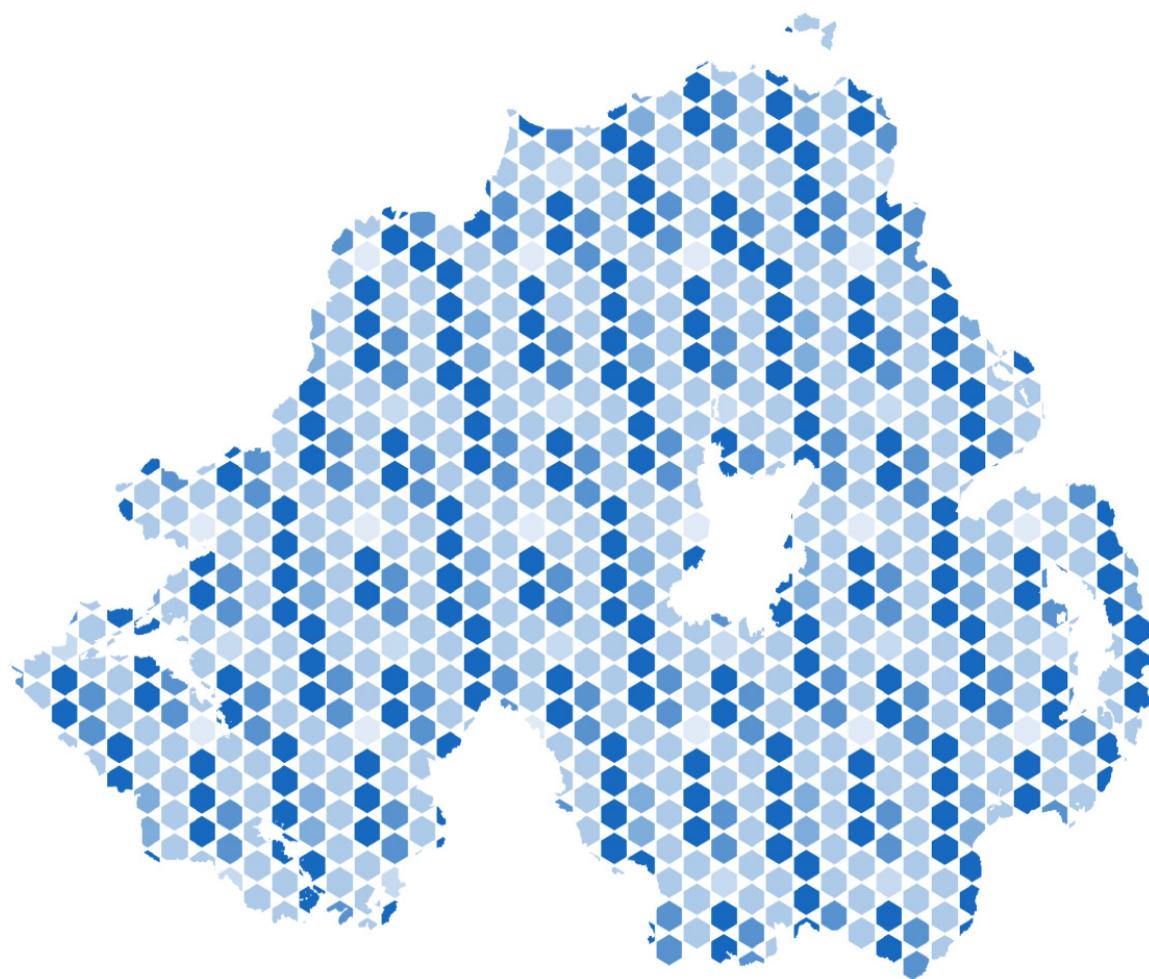


SPECIAL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Sandelford School, Coleraine

Report of an Inspection
in March 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, Inspectors 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: Sandelford School Coleraine** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 07/03/11**
- ii. **School Reference Number: 331-6512** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

1.2

School Year	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Total Enrolment	143	145	144	140	146

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 Programme: 0

1.4 Average Attendance for the Previous School Year: 89.7%

- 1.5 i. Number of Teachers in School: 21 on Outreach Programme: 0
(including the Principal and p/t teachers)
(f/t equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (pupil/teacher ratio): 7.3
- iii. Average Class Size: 7.4
- iv. Number of Classroom Assistants: 29
- v. Ancillary Support:
Number of Hours per week:
Clerical Support: 46
- vi. Percentage of children in receipt of free school meals: 36%

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Sandelford School provides education for 146 pupils aged four to 19 years with statements of special educational needs. The catchment area extends across a radius of 15 miles from Coleraine. The school is purpose built and has recently been refurbished to provide high quality additional accommodation and resources for the older pupils. The Vice-principal was on secondment at the time of the inspection and an acting Vice-principal had been appointed at the end of January 2011.

Following the inspection in 2005, the school became involved in the School Support Programme until January 2008. The Principal and senior management team have restructured roles and responsibilities in the school so that the staff work in small teams and share their practice. This has led to good outcomes for the pupils. Overall the school has benefitted from its involvement in SSP.

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

2.1 In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is very good. Since its last inspection in May 2005, the school has addressed actively the areas for improvement highlighted at that time and is now meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the pupils.

2.2 The main strengths of the school include:

- the outstanding caring ethos provided by the staff, and their strong commitment to and concern for the welfare of the pupils;
- the positive behaviour of the pupils who enjoy their time in school and benefit from the experiences provided for them;
- the appropriate, child-centred curriculum and the very good planning to meet individual needs;
- the high quality of the majority of the teaching, which ranged from very good to outstanding;

- the very good strategic leadership of the Principal, supported by her management team; and
- the very good opportunities for the pupils to develop employability, social and life skills through a variety of relevant community, employment and education links.

2.3 The area for improvement is:

- the need, as recognised by the school, to continue to explore relevant accreditation opportunities.

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

3.1 The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and safeguarding included the opportunity for the parents and the staff to complete confidential questionnaires prior to the inspection, as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and two group of pupils, one from the junior and the other from the senior school. The numbers of questionnaires issued, returned and containing written comments are given in Appendix 1.

3.2 PARENTAL RESPONSES

The responses from the parental questionnaires indicated that almost all of the parents regard highly the opportunities provided by the school to develop their child's personal and social qualities and ensure their well-being. The parents expressed their appreciation of the care and support provided by the school for their children.

3.3 TEACHER AND SUPPORT STAFF RESPONSES

Almost all of the responses from the staff were highly positive. They acknowledged the strong sense of collegiality and teamwork across the school.

3.4 GOVERNORS

The governors acknowledged their strong appreciation of, and support for the leadership of the school. They recognised the improvements made since the last inspection, and the warm and supportive environment created by the staff for the pupils.

3.5 MEETINGS WITH PUPILS

The older pupils talked enthusiastically about their teachers and assistants and the range of programmes available to them, in particular, the school trips and educational placements. The younger pupils appreciated the support of their teachers and stated that they enjoy using the range of information and communication technology (ICT) available. From the discussions held with the pupils there is evidence that they are aware of what to do if they have any worries about their safety and well-being.

3.6 The small number of issues emerging from the questionnaires have been shared and discussed with the Principal and with the governors.

4. KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

4.1 ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

The achievements and standards attained by the pupils are very good.

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

The pupils enjoy coming to the school, attendance is high and they respond well to the curriculum which reflects their interests and needs. They enjoy the variety of opportunities to learn provided for them, for example, through visitors who come to the school, as well as the range of appropriate trips and outings to places of interest. The pupils are gaining confidence and developing friendships and good working relationships with the staff. The majority are developing well the necessary communication and social skills to make good progress in their learning as they progress through the school. In the communication classes, the pupils enjoy and learn from their participation in circle time, which leads to individual tasks which focus on the interests of the pupils.

The pupils are achieving the short-term targets outlined in their individual education plans (IEPs); the school recognises the need to revise the appropriateness of the annual objective identified for each pupil to ensure that these are linked appropriately to longer term practical outcomes for the pupil, and that they are sufficiently challenging for the teacher.

Skills for life and work are developed through appropriate and relevant work experience, which is planned progressively to promote independent living skills. By the time they leave school, the majority of pupils achieve a range of accreditation in appropriate areas. (Appendix 2)

Among the pupils' achievements are:

- the very good progress made by all of the pupils in achieving their individual targets;
- the exemplary behaviour demonstrated by the pupils throughout the school;
- the active involvement of the pupils in the sensory learning activities and the positive outcomes for them as a result of their involvement in the creative and expressive curriculum;
- the pupils' developing independence, self-confidence and social skills; and
- the good range of appropriate accreditation gained by the older pupils as they prepare to leave school.

4.2 PROVISION FOR LEARNING

4.2.1 STANDARDS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Almost all of the lessons observed during the inspection were of a good or better quality, and almost 20% were judged to be outstanding. In a very small number of the lessons, there was a need to provide further challenge to extend the learning for pupils who are capable of more.

The most effective lessons were characterised by an individualised approach, coupled with short practical activities which promoted active involvement and independent learning. A variety of teaching approaches using excellent resources were used to communicate effectively with pupils. Careful attention was given to what motivates and interests the pupils and the teachers provided clear instructions which allowed the pupils to set and monitor their own targets. Information and communication technology, and particularly the use of interactive whiteboards and assistive technologies, were used very effectively. Very good use was made of sensory and visual approaches for those pupils with communication difficulties to engage them more effectively. In the small number of less effective lessons, the pace was too slow, the pupils were restless and disengaged, and opportunities to extend learning were missed.

PRIMARY

In the primary classes there is a supportive, secure and inclusive environment in which the relationships at all levels are excellent and the pupils are encouraged to achieve. The teachers plan for and evaluate the learning effectively with the classroom assistants, and together they identify areas for further development. Good links are maintained with the parents through regular information about their child's progress and through appropriate workshop sessions organised by the staff. From the youngest class, the teachers and classroom assistants place much emphasis on developing the pupils' independence and on helping them acquire good thinking and oral skills.

There are regular opportunities to develop the pupils' early reading and writing skills and for group story sessions. Play-based learning is used well to introduce mathematical language and concepts such as counting, positional language, sorting and money. The primary curriculum has breadth, variety, challenge and progression in the learning and the staff monitors closely the targets set for each pupil in their IEPs.

The school provides a nurture group one afternoon per week for pupils aged between 0 to 3 years and their parents. The work of the group is very well organised by the head of the foundation stage/key stage 1, with the support of agencies, such as Barnardos, who plan a variety of programmes for example, to assist, speech and language and physical development. The staff works closely with the families to help the parents play a more active role in the education of their child and to provide valuable opportunities to meet other parents and children with similar needs and interests. The class is appreciated by the parents and has the potential to develop and assist other parents whose children require additional support with their learning at this very young age.

POST-PRIMARY

In the post primary classes, the majority of the pupils continue to gain confidence and independence. The lessons are well-planned to ensure that the pupils' individual learning needs are met. The interactive whiteboard is used effectively to engage all the pupils in interesting and challenging work. There is a happy and secure environment and a strong emphasis on personal and social development; the weekly thirty-minute Life Skills groups

provide a valuable opportunity for pupils to mix with each other across the key stages. The individual skills checklist for pupils is monitored well by the teachers to help track progression. The home/school diary provides useful additional information for parents on the daily progress of the pupils; there is a need to further promote the use of the diary with the parents.

The pupils demonstrate a very good standard of personal development and respond well to the good variety of learning activities. The curriculum offered is appropriately planned in core skill areas. The pupils work well together in groups and pairs and develop well as independent learners.

The Leavers' Programme provides very good opportunities for the pupils to develop employability, social and life skills through a variety of community links and partnerships with local schools, employers and the College of Further Education. The school is an active member of the local Area Learning Community and has developed strong links with a range of local schools to good effect. Most of the pupils in the Transitions Group attend the Northern Regional College each week and undertake City and Guilds Entry Level 3 Food Studies in Hospitality and Catering and in Art. Groups of pupils attend the Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) Occupational Studies courses in North Coast Integrated School and/or St Joseph's High School, where they participate well and benefit from a range of courses including Hospitality and Catering, Joinery, Hair and Beauty and Motor Vehicle Maintenance. By the end of their school careers, a majority of the pupils achieve a good range of unit awards from the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network, the Princes Trust XL and CCEA Occupational Studies.

The staff needs to explore further a range of accreditation opportunities to ensure that, as the nature of the leavers group changes, their needs can be met and their achievements recognised and rewarded. The data arising from the assessments and accreditation attained by the pupils should also be collated and analysed further and used to inform individual and whole school target setting.

The overall careers provision is relevant to the individual needs of the pupils. The pupils develop good skills in the school through carrying out a range of independent living tasks in the newly development Transitions area. This is complemented by the work experience programme which is planned progressively, at a level to suit each pupil, whether that means experiencing work shadowing ancillary staff within the supportive environment in the school, supported employment in the local community or placement with an outside employer. Those pupils aged 16 and over who participate in the programme are given good opportunities to develop their skills further in readiness for further education and employment.

4.2.2 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is outstanding. The school has a very good caring ethos and strong commitment to the welfare of the pupils and the staff. The pastoral support provided by the staff is responsive to the individual needs of the pupils; the comprehensive range of appropriate policies ensures that pupils feel safe and their concerns are listened to. The very good working relationships between pupils and teachers are mutually respectful; there is a strong emphasis on the development of personal and social skills that encourages the pupils to accept individual responsibility and increase independent learning. The pupils particularly appreciate and enjoy Golden Time which they work hard to achieve and which allows them to make choices of rewards they value.

4.2.3 SAFEGUARDING

The school has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children and young people. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education, but the following area needs to be addressed, ie, the need to ensure that all of the parents are provided with a copy of the current procedures to deal with any concerns or complaints.

4.2.4 HEALTHY EATING / PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. Examples which encourage the pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles include the provision of opportunities to participate in healthy cookery as part of lifestyles and home skills, and to make informed food choices in a sociable setting.

The main strengths of the quality of the provision are:

- the good to outstanding quality of almost all of the teaching;
- the strong sense of collegiality within the classroom teams and across departments within the school;
- the outstanding ethos and pastoral support demonstrated in the school's strong commitment to the welfare of the pupils and staff;
- the detailed attention given to individual planning through assessment;
- the short, interesting and practical activities coupled with the excellent use of resources to motivate the pupils;
- the individualised support and encouragement given by staff to help pupils succeed and to work with increasing independence and initiative; and
- the pupils' overall health and well-being, which is promoted well throughout the school.

5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

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

The Principal, supported by her senior management team (SMT), provides effective leadership and gives excellent strategic direction for the work of the school which has led to the emergence of a clear management structure and rationale. The current arrangements allow staff to work in a team with a specific focus and also to work at a whole school level, to ensure consistency in their practice, for example, planning for assessment and writing IEPs. There are also clearly defined procedures for monitoring and evaluating the quality of the provision, with, for example, the Emotional and Social Support team providing further monitoring for those pupils identified as needing additional support. There are clear and open channels of communication between staff at all levels. This has provided the opportunity for discussion by the whole school team, the development of a shared understanding and has led to effective collaboration and teamwork.

Within the structures which have been established, the SMT has placed great emphasis on appropriate training to enable staff to develop their skills in key areas of work. There are excellent opportunities for good quality staff development which effectively support a culture of school improvement. The school development plan is very good and gives very good attention to and meets fully the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 The inspection has identified the following strengths:

- the outstanding caring ethos provided by the staff, and their strong commitment to and concern for the welfare of the pupils;
- the positive behaviour of the pupils who enjoy their time in school and benefit from the experiences provided for them;
- the appropriate, child-centred curriculum and the very good planning to meet individual needs;
- the high quality of the majority of the teaching, which ranged from very good to outstanding;
- the very good strategic leadership of the Principal, supported by her management team; and
- the very good opportunities for the pupils to develop employability, social and life skills through a variety of relevant community, employment and education links.

6.2 The area for improvement is:

- the need, as recognised by the school, to continue to explore relevant accreditation opportunities.

6.3 In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is very good. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the pupils and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

	Number of questionnaires issued	Number of questionnaires returned	Percentage returned	Number of written comments
Parents	140	22	15.7%	9
Teachers	21	16	76.2%	3
Support Staff	38	8	21.1%	0

DETAILS OF COURSES - 2010-2011

Occupational Studies (Sandelford, North Coast Integrated, St Joseph's)	30 students
CCEA Entry level (1,2,3) in Art and Design	8 students
City and Guilds Entry level (1,2,3) in Hospitality	8 students
OCN New Hop Skills Travel Training	36 students
Heartstart	36 students
ASDAN Towards Independence	15 students (NRC support in Sandelford)
ASDAN Transition Challenge	8 students
ASDAN New Horizons	22 students

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