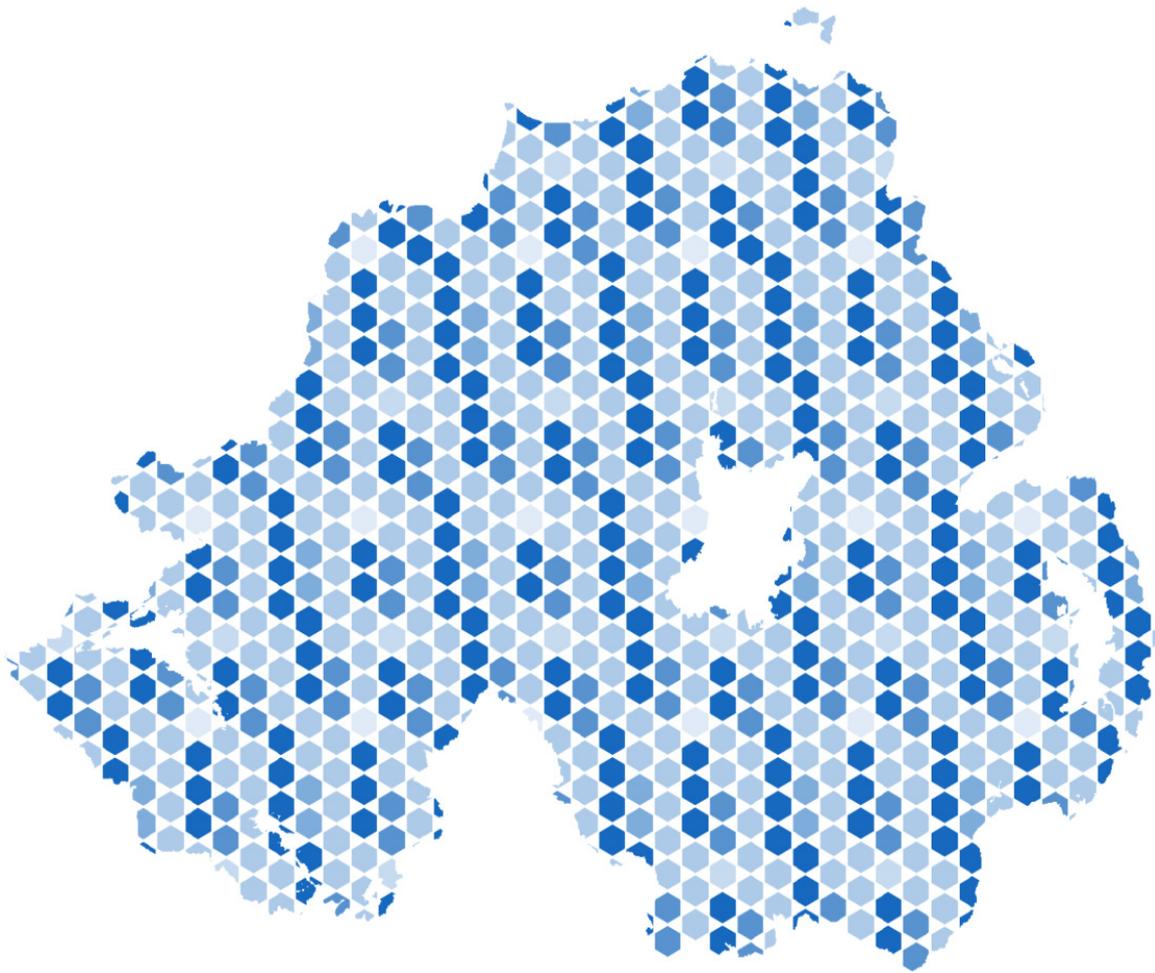


SPECIAL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

An Evaluation of the Linked
Independent Living and Advice
Centre at Fleming Fulton School

Report of an Inspection
2008-2010

eti

*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*

Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

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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%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Fleming Fulton School is situated in the Malone Road in Belfast. The school has been in existence since 1957 and provides education for approximately 140 pupils with physical disability. The school also caters increasingly for pupils with additional and significant learning difficulties. The staff have developed an outreach support service for pupils who have a physical disability and are enrolled in mainstream schools. The LILAC project is the culmination of the school's work to support the inclusion of these pupils in mainstream pre-school, primary and post-primary schools. The project aims to provide advice for young people, their families, their schools and the range of other professional support staff, on all issues which contribute to making inclusion an effective reality.

1.2 The findings from the inspection visit leading into the final year of the LILAC indicate that very good progress has been made when measured against the original aim.

2. CONTEXT

2.1 The Fleming Fulton senior management team and governors established a working party to examine how the school could enhance its role in light of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Order (SENDO) legislation of 2005. The LILAC service started in June 2007. The school has over fifty years experience of providing education for pupils in a multi-disciplinary environment and sees the LILAC as an opportunity to promote awareness and provide advice and training to mainstream schools which have enrolled pupils with physical disability. The school sets this work in the context of the SENDO legislation of September 2005 and the Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) report of May 2006 on the Future Role of the Special School.

2.2 The school has a history of sharing expertise, knowledge and good practice with other professionals, both in education and in the medical and therapy fields. A number of staff, for example, have been involved through the Comenius project, in useful international research on inclusion for pupils with physical disability. The current LILAC multi-disciplinary team offers a wide range of services, from individual advice for teachers, parents and pupils to support for the host school itself. The team comprises a teaching co-ordinator, classroom assistant, occupational therapist, technician for information communication technology (ICT), a clerical assistant and an additional part-time teacher. To date, the LILAC has provided support and advice for 127 young people across 88 mainstream schools. The project is funded from a Lottery grant and is available free of charge to all schools in Northern Ireland.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 In 2006-2007 the school applied for, and was awarded £500,000 from the Big Lottery to develop the LILAC project. Discussions were held among the school's management team, the teacher in charge and her multi-disciplinary team, and the District Inspector (DI) to refine and develop the project. Discussions were also held with the Department of Education (DE) who were not able to provide funding but expressed an interest in the project. The school asked the Education and Training Inspectorate to evaluate the project. The Assistant Chief Inspector (ACI) with responsibility for special education, and the DI visited the school in March 2009 and suggested how the school itself might evaluate its work. The Inspectorate would then quality assure the school's evaluation.

3.2 The inspection process included four visits to the school, as well as to a number of inclusion events, including a one-day conference, an arts festival, a musical production involving the Ulster Orchestra and 14 other schools. During the visits to the school, the Inspectorate held discussions and interviews with key personnel, visited classes, and

scrutinised relevant data and documentation. The Inspectorate's quality assurance also included a telephone survey of approximately 10% of the mainstream schools involved with the project.

3.3 The school LILAC team's self-evaluation process included surveys to ascertain the viewpoints of pupils, parents, Fleming Fulton staff and LILAC team members, and to evaluate the quality of service from the mainstream schools' perspective. Documented case studies provided by the LILAC also gave insights into the range and quality of the support and provided clear indicators relating to the successful outcomes for individual pupils. Subsequent Inspectorate discussions with the sample of mainstream staff as well as the scrutiny of records provided by the LILAC, confirmed the high value the mainstream schools place on the expert advice and support provided for them.

4. DEVELOPMENT OF THE CENTRE

4.1 As part of the school's commitment to developing the LILAC as a specialist resource centre, the staff team visited similar developments in England, including the Aids to Communication in Education Centre (ACE) in Oxford. In addition, they based their development of the LILAC on research on effective outreach from special schools in England and Wales. By the start of the final year of the LILAC, a sound underpinning set of values, principles and procedures guided the day-to-day work of the team. The Inspectorate found the very effective multi-disciplinary approach adopted to be clearly based on mutual respect, professionalism and consensus of opinion. The team's shared understanding of barriers to learning, which the pupils need to overcome, and their combined knowledge, experience and expertise were utilised very effectively to afford autonomy to the receiving schools, while supporting the growth and development of the school's capacity to deal with pupils with physical disability. The team were also clearly focussed on the efficient and effective delivery of their service and all the schools contacted appreciated the swift and courteous responses to enquiries.

4.2 The LILAC won the award for outstanding school team of the year in the 2010 regional finals of the Teaching Awards, and has now gone on to win the national award in that category. It was commended by the judges as "a truly unique team who will influence policy on the education of children with physical disabilities in the future".

5. MAIN FINDINGS

5.1 The LILAC team's evaluation stressed the importance of their having access to a pool of specialist colleagues in Fleming Fulton School including their curriculum expertise, so that the receiving pupils could have access to a maximum of subjects across the curriculum. Discussions between the Inspectorate and the other teachers in Fleming Fulton confirmed the high quality of support for the LILAC team from within the school.

5.2 The LILAC team outlined for the Inspectorate their particular areas of expertise and gave good examples of how their input had made a difference for the mainstream pupils they had supported. The Inspectorate confirms the very good quality of this intervention. The occupational therapist, for example, highlighted the collaborative approach working alongside the teacher and classroom assistant to ensure access to the curriculum by recommending resources and adaptations, such as the optimum table height and appropriate seating for the pupils. The team described how these adaptations influenced positively the development of posture and tone so that pupils can, for example, better perform handwriting skills, use tools in practical classes, communicate and eat more easily.

5.3 The ICT specialist illustrated how specialist assistive technology available to the LILAC has supported pupils who have difficulty accessing the curriculum. The classroom assistant gave examples of how well targeted aspects of care can support a pupil's independence and develop life skills in an inclusive environment. The inclusion of a past pupil from Fleming Fulton on the LILAC team gives a unique perspective and insight to the team into issues such as self-esteem and living with physical disability. The Inspectorate confirms this model of multi-disciplinary support as highly effective.

6. CASE STUDIES

6.1 A special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) in a small rural primary school spoke of the reassurance and helpful support in the initial stages of the integration of two boys with cerebral palsy. She valued the initial assessment of the classroom environment by the team's occupational therapist, the training provided by the classroom assistant and teacher from LILAC, and the ongoing advice as the pupils matured and their needs changed and developed. She was particularly appreciative of the response times when she needed to talk over practical issues and matters relating to accessing aspects of the curriculum.

6.2 In an inner city nursery school, the Principal was clear that many of the early intervention strategies and discussions with the parents of a pupil with a significant physical disability, were very well-informed by ongoing contact with the LILAC team. In addition, she commented on how she had accessed advice and information on adaptations needed to provide intimate care and toileting facilities in a way that met the pupil's needs and also ensured the pupil's dignity. Again, emphasis was put on the quick response provided to queries, and the confidence this afforded to staff who were dealing with issues for the first time.

6.3 In a large grammar school one of the pupils spoke of how the support, information and advice provided to her and her school had empowered her to come back to school at age 16, for advanced level studies. She commented on the confidence she had gained through the strategies for revision and study, which the LILAC developed with her. She was also very appreciative of the advice and support given to her teacher and classroom assistant to enable her to access practical study independently. 'In Design and Technology my classroom assistant used to stand behind me to hold me up and the technician held the equipment when I was doing something – I felt I wasn't doing it myself. Then I got the height adjustable table and my fantastic chair and suddenly I knew I could do as well as anyone.' The SENCO in the school noted a tremendous change and commented, 'She is a changed girl since LILAC came on board..... I think she didn't ask for help because she knew we had no answers.'

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 The inspection visit in the final year of the LILAC indicates that very good progress has been made when measured against the original aims. The overall quality of support provided by the LILAC team is very good. In completing its own evaluation of the project, the school's LILAC team kept detailed records of the requests made, the support given, the responses by the mainstream school and the benefits of the support over time, for the pupils.

7.2 The strengths of the work to date in the LILAC project include:

- the good quality leadership and management of the LILAC project, underpinned by a strong vision, and clear values and beliefs regarding the role of the special school in supporting inclusion;

- the highly effective LILAC team which demonstrates successful multi-disciplinary co-operation based on a sound understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities, their knowledge, experience and on very good working relationships;
- the good quality support provided to mainstream schools, pupils and parents, to help pupils to make progress across the curriculum and to become fully included in the life of the school;
- the very good collaboration between the LILAC team and the mainstream schools and the strong emphasis on building the capacity of the school staff, and the parents in coping with disability, and on the pupils' independence;
- the raising of awareness of and understanding about barriers to learning through creative projects developed by the LILAC team in partnership with others, such as the Ulster Orchestra and a number of local schools in the production of a multi-media performance; and
- the very high value placed by schools on the timely advice, support and guidance provided by the LILAC team.

As identified through the LILAC's own self-evaluation and endorsed by the Inspectorate, there is a need for the team to:

- develop further the strategies for increased parental and pupil engagement in the development of the LILAC service; and
- explore further with the wider education sector, the role of the LILAC outreach model in the context of future support for all pupils with physical disability in the school of their choice in Northern Ireland.

8. THE INSPECTORATE'S FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 There is further work to be done on the cost of the service, the impact of the support over time and the possibility of supplementing advice to schools through, for example, an online service or by way of digital versatile disks.

8.2 The funding for the LILAC project comes to an end in 2011. It is clear from the success of the project that it has provided an additional valuable service to schools in helping them to make good provision for pupils with physical disability. It will be for Fleming Fulton School, in conjunction with the Belfast Education and Library Board and DE to decide whether or not the service can be maintained without the support from the Lottery Fund.

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