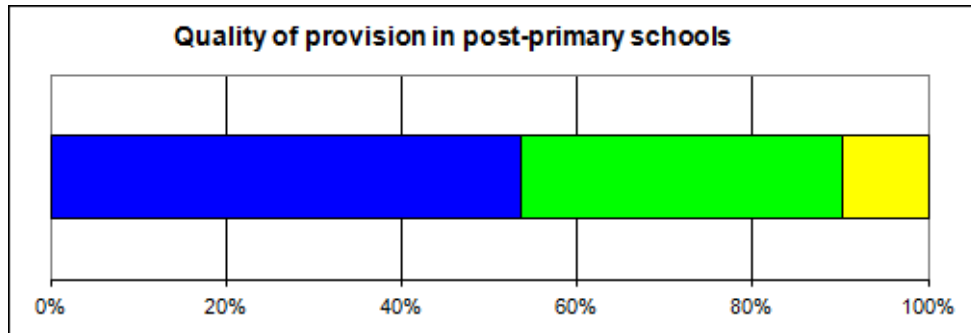
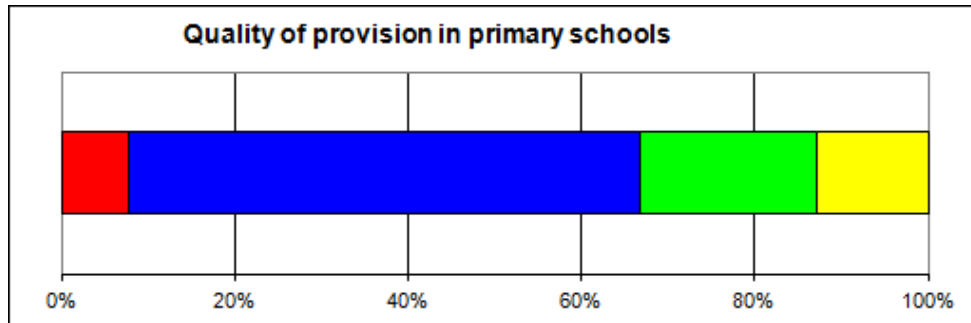
*'(In the small group) I like being able to ask questions without feeling silly. My own class is quite big and I don't like making too many mistakes in front of everybody. I'm definitely getting better at writing stories as my sentences are a lot more interesting.'*

Comment of a year 6 pupil who is accessing Signature funded intervention.

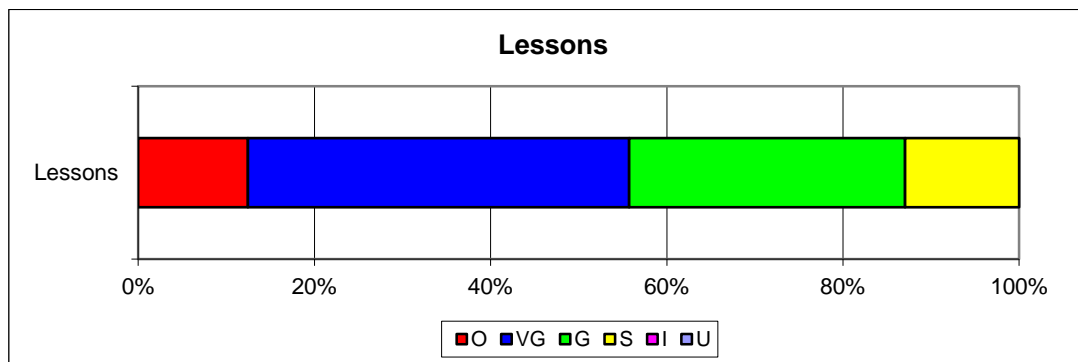
#### For the pupils targeted

3.3.1 The overall quality of provision was good or better in 89% of the schools visited, and very good or outstanding in 60% of the schools. For comparison, the percentage of primary school provision evaluated as very good or outstanding was over ten percentage points higher than in the post-primary sector. However, more primary school provision was evaluated as 'satisfactory' than in the post-primary sector.





3.3.2 Planning, teaching and assessment were effective at promoting learning in 87% of the lessons observed, and 56% of lessons observed were evaluated as very good or outstanding. Thirteen percent of lessons observed were evaluated as less than good, with over two-thirds of these lessons being with the support classes for the targeted pupils.



3.3.3 In the most effective practice observed, the lessons are planned thoroughly and are well informed by an accurate evaluation of the pupil's prior learning, rigorous analysis of data and knowledge of the pupils' individual needs and interests. There is effective communication between the Signature teacher, class teacher and the SENCO which enables the learning to be focused sharply and linked closely to the work of the class teacher. This provides coherence, differentiation and progression in the pupils' experiences in class and in the withdrawal sessions. The pupils' learning styles are informing practice and detailed evaluations of the learning are being used effectively to inform future planning.

A wide range of teaching strategies are used to develop and consolidate learning and to engage effectively the pupils; the pupils demonstrate interest and enjoyment in the lesson. The teachers have high expectations for what the pupils can achieve and use positive reinforcement to raise confidence and self-esteem. They make skilful use of questioning to extend, probe and challenge the pupils' thinking and their oral responses. Information and communication technology is used effectively to enhance both teaching and learning.

The teachers employ a wide range of assessment approaches to monitor and evaluate the pupil's learning; in particular, the pupils are encouraged to assess their work (and the work of others) against their individual targets and given opportunities to make further improvements. The pupils have good opportunities to share their learning and evaluate each other's work in the supportive ethos of the targeted support groups. The teachers' marking is of a consistently high standard, with positive and sensitive comments giving clear guidance to the pupils on how to improve the quality of their work. Very effective use is made of a range of data to monitor and evaluate the progress of each pupil and individual learning needs are met effectively.

3.3.4 In the less effective practice, in 13% of the lessons observed, the pace and level of challenge of the lessons observed did not meet the individual learning needs of the pupils. On occasion, the targeted support session is too short to develop and consolidate effectively the intended learning and the range of teaching and learning strategies are too narrow. There are missed opportunities to build appropriately on the pupils' responses and the teacher does not use these responses to develop further the pupils' thinking and learning. The pupils are not involved meaningfully in setting their own targets and are not aware sufficiently of how to improve their work. In a small number of lessons, the teachers did not employ an appropriate range of strategies to provide for the complex needs of the targeted pupils.

In a small number of cases in the post-primary sector, the focus of the support classes was on the development of the pupils' study skills rather than on the explicit development of their literacy and numeracy skills. There is evidence that this approach did not have as marked an effect on raising the standards attained by the pupils as when the approach adopted by the school was focused more clearly on the improvement of the literacy and/or numeracy knowledge, skills and competences of the pupils.

3.3.5 In the schools that deployed a non-Signature funded teacher to support the targeted pupils, 90% of the lessons observed were good or better and 68% were evaluated as very good or outstanding. It is a matter of some concern, however, that 10% of lessons were less than good. Where the Signature funded teacher was providing the targeted support, 87% of the lessons observed were of good or better quality. This figure is similar to the percentage of good or better lessons where a non-Signature funded teacher is providing the targeted support. There is a significant difference, however, in the percentage of lessons evaluated as very good or outstanding: in the lessons with the Signature funded teacher, 43% were very good or outstanding compared to 68% of lessons with the non-Signature funded teacher.

### **For the teachers**

3.3.6 Most of the teachers reported that seeing pupils make significant progress, and gaining in confidence, added to their professional and personal satisfaction. In a significant minority of the schools visited, the schools adopted a team-teaching approach to the provision of additional support for the pupils identified as at risk of not attaining at the expected level in literacy and numeracy. Where the planning for this approach was of a high quality, which was in almost all of the cases, the pupils spoke very highly of having access to more help, a greater number of opportunities to talk about their learning, and their increased enjoyment in learning.

3.3.7 An additional potential challenge (and/or opportunity) to the work of the Signature funded teachers who are working across a number of schools, is the need for them to adapt their teaching to the varying approaches used in literacy and numeracy within the different schools; this requires a high level of organisation and planning. Greater recognition by senior leaders of this additional challenge placed on the Signature funded teacher is required, and, in most cases, needs to be given greater consideration when timetabling for the deployment of the teacher.

3.3.8 The CASS officers of the Education Authority completed a useful skills audit of the Signature funded teachers at the beginning of their deployment in the project to enable relevant support to be accessed. While all of the teachers who were recruited centrally could access the support programme devised by the Education Authority, a minority of the teachers recruited by schools reported that they were not able to access the support programme and would have welcomed the opportunity to do so.

3.3.9 A key strength of the provision at Education Authority level is the effective inter-regional working and sharing of expertise to enable the successful implementation of the programme in schools. The expertise in human resourcing provided by the Education Authority (Western region) was also used well to support the successful implementation of the programme. The wide representation on the Strategic Oversight Group from the employing authorities, teaching unions and other educational stakeholders ensured effective governance of the programme.

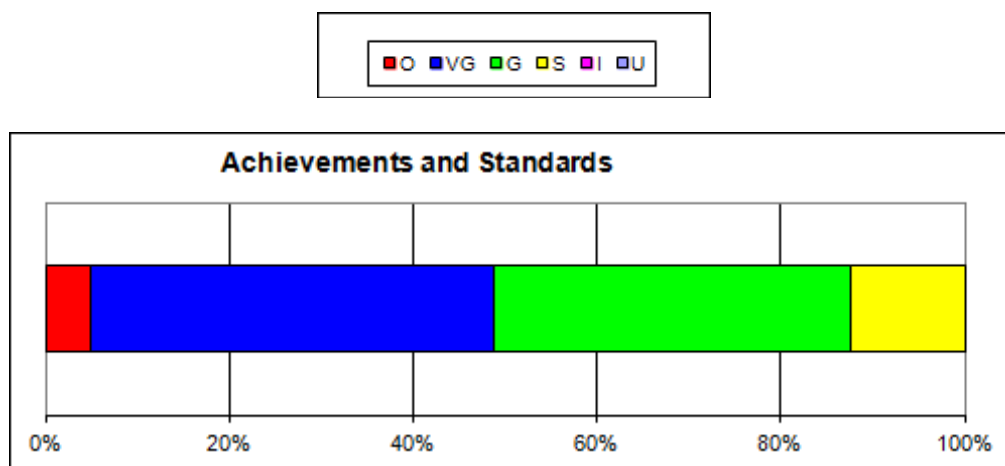
### 3.4 Achievements and standards

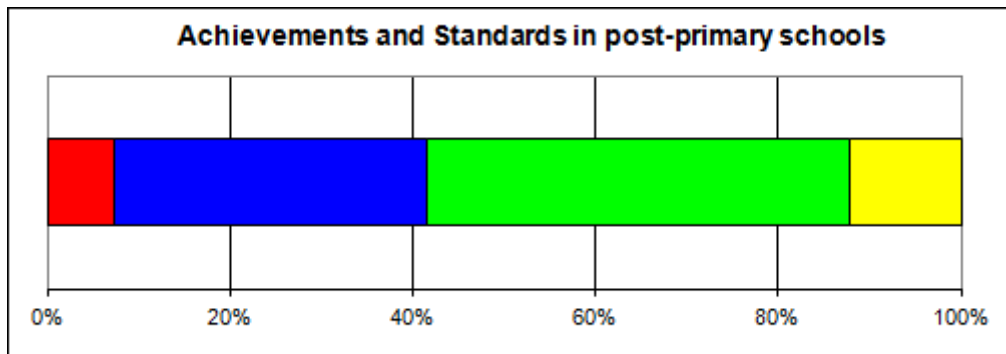
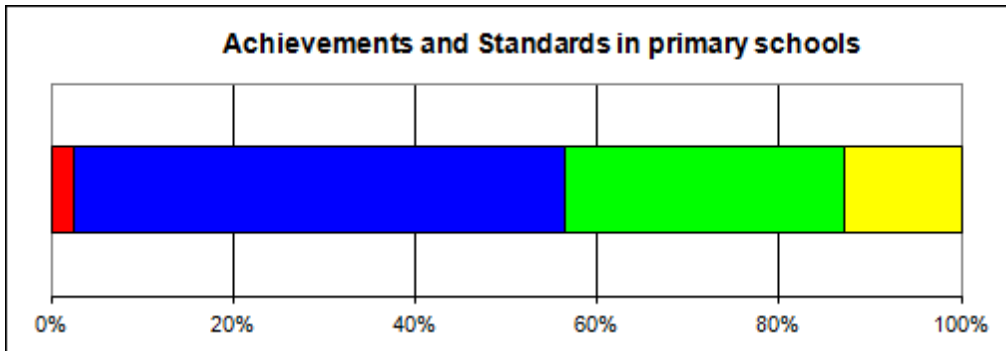
*‘With the help I am getting from the small group class, I understand much more clearly the potential power of my spoken and written language for making a good impression; getting a ‘C’ in my GCSE English exam is an added bonus.’*

Comment of a year 12 pupil who is accessing Signature funded intervention.

#### For the pupils targeted

3.4.1 The standards attained by the pupils engaged in the programme were evaluated as good or better in 88% of the schools visited, being very good or outstanding in 49% of the schools. Due to industrial action, end-of-year key stage 2 assessment data in 2014 was not made available. Most schools did, however, provide internal assessment data and other evidence of progress in learning, including access to pupil portfolios and books.





3.4.2 In discussions with the pupils receiving the targeted support, all reported that they: feel more confident in their ability to undertake literacy and/or numeracy tasks; are clear that they have made progress; really enjoy working in the smaller groups; and, are enthusiastic about their learning. In most cases, the pupils are aware of their learning targets and of the progress they are making towards achieving them.

3.4.3 In almost all of the post-primary schools visited, the pupils reported that they have a deeper understanding of the topics covered and, as a consequence, have developed their skills. They have higher expectations and understand well the importance of achieving a grade C or better in GCSE English and/or mathematics for the next stage of their life and work. They are confident in using a wider range of learning strategies including the use of past papers and mark schemes, editing work, mind maps, recording information, flash cards and learning from each other through discussion and open-ended questioning. In almost all cases, the pupils feel valued and reported that they are treated with respect by the teachers and they enjoy the interaction with them in the support sessions. In discussions with year 13 pupils who had participated in the programme during their year 12 studies, they spoke particularly positively about how their attainment in GCSE English and/or mathematics at grades A to C had provided them with the opportunity to participate in post-16 study with increased confidence, had supported their attainment in other subject areas, and had enabled them to access the post-16 curriculum without the requirement to re-sit the GCSE qualification.

3.4.4 The teachers who are providing the additional support for the targeted pupils reported that the pupils are more willing to take risks in their learning and have greater perseverance in their work and confidence in asking for help when required. In the primary schools, the teachers have evidence of the pupils transferring their skills and learning gained in the withdrawal sessions to other areas of the curriculum.



3.4.5 In the primary schools, there is good evidence that the standard of pupils' writing shows a developing sophistication and style. Their written work shows a good variety of writing forms and, in general, presentation is very good. Most of the pupils targeted for the programme demonstrate very good improvement in their spelling and grammar which has transferred to their written work. In most cases, the pupils are very familiar with their learning targets for the next level in literacy and, in the best practice, these learning targets are referred to frequently by the teacher throughout the day in class and during the withdrawal sessions. The pupils work well individually and in pairs and can evaluate effectively their own work and the work of others. In numeracy support sessions, they demonstrate good recall and a clear understanding of different mathematical operations. There was an appropriate focus on the development of mathematical language and processes, and the pupils could explain well the mental mathematics strategies they employ. In the literacy support sessions, they demonstrate their growing capacity to articulate their views, opinions and feelings. They are also able to show empathy with others and display an understanding of key skills such as clarifying, predicting, summarising and questioning.

3.4.6 In the support lessons observed in the post-primary schools, the pupils engage actively with interest and enjoyment, remain well-focused throughout the lesson and give extended responses. In sharing their own work, they learn well from each other and have a better understanding of how to improve further their work. In the literacy support classes, the pupils respond well to the range of texts and have good opportunities to apply a range of writing techniques in extended writing tasks. In numeracy support sessions, the pupils explain clearly the strategies they employ and collaborate well in problem solving situations. In the most effective practice, the pupils make good use of Information and Communication Technology, including social media platforms, to discuss and share their learning.

3.4.7 In almost all schools, parents were made aware of their child's engagement in the programme. In a significant minority of schools, parents were given opportunities to participate in workshops to develop the parents' capacity to support and consolidate their child's learning at home. This feature of the implementation of the programme should be disseminated to all schools.

### **For the teachers**

3.4.8 Almost all of the Signature funded teachers reported that they have benefited well from their experience of the recruitment process and felt that they were better prepared for applying for teaching positions in the future. Whilst 83% of all of the signature-funded teachers were in post by the end of January 2014, only 71% of the centrally recruited teachers were in post. This impacted on the pace at which the interventions could be established in a number of schools and therefore how much experience the centrally-recruited teacher could gain and the extent of the progress the pupils made. A significant minority of pupils in years 7, 11 and 12 reported some disruptions to the level of support in the third term of 2014 due to events such as sports day, prize-giving and leavers' performances in primary schools, and examinations and study leave in post-primary. A small number of pupils also commented on their engagement in the programme affecting adversely their access to other areas of learning, such as personal development classes or physical education. It is important for senior leaders to put strategies in place to minimise the potential disruption to pupils' learning in the other areas of the curriculum.

3.4.9 Most of the Signature funded teachers who are acting in a backfill capacity reported that they have benefited greatly from the experience of whole-class teaching over an extended period and from engaging in the continuing professional development opportunities within the school. In the most effective practice, in a majority of schools, the Signature funded teachers have had very good support from the teacher tutor in the school and have developed further their confidence and teaching skills by working closely alongside more experienced colleagues. Most of the Signature funded teachers, in particular, those who are supporting the targeted pupils, are more aware of how to make effective use of data to identify underachievement and to diagnose areas of individual need.

3.4.10 The groups of targeted children in both primary and post-primary have appropriately not remained constant throughout the programme for a variety of pastoral and educational reasons, mainly due to the pupils making sufficient progress for them to exit the programme. It is important that all schools monitor and record accurately the progress of the pupils targeted for support to ensure the school can evaluate robustly the overall quality of the programme and the intervention strategies deployed in raising standards in literacy and numeracy within the school.

#### 4. Recommendations

	Recommendations
For DE	<p>R1 To carry out a full appraisal of the risks associated with the implementation of a programme of this scale, such as potential short-term and long-term recruitment issues and to share these findings with all educational stakeholders.</p> <p>R2 To plan for the dissemination of the highly effective practice identified in the inspection visits to ensure the programme has a lasting legacy on raising standards of attainment. As part of this recommendation, DE should consider how it can support more effectively the development of inter-school networks or ‘clustering’ to foster further improvement in the standards attained by pupils in NI.</p>
For the Education Authority (working with the employing authorities)	<p>R3 To ensure all principals and teachers have full, and timely, access to the training being provided, irrespective of the mode of recruitment, and to tailor the training more closely to the specific needs of each cohort.</p> <p>R4 To improve the NISPLAN website platform to make less cumbersome the recording of each school’s action plans and evaluations of progress.</p> <p>R5 To provide more timely support (and appropriate challenge) to schools to ensure appropriate deployment of teachers, paying particular attention to the needs of Signature funded teachers who are working in a number of schools.</p> <p>R6 To plan for the dissemination of the highly effective practice identified in the inspection visits to ensure the programme has a lasting legacy on raising standards of attainment. As part of this recommendation, the employing authority should consider how it can support more effectively the development of inter-school networks or ‘clustering’ to foster further improvement in the standards attained by pupils in NI.</p>

**For schools/co-ordinators**

R7 To engage more meaningfully with pupils and parents to raise their awareness of the aims of the programme and of potential strategies they may use to support learning and, ultimately, raise standards.

R8 To ensure that all teachers involved in the programme have the necessary skills to provide high quality planning, teaching and assessment which lead to successful learning for the pupils targeted.

R9 To develop further the effective systems for monitoring and recording accurately the progress of the pupils targeted for support to ensure the school can evaluate robustly the overall quality of the programme and intervention strategies employed to raise the standards of attainment and to minimise potential adverse impact on other areas of the curriculum.

R10 To develop fully the potential career progression of the Signature funded teacher, it is important that school leaders provide opportunities for the teacher to undertake appropriate development opportunities, particularly in relation to attendance at early professional development courses.

## **APPENDIX 1**

The Strategic Oversight Group, led by the Education Authority (Western region), was established with membership from the employing authorities, teaching unions and other educational stakeholders:

- Department of Education;
- Education Authority Representatives (HR, Finance and School Improvement (CASS));
- Council for Catholic Maintained Schools;
- Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education;
- Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta;
- Governing Bodies Association;
- Teaching Unions;
- General Teaching Council of Northern Ireland; and
- Regional Strategy Group for Special Educational Needs.

### Primary schools visited by inspectors as part of the evaluation

Thank you to the schools who participated in the evaluation. Evaluations of the quality of the programme were not reached in all of the schools visited as, in a small number of schools, the programme was at the early stages of implementation.

Aghadrumsee Primary School, Enniskillen  
Avoniel Primary School, Belfast  
Ballykeel Primary School, Ballymena  
Ballyoran Primary School, Portadown  
Belleek Primary School, Belleek  
Blythefield Primary School, Belfast  
Bunscoil Cholmcille, Londonderry  
Cliftonville Integrated Primary School, Belfast  
Donaghmore Primary School, Dungannon  
Downpatrick Primary School, Downpatrick  
Drumachose Primary School, Limavady  
Drumlins Integrated Primary School, Ballynahinch  
Elmgrove Primary School, Belfast  
Fane Street Primary School, Belfast  
Fountain Primary School, Londonderry  
Gaelscoil An Chaistil, Baile An Chaistil, Ballycastle  
Gaelscoil Ui Neill, Coalisland  
Greenhaw Primary School, Londonderry  
Harryville Primary School, Ballymena  
Hollybank Primary School, Monkstown, Newtownabbey  
Mercy Primary School, Belfast  
Mount St Catherine's Primary School, Armagh  
Mullabuoy Primary School, Londonderry  
Parkhall Primary School, Antrim  
Sacred Heart Primary School, Belfast  
Silverstream Primary School, Greenisland  
John Paul II Primary School, Belfast  
St Caireall's Primary School, Castlederg  
St Columbkille's Primary School, Omagh  
St Joseph's Primary School, Bessbrook  
St Joseph's Primary School, Artigarvan, Strabane  
St Kieran's Primary School, Poleglass, Belfast  
St Mary's Primary School, Annalong  
St Matthew's Primary School, Belfast  
St Michael's Primary School, Mowhan  
St Patrick's Primary School, Crossmaglen  
St Paul's Primary School, Belfast  
St Teresa's Primary School, Mounthorris, Armagh  
St Therese's Lenamore Primary Sschool, Londonderry  
Stewartstown Primary School, Stewartstown

### Post-primary schools visited by inspectors as part of the evaluation

Thank you to the schools who participated in the evaluation. Evaluations of the quality of the programme were not reached in all of the schools visited as, in some schools, the programme was at the early stages of implementation.

Ashfield Boys' High School, Belfast  
 Ashfield Girls' High School, Belfast  
 Campbell College, Belfast  
 Christian Brothers' School, Belfast  
 Colaiste Feirste, Belfast  
 Corpus Christi College, Belfast  
 St Joseph's College, Belfast  
 Carrickfergus College, Carrickfergus  
 Downshire School, Carrickfergus  
 Dunclug College, Ballymena  
 Edmund Rice College, Newtownabbey  
 Glengormley High School, Newtownabbey  
 Our Lady of Lourdes High School, Ballymoney  
 Slemish College, Ballymena  
 St Benedict's College, Randalstown  
 St Joseph's College, Coleraine  
 St Killian's College, Carnlough  
 Ulidia Integrated College, Carrickfergus  
 Fort Hill College, Lisburn  
 Lagan College, Belfast  
 Newtownbreda High School, Belfast  
 Saintfield High School, Saintfield  
 St Colman's High School & 6th Form College, Ballynahinch  
 St Colm's High School, Twinbrook, Belfast  
 St Mary's High School, Downpatrick  
 Aughnacloy High School, Aughnacloy  
 Craigavon Senior High School, Portadown  
 Dromore High School, Dromore  
 Holy Trinity College, Cookstown  
 Integrated College, Dungannon  
 Markethill High School, Markethill  
 St Catherine's College, Armagh  
 St Ciaran's High School, Ballygawley, Dungannon  
 St Patrick's College, Dungannon  
 St Paul's Junior High School, Lurgan  
 Castlederg High School, Castlederg  
 Dean Maguirc College, Omagh  
 Lisneal College, Londonderry  
 Omagh High School, Omagh  
 Sacred Heart College, Omagh  
 St Brigid's College, Londonderry  
 St Cecilia's College, Londonderry  
 St Mary's High School, Brollagh, Belleek

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