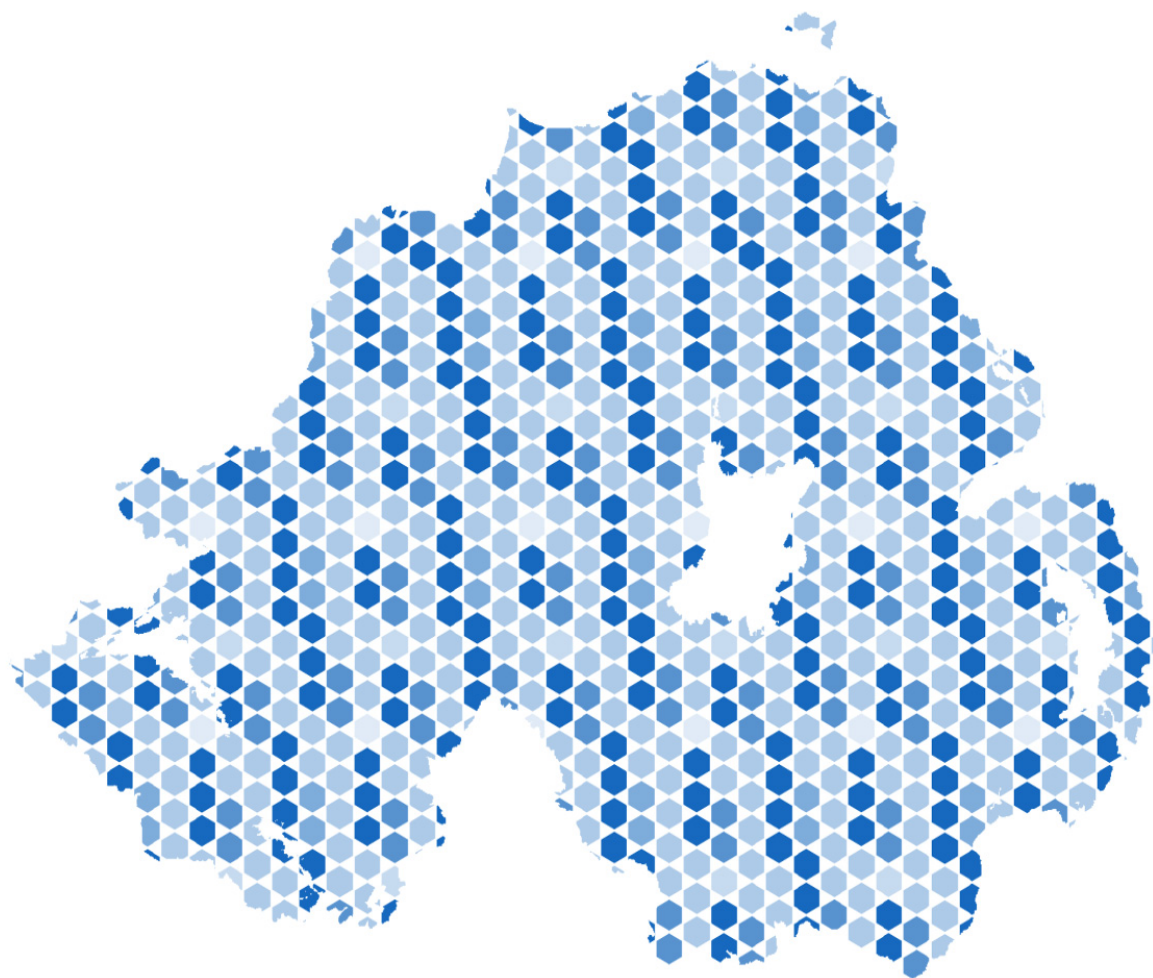


SPECIAL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Rossmar School, Limavady

Report of an Inspection
in January/February 2011

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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, the Inspectorate relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

STATISTICAL INFORMATION (SPECIAL SCHOOLS)

- | | | | | |
|-----|-----|---|------|---|
| 1.1 | i. | School: Rossmar School,
Limavady | iii. | Date of Inspection: w/b 31/01/2011 |
| | ii. | School Reference Number: 231-6662 | iv. | Nature of Inspection: Focused |

1.2

School Year	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Total Enrolment	79	73	80

The enrolment for the current year is the figure on the day of notification of inspection. For previous years it is the figure in the annual return to the Department of Education.

- 1.3 Number of Pupils in Outreach/Learning Support Programme: 12

- 1.4 Average Attendance for the Previous School Year: 88.8%

- | | | | | |
|-----|------|---|-------|--------------------------|
| 1.5 | i. | Number of Teachers in School:
(including the Principal and p/t teachers)
(f/t equivalent = 25 teaching hours) | 14 | on Outreach Programme: 1 |
| | ii. | PTR (pupil/teacher ratio): | 6.15 | |
| | iii. | Average Class Size: | 8 | |
| | iv. | Number of Classroom Assistants: | 16.5 | |
| | v. | Ancillary Support:
Number of Hours per week: | | |
| | | Clerical Support: | 36 | |
| | vi. | Percentage of children in receipt of free
school meals: | 72.5% | |

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Rossmar School opened in February 2008, following the amalgamation of the former Glasvey (severe learning difficulties) and Limegrove (moderate learning difficulties) special schools. The new school has been located on the Limegrove site in Limavady from September 2008.

The school provides education for pupils aged three to nineteen years with statements of special educational needs (SEN). The school also maintains a nursery and Learning Support Service (LSS) to local schools. Currently, four pupils with complex social and emotional needs from local primary schools receive intensive support in Rossmar on a part-time placement basis and a further eight pupils are receiving outreach support within their home primary schools.

The school's catchment area extends across a radius of 15 miles and covers the towns of Limavady, Park, Feeny and Magilligan.

1.2 FOCUS OF THE INSPECTION

The inspection focused on:

- achievements and standards;
- learning and teaching;
- pastoral care and wellbeing; and
- leadership and management at all levels across the school.

2. OVERALL FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is good.

The main strengths of the school include:

- the positive and inclusive ethos and the regular links established with the parents and carers;
- the well-behaved pupils and their positive attitudes to learning;
- the effective leadership of the Principal and his vision for the work of the school;
- the hardworking, committed and caring staff team;
- the high quality of most of the teaching;
- the well-designed and co-ordinated accreditation framework which leads to good outcomes for pupils; and
- the very good links, including collaborative courses, established with post-primary schools in the Roe Valley Area Learning Community (RVALC).

The main areas for improvement are the need to:

- improve further the quality of a minority of the teaching and learning through the dissemination of the most effective practice identified during the inspection; and
- monitor and evaluate more rigorously the school's practices and procedures, and to review the associated roles and responsibilities of the staff.

3. THE VIEWS OF PUPILS, PARENTS, TEACHERS, SUPPORT STAFF AND GOVERNORS OF THE SCHOOL

The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection, as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors), and a group of pupils.

The number of questionnaires issued and returned and the number containing written comments are given in Appendix 1.

3.1 PARENTAL RESPONSES

The responses from the parental questionnaires indicated that the parents regard highly:

- the positive and judicious responses by staff to individual concerns;
- the arrangements for the pastoral care and safeguarding of the children; and
- the good levels of achievement which the children attain over their time in the school.

3.2 TEACHER AND SUPPORT STAFF RESPONSES

The responses from the staff acknowledged the welcoming and pastoral ethos provided for the pupils. The staff appreciated the opportunities to contribute to whole school policies and provision and felt that their contributions are valued by senior management.

3.3 GOVERNORS

The governors expressed strong appreciation for the effective leadership of the Principal and the staff's continual commitment to the pupils. In particular, they commended the good progress made since the amalgamation in developing a sense of collegiality amongst the staff, the improving behaviour of the pupils, and the school's improved profile in the local community.

The governors also expressed concern about the poor quality of the accommodation.

3.4 MEETING WITH PUPILS

The pupils talked enthusiastically about their school and indicated their awareness of what to do if they have any worries about their safety and well-being.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) endorses the very positive findings emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions, and in particular highlight the poor quality of the accommodation.

4. KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

4.1 ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

The level of achievement and standards attained by the pupils is good.

In this report, the standards of achievement are judged in relation to the pupils' previous attainments, their individual abilities and their SEN.

The pupils achieve well during their time in the school and acquire the appropriate social skills and learning to transfer to further education, employment or the local adult centre (see appendix for details of external examination results). Most of the pupils leave with a range of appropriate accreditation and well-established social skills and self-confidence. Those pupils with the most complex and profound learning difficulties follow an early development and sensory curriculum and complete their individual programmes to varying levels. They will continue to require constant support with their learning and daily living beyond their time in school.

Among the pupils' achievements are:

- their well-developed sense of wellbeing, social and life skills;
- the good range of accreditation gained over their school careers; and
- their increasing familiarity with, and participation in the life of the local community.

The achievements of a minority of pupils could be better.

4.2 PROVISION FOR LEARNING

4.2.1 STANDARDS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The quality of provision for learning in the school is good.

Eighty-six percent of the lessons observed were of a good or better quality and almost 20% were judged to be outstanding. In a minority of the lessons, there was a need for substantial improvement in the activities to meet individual needs.

In the most effective lessons, there is very good use of assessment for learning practices, excellent individual support by the teachers and assistants and a very appropriate focus on learning outcomes. The lessons have a good pace and a variety of well-timed practical activities, which result in greater pupil participation and an understanding of the learning intentions. Encouragement and challenge are carefully interwoven with the learning activities which are used well to help the pupils consolidate their learning. In the least effective lessons, the planning is not sufficiently thorough or sufficiently well-matched to what the pupils could achieve.

The pupils in the nursery class are introduced to an appropriate and enriching language-based curriculum, through which they make a very good start to their education and develop a very sound basis in talking and listening, writing and reading. At this early stage, a growing and positive relationship with the parents is evident; these excellent links are maintained across all the classes. In all the primary classes, the pupils have very good breadth of curriculum experiences, designed to further their learning and independence. The teachers and assistants work very well as a class team and create an appropriate

learning environment for the pupils, and through the consistently high quality of their interactions with the pupils, promote effectively the pupils' self-esteem and learning across a majority of subjects.

In the post-primary department, a good start has been made to developing thematic units of work that link science, technology and mathematics. The post-primary co-ordinator has appropriately identified the need to ensure these subject teachers work more closely together to help the pupils to see the connections across their learning. Very effective links have been developed with neighbouring post primary schools through the RVALC enabling the school to extend the key stage 3 (KS) 3 curriculum by having joint learning for life and work, science and physical education classes with pupils from the local mainstream schools. This broader curricular provision should be extended into KS4 for a small minority of pupils who have the capacity to study these subjects through to General Certificate of Secondary Education examination level.

4.2.2 PASTORAL CARE

The staff show a genuine concern for the care and welfare of each pupil. They have worked hard to create a welcoming, supportive and reassuring environment in the new school which is developing well the pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Sound processes are in place to promote good behaviour, and during the inspection, the behaviour of almost all the pupils was good.

4.2.3 SAFEGUARDING

The school has very good, comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

4.2.4 CAREERS EDUCATION, INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

The quality of provision for Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance is very good. The careers provision is realistic and relevant to the individual needs of the pupils and at all times, encourages the pupils and enables them to make decisions about the opportunities available to them beyond school. The work experience programme is planned well at a level to suit each pupil whether that means placement with an outside employer or experiencing work within the supportive environment in Rossmar. Those pupils aged 16 and over who participate in the programme are given good opportunities to develop their skills further and in readiness for further education and employment.

The LSS provides intensive support for pupils of primary school age who are at risk of marginalisation and disaffection because of their social and emotional needs and consequent negative behaviour. During the inspection, a visit was made to one of the supported schools to observe the LSS teacher working with one pupil and to discuss the impact of the support with the Principal and the class teacher. Both the Principal and the teacher spoke very highly of the support to the pupil and the school. The quality of the support observed was excellent. The LSS has the capacity to support the needs of more pupils with similar and related needs and to become a significant resource on which schools within the local area learning community might draw.

The main strengths of the quality of learning and teaching are:

- the good and very good quality of almost all of the teaching;
- the well developed assessment and planning framework which underpins the work of the classroom and accreditation pathways;

- the good classroom management in almost all of the lessons and individual support and encouragement for the more reluctant pupils; and
- the high quality of the pastoral care and personal support of the pupils.

Further work to develop the breadth of the Key Stage 4 curriculum is needed.

4.3 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership and management of the school is good.

The Principal, who has been in post for three years, provides strong leadership and has drawn judiciously on the good experience and knowledge of the Vice-principal and the two heads of department to provide a clear direction for the work of the school. Together, they have initiated a number of improvements. The clear focus on accreditation and transition, pupil behaviour, good communication with parents, a common system of planning for assessment and learning, and links with the local area learning community are among the key initiatives underway and helping to raise the standards and quality of experiences of the pupils. It is evident that the school has made good progress in these areas since the amalgamation.

There are good opportunities for consultation about the School Development Plan and sufficient importance is placed on developing the staff's commitment to action planning, monitoring and evaluation of the pupils' attainments and experiences. There are effective policies and arrangements in place, for example, the common format for assessment of the pupils' progress, the establishment of the accreditation framework, the arrangements for the professional development of the staff and the high quality of the maintenance of the physical environment of the school. The areas for improvement include the need to evaluate more effectively the extent to which the school has met or revised its key targets in order to meet fully the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005.

In order to take the work forward, it will be important to build the capacity of middle management through more rigorous and systematic self-evaluation, and develop the strategic role of the senior management team in leading, monitoring and evaluating the provision.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Inspectorate will monitor the school's progress on the areas for improvement.

QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

	Number of questionnaires issued	Number of questionnaires returned	Percentage returned	Number of written comments
Parents	73	30	41%	12
Teachers	14	8	57%	2
Support Staff	19	18	95%	0

APPENDIX 2

EXAMINATION RESULTS

CCEA

Entry Level

		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
English	2009	2	4	0
English (Essential Skills)	2010	8	0	0
Mathematics	2009	0	0	6
Mathematics (Essential Skills)	2010	0	8	0
Art	2009	2	7	0
	2010	0	4	0
Technology and Design	2009	0	4	0
	2010	5	0	0
OCR Certificate in Employability	2009	0	3	7
	2010	N/A	N/A	N/A

Above Entry Level

		First Skills	Level 1
Occupational Studies	2009	7	4
	2010	2	6

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