



‘Learning across the Continuum’

A Guide to Collaborative Practice

‘Sharing Practice: Supporting Inclusion’

2012

1. Introduction and Context

- 1.1 Over June 2011 - February 2012, twenty-four special schools accepted an invitation from the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) to work collaboratively on a joint curriculum project of their choosing with a neighbouring mainstream school or setting and to explore the process, benefits and shortcomings of this activity. The projects were monitored by ETI and a composite report written to inform the schools of the impact and value of the activity¹.
- 1.2 Arising from an analysis of the outworking of the projects, including the schools' self evaluation reports and ETI field work visits, the inspection report confirmed the benefits of collaborative working and recommended that the process should develop and continue.

In addition, the findings suggested a number of essential lessons to inform the process of collaborative planning and joint working and provide practical information to guide new and further work of this type. This guidance sets out the key elements arising from the projects which support and encourage collaborative working. It is offered as a template, along side a synopsis of the case study projects, to all schools and Area Learning Communities to use to build their capacity to respond more effectively to a wider range of pupil needs through collaborative working.

2. Analysis of the Data arising from the Collaborative Projects

- 2.1 The lessons learned from the experience of the projects indicate the need for a framework and clear set of guiding principles if collaborative working is to be effective.
- 2.2 As part of the evaluation of the projects, schools were asked to record their views and judge these in terms of:
- the planning of the project;
 - the process in practice;
 - the outcomes and achievements; and
 - the overall evaluation and sustainability.

¹ For full report see www.etini.co.uk or www.deni.gov.uk

- 2.3 The evaluations provided a rich source of information about collaborative working and four key strands emerge which provide a framework to effective collaborative and strategic thinking.

The strands are outlined in detail below but are summarised as follows:

1. Identifying a clear rationale and strategic approach to collaborative working.
2. Deploying resources and agreeing shared responsibilities to enable the collaborative work to progress smoothly and to address any difficulties which may arise.
3. Building a collaborative ethos and school commitment to inclusive planning.
4. Monitoring and evaluating the impact and establishing the sustainability of further collaborative action and outcomes.

- 2.4 The most important indicators to arise from the pilots suggest that collaborative working is most effective when:

- the teachers use creative and practical approaches to motivate the pupils;
- the project is explained clearly to the pupils;
- pastoral, as well as academic, outcomes are sought and equally valued;
- expectations are high;
- basic skills including communication, literacy and numeracy are promoted;
- the pupils interactions and responses during the project are observed and flexible programme changes considered as a consequence;
- resources are deployed within current budgets;
- whole school and parental understanding and acceptance are actively encouraged and achieved;
- limitations and difficulties are overcome with care and sensitivity; and
- the pupils enjoy the experience and develop positive attitudes to learning with their peers from other schools/settings.

2.5 Identifying a clear rationale and strategic approach to collaborative working

The evidence indicates that collaborative working will have the most effective outcomes for learners when the participating schools have a clear concept of working together in partnership and an agreed rationale about the benefits and outcomes sought.

Collaborative working requires:

- initial and ongoing discussion between the participating schools/settings about the concept and potential of shared working and capacity building;
- a clear commitment to collaborative working and shared learning;
- a whole school understanding and consensus about the protocols and arrangements to facilitate collaborative working, including a policy directive within the school development plan;
- a phased approach, beginning with a small and manageable pilot to explore the process and evaluate the impact;
- an agreement to ensure resources are identified and to allocate appropriate planning, monitoring and evaluation time (this will be of greater impact when the key ELB link officers for the Entitlement Framework (EF) are involved and support services provide additional input);
- schools establish a professional trust and transparency about the outworking of the collaboration which is shared with all staff and is sensitive to any anxieties and concerns which may arise;
- there is a clear self-evaluative approach and focus on learning outcomes; and
- continuous consultation to ensure the project is meeting its stated aims and to encourage further understanding and acceptance of the concept and approach to collaborative working.

2.6 Deploying resources and agreeing shared responsibilities to enable the collaborative work to progress smoothly and to address any difficulties which may arise

There is a consensus arising from the special and mainstream pilots to suggest that deploying resources and achieving shared responsibility are the most important challenges in managing collaborative working projects effectively.

Collaborative working requires:

- Principals and senior management teams in the participating schools to agree and communicate to all staff the rationale, protocols and arrangements for collaborative working;
- Principals and senior management teams to consider jointly and take action to address the issues or barriers which may arise at any stage of the project;
- Principals and senior management teams to nominate a member of staff to co-ordinate the project who has the interest, skills and commitment to work collaboratively across schools or area learning communities;
- access to transport, flexible timetabling and careful planning;
- ample time for staff to plan and co-ordinate the project;
- funding and resources as the projects requires;
- regular feedback to the Principals and senior management teams to inform improvement and indicate success;
- the realigning of resources and responsibilities to schools collaborating within area learning communities or SEN learning communities; kick start funding may be necessary for first time pilots; and
- clear arrangements to monitor collaborative working and its impact on raising standards.

2.7 Building a collaborative ethos and school commitment to inclusive planning

Building a set of indicators for collaborative working is an attempt to develop the concept of shared learning beyond the idea of special and mainstream school working together for a limited time or a single event to a position where pupils across schools share educational experiences as an effective way to meet their learning needs and promote their wellbeing.

Collaborative working requires:

- a priority focus on the pupils and their learning and pastoral needs;
- a common understanding of the wider benefits to the schools of inclusive working;
- the pupils' agreement and willingness to understand the reasons behind the collaborative activity;
- parental appreciation of the value of collaborative working; and
- staff training in collaborative working.

2.8 Monitoring and evaluating the impact and establishing the sustainability of further collaborative action and outcomes

While acknowledging the critical role of a school's commitment to shared learning, assessment of learning and evaluation of the outcomes need to be at the heart of decisions about effective collaborative working. Clarifying the aims and outcomes must ensure that working collaboratively will enhance and enrich what is already happening in schools and enable a profile of effective inclusive learning to develop.

Collaborative working requires:

- schools to agree the expected outcomes; these can be set for pupils and or staff and may range from awareness raising, shared learning, improving literacy and numeracy skills, accreditation and professional development;
- an understanding that outcomes can be different for each participating school;
- schools to establish a clear system to measure the outcomes on pupils' learning through shared evaluation within each school's framework for self evaluation;
- Principals and senior managers to oversee the process and analyse the data to ensure the best possible outcomes and any follow up action to inform improvement; and
- an objective appraisal of the collaborative process and the project outcomes with a view to enabling sustained collaborative working.

3. Conclusion

The key principles of collaborative practice outlined above, if underpinned by a clear understanding of the support which the special school can provide, should help teachers to develop more inclusive practice and meet more effectively the diverse learning needs of pupils in mainstream classrooms.

Learning across the Continuum

Special and Mainstream Schools Working Together

Sharing Practice: Supporting Inclusion

A Short Synopsis of Case Studies

2012

(the full project reports available on www.etini.gov.uk)



‘Sharing makes it easier!’



‘friends through learning’

“Pupils from each school developed friendships and life long skills. Both teachers involved found the experience so rewarding and they intend to continue the link in the spring term with a different theme. The pupils have already expressed an interest in a future project.”

Rossmar Special School and Roe Valley Integrated Primary School

“It was better than I thought it would be”

Ryan from Erne school

Case Studies in short

Strengths of the projects	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Inclusive opportunities for staff and pupils ■ Accreditation potential for pupils ■ Literacy and numeracy improvement all round ■ Skill development for staff and pupils ■ Show case opportunities to wider community ■ Improved Achievement & wellbeing ■ Social and educational spin offs ■ Shared education and resource ■ Professional respect and appreciation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Funding and resources ■ Access and transport ■ Achieving Commitment ■ Addressing Anxieties ■ Including Ice breakers ■ Considering a range of approaches ■ Sharpening outcomes ■ Improving pupil participation ■ Dealing with spin offs ■ Developing self evaluation processes across schools

Ardmore Centre and Knockevin School

Children and young people enjoy the outdoors: an adventure activity provides the opportunity for young people often marginalised in and out of school to show maturity, responsibility and leadership skills.

A project enabling children from **Knockevin Special School** to engage with outdoor pursuits under the direction of young people from the **Ardmore School** has shown great benefits for all. While enjoying the activities, the Knockevin children faced the challenge of learning alongside others in outdoor and challenging settings. They did so with eagerness. The young people from Ardmore enjoyed the responsibility of looking out for other children, and their behaviour (often the subject of concern) was impeccable.

‘Pupils develop self-esteem and leadership skills’

‘Pupils face new challenges and opportunities for social interaction’

Ardmore staff now incorporates leadership skills into the outdoor curriculum and are working to involve other schools in the programme.

Arvalee School and South West College of Further Education

Arvalee School (special) has just completed a project supporting pupils across two post primary schools in the Omagh Area Learning Community to achieve Literacy and Vehicle studies accreditation in the South West College of Further Education.

This project ensured that the pupils engaged well in the literacy aspects of the programme knowing that commitment was essential to accessing the vocational area of vehicle studies which they love. The project had a positive impact on the pupils' attendance and behaviour at school and college and ensured their continued commitment to the course as their social skills developed.

'I feel I am learning a lot and improving my writing, reading and communication.'

'I like going to college because I do not have to wear a uniform. I like the canteen and I like meeting new people.'

It is envisaged that the vocational learning support will continue for these students into year 12 and a new cohort of Year 11 students will be able to access a similar programme next year.

Beechlawn Special School and Laurelhill College

Linen brings Beechlawn School (Special) and Laurelhill College together in a series of enjoyable educational activities.

In spite of the many constraints surrounding this project, the event was roundly successful and pupils from both schools learned of the wonders of linen making as part of the life of the past and their local community. Through the structured programme, the Lisburn Linen Museum provided the perfect vehicle for the pupils of both schools to participate in a range of age appropriate and realistic activities and to integrate quickly and effectively. The practical activities and new knowledge gained throughout the project has encouraged Beechlawn staff to seek further collaborative opportunities to ensure shared learning is an essential aspect of the curriculum of the school.

"What I enjoyed most is that we worked together."

"The workshops are fantastic!"

"This has made me realise that I would like to work with young people."

Belfast Hospital School and St Rose's College

Helping teenagers who are unable to attend school due to mental health issues is the core Business of a new venture by staff of Belfast Hospital School (BHS). The 'Time Out for Positive Steps', the TOPS programme for short, makes use of the virtual environment to encourage young people to re-engage with education and to gain a unit of study from OCR's Employability Skills suite.

To date, 12 pupils from BHS, St Rose's College and one on home tuition are learning on line together and developing essential inter-active skills through the 'Assessing Myself for Work' unit. The Employability Skills programme is well prepared and monitored to ensure that the young people work in a secure environment and move at a pace which suits their needs. Outcomes are very promising and for these often very isolated pupils the pathway to reintegration and learning alongside their peers in mainstream is a reality and achievable.

The focus on employability provides young people with insights into themselves and their future and the flexibility to develop provision at a range of levels.

The most enjoyable part of the course one pupil said, 'was when I had to answer questions about myself, as it made me think about what I wanted later in life.'

Staff from the BHS believes that developing the on-line collaborative working programme with other schools will help pupils to engage with learning who otherwise might become anxious and marginalised or isolated.

Belmont House School and Greenhaw Primary School

'Story-boarders and camera folk - take 2' Familiar shouts when pupils from Belmont House School (special) and Greenhaw Primary School produced, under the direction of the expertise of the Nerve Centre Staff, a stop-motion animation series of film which both schools are proud to display and include in their ICT portfolios.

The joint training by the Nerve Centre staff in the use of digital technology helped to promote collaborative working between the staff and the pupils in both schools and ensured staff developed valuable group work skills and an understanding of animation work. Learning the story of Cu Chulainn, imaging a story line and making backdrops for the film shots were all enjoyable and serious learning activities for the pupils and staff. The pupils worked well on the project to develop an understanding of animation work and produce exemplary ICT contents for their portfolios.

'We have applied for funding to further develop collaboration between ourselves and our partner school.'

Castle Tower Special School and Carniny Primary School

iPads at work in bringing schools together -

In an innovative project, young pupils from **Castle Tower Special School** and **Carniny Primary School** are learning to improve their fine motor skills by using the iPad clips modelling the skills of using a pencil and scissor.

This programme of lessons shows how video modelling can work in practice and cover wide areas of the curriculum which is of benefit to both staff and pupils. Already the schools have extended the work and a library of clips is available to support further learning as the clips can be played repeatedly to ensure correct learning is achieved. The work so far completed on this project has shown clearly the potential for digital video modelling as a teaching tool for both schools.

‘One teacher with the interest, skills and resources can start a process which can develop in directions unforeseen.’

Ceara School and King’s Park Primary School

Knowing me - Knowing you... a collaborative play project bringing pupils from Ceara School (Special) into contact with early years pupils from King’s Park Primary School

At the heart of this project are well planned and fun lead activities giving the pupils of both schools the chance to communicate together and sign at the school assembly, songs performed as part of the event. Time was given to allow the pupils to get to know one another and to play together in free and structured activities, involving tactile, visual, auditory, olfactory and taste experiences. The planning of the project based on play experiences ensured that all pupils were able to participate and benefit from the social experience of sharing breaks and learning together.

‘This is just the beginning of our project. All who have participated have learned something and barriers and fears are breaking down. We believe that learning through this link goes beyond the classroom and both schools and will feed into both communities through the new insights of the pupils and adults involved.’

Cedar Lodge School and St Bernard's Primary School

Sharing good practice: Cedar Lodge School (special) with St Bernard's Primary School

This project enabled staff in Cedar Lodge to share their experience of working with pupils with autism and behaviour issues, with staff in St Bernard's. To- date, the primary school has benefitted in practical ways and has been able to modify classroom practices to met more effectively the needs of a year 1 pupil. Both schools have decided to follow up the success of the project with a further project on early intervention strategies for addressing dyslexia.

'This project flags up the future role of special schools. It allowed staff from the special sector to affirm their expertise and to work with colleagues in the mainstream sector.'

Donard School and St Mary's Primary School

Titanic remembered through Shared Education

Learning experiences across all areas of the curriculum including music, drama, art and PE brought together pupils from Donard Special School and St Mary's Primary School to enjoy joint lessons, involving story telling, music and dancing. A trip to the Titanic quarter to bring the topic alive for all is a super reward to finish the project.

Throughout, the pupils interacted well with one another and enjoyed the practical approach used. New and interesting facts and stories about the history of the Titanic were prepared to enthuse the pupils and to bring the events of 1912 into the classrooms of both schools.

The teachers report the benefits of sharing their expertise and experience including planning for mixed ability teaching approaches and differentiation.

'Teacher from both schools have learned from each other's teaching styles, classroom environments, responses to pupils' needs and use of resources.'

The teachers intend to celebrate the work completed by showcasing achievements through pupil lead assemblies and to extend collaborative work to involve other classes, younger pupils and staff.

Erne School and Portora College

Performing Arts alive and well in Portora Royal College and Erne Special School.

A new venture enhancing music and drama through a capacity building programme engaging pupils from both schools has helped to develop the Erne school staff's knowledge of the music curriculum and provided the staff of Portora with useful guidance on teaching pupils with significant learning needs. Performing actively enriched the lives of pupils from the schools and provided a continuous professional development opportunity for staff in both schools.

"I made new friends. I liked everything about it" Nathan from Erne

"trying to communicate with people with disabilities" the hardest part Kyle from Portora

'Overall a very worthwhile experience. The enthusiasm of the pupils for this project reinforces the huge benefits of such projects. Hopefully the start of further collaborative projects involving pupils from both schools being taught together'

Foyle View and Belmont Nursery School

The Playtrail leads the way. Foyle View School (special) has introduced a new aspect to its extensive outdoor provision - the 'Forest School' and pupils from the neighbouring Belmont Nursery School are among the first to enjoy the many activities, the Playtrail staff have developed.

The pupils from both schools learned a lot through the practical tasks such as building a nest for Spike the hedgehog. They were able to explore and experience various textures of leaves, bark and moss while collecting materials for the nest and also developed new language around the topic of hibernation and animal homes. Much of the outdoor work was expanded back in the classroom through discussion and via prompts from video and photographic evidence, and little motivation was necessary as the experience proved so enriching. Photos stills add visual support to the activities and provide long lasting records which the pupils can recall and talk about for some time.

'We have already initiated planning for two more phases of the project, one this term (spring term 2012) and one during the summer term.'

'It is however our intention to develop a Resource Pack for use by other schools or parent/grandparents to use on their visits to the play trail.'

Glencaig Special School and Glencaig Integrated Primary School

The first Forest School course at Camphill Glencaig brought pupils from the neighbouring Glencaig Integrated Primary School to enjoy the many features of woodland fauna and flora and to raise their awareness of sustainable development, alongside pupils from the community special school.

The six week course included nature walks to identify trees, a mini-beast safari, and a visit to the school's bio-mass boiler to learn about its environmental benefits. In addition, the pupils learn how to use their initiative to solve problems and co-operate with others. The 5 acres of woodlands provide an excellent natural environment for this project and the potential for further and similar projects.

'The Forest School project was a great success for all involved, pupils, parents, teachers and support workers.'

The project has the potential of developing positive relationships and collaborative learning between pupils with different needs and abilities.

Glenveagh Special School and Bun Scoil an Tseibhe Dubh

Linguists at work: in a new venture Glenveagh School has forged links with a local Irish Medium school to explore how children in both schools can learn together.

With Irish and Makaton signing on the curriculum, the children are socialising and communicating with fun and eagerness. Even more exciting is the introduction of Spanish for both sets of children - so with 'ola' and 'dia duit' the schools are signed up for long-term collaborative working.

Staff feels the value of the project will only be realised as it is developed over a longer period of time allowing the staff to learn from this project and enhance further collaborative projects for the future.

Harberton Special School and Taughmonagh Primary School

Well grounded and secure.

Staff in Harberton and Taughmonagh schools have set themselves a huge challenge: to create an extensive Arboretum Trail which will bring the schools close together in a series of design and practical activities over the next three years - pupil councils in the schools will be the drivers, engineers and landscape artists in this super project and the outcomes predicted will provide a wide range of curricular and social experiences the children will not forget and which will ensure they leave school with a range of practical knowledge and skills.

Early plans already have secured business links with external agencies and will even benefit the other three schools in the wider school campus - **collaboration with a future!**

Jordanstown School and St James Primary School

Deaf Awareness - Learning to sign - a Learning Partnership organised by Jordanstown School (special) with St James Primary School

Year 6 pupils enjoyed the opportunity to communicate through signs with newly made friends from Jordanstown School. **The Resource Pack - Learning 2 Sign Booklet** teaches pupils the basic signing of common words and phrases to enable them to appreciate the world of deaf education and to communicate and make new and interesting friends. The project enabled the pupils with hearing impairment or who are deaf to develop their confidence and inter-personal skills.

The project is now on the road and available to parents and local community groups and is even on the timetable for student-teachers in St Mary's University College and Queens University School of Education.

Kilronan School and Magherafelt Primary School

Play time in Magherafelt Primary School and Kilronan Special School

This project found more that it bargained for when the young children enjoyed the activities and resources so much staff couldn't believe the many spins offs which followed. What fun they had in the Animal Hospital at Kilronan; lots of writing of prescriptions, making animals better, taking messages on the phone. Enjoying restful time in the quiet corner and experiencing the pleasure of the sensory equipment. What a busy place! The children interacted well with each other and it is agreed that with time they will continue to develop their communication and literacy skills and build friendship and understanding.

'We feel this is something that is only really beginning for us and will only be too happy to share our experiences in the not too distant future.'

Knockavoe and Holy Cross College

Fine Art in Knockavoe School (special) and Holy Cross College on display for all to see and wonder at.

This project brought together staff and pupils from Knockavoe school and Holy Cross College to explore the benefits of engaging in a practical art activity with the purpose of producing a display which the schools could feel proud of and showcase to parents and pupils. The pupils made much of their joint working to establish new friendships and to support those who needed a helping hand to succeed. The project is still alive and well and all concerned are enthused by the energy of the pupils to produce a fine art product. With learning and social skills now well developed, plans are underway to build further the bridge across the schools and enable more learners to enjoy the challenges and rewards of such projects.

'Profile of our school has been raised significantly in community'

Lisanally School and St Patrick's High School

Art-attack! Pupils from St Patrick's High School become mentors to pupils with learning difficulties from Lisanally School to enjoy joint art lessons with accreditation thrown in.

This term long project was a first for both schools and judging by the evaluations a welcome initiative. Initially a group of KS4 pupils from Lisanally attended St Patrick's High School where a group of peer mentors supported them in a range of art activities. The 'peer mentors' were undertaking an accredited Health and Social Care course and the project was the perfect fieldwork. Pupils from both schools found mutual enjoyment and pleasure from the practical aspects of the activities and all benefitted from the social aspects of the collaboration. The same group are now undertaking a new project on science and a further ICT project is proposed!

One pupil answered toEnjoyable aspects? "Everything"!

'Our aims were realised beyond our expectation'

Loughshore Resource Centre and St Gerard's and Hillcroft Special Schools

Gone fishing!

Young people from Loughshore Educational Resource Centre and newly made friends from St Gerard's Resource Centre and Hillcroft Special School made great use of the Woodford Fly Fishery in Carrickfergus to learn to fish with skill. The programme offers the young people access to professionally trained instructors and the chance to gain accreditation in angling.

The young people find friendship and fish in this innovative project! The staff in Loughshore hope to benefit from the practical elements of the activity which is well suited to young people who find formal learning off putting and challenging. Skill and knowledge are developing well among the young people and social barriers are being broken as a result.

Well underway the staff believes this is a programme for the future and one with sustainable outcomes for all.

Mitchell House School and Dee Street Community Centre

A new garden seat brightens the lives of pupils at Mitchell House School (Special) and visitors to Dee Street Community Centre.

In order to foster links with their local community, a group of KS4 pupils designed and built a garden seat for use in the Dee Street Community Centre.

So when it comes to coping with their disabilities the pupils from Mitchell House have the edge; designing and making a garden seat for use in the local community centre was a success story. The pupils were able to develop a range of skills; see their design becoming reality; communicate with a range of people who use the community as well as manage their time to ensure a deadline was met. Seeing the reality of their work has greatly empowered the pupils to do more and already plans are underway to extend the idea and involve other schools in the mini-enterprise venture.

The Centre is so impressed that the pupils are invited to repeat the project in another community centre...well done all!

Newtownabbey Educational Guidance Centre and Ballyclare Secondary School

Hindsight - a wonderful thing! Newtownabbey Educational Guidance Centre and Ballyclare Secondary School find a way forward through collaboration.

The proposed project aiming to bring pupils together to work on a programme of Road Traffic Studies exposed the very real issues of encouraging young people to move out of their comfort zones and face the challenges and anxieties of the experience. Further planning of this project is well underway and staffs in both the Centre and the school are confident that the pilot will achieve its aims and that the young people will find rewards for their efforts. The road to completion is still a challenge but the willingness all round to succeed is the key to further progress and achievement. The hearts and minds of the young people so much an aspect of the pilot is now an important element of the planning from the initial stages which points to potential improvement over the next year.

Oakwood School - A Busy Time

While not included in the project, Oakwood submitted a short report to show the impact of their work on promoting the interests and early skills in reading and numeracy of young pupils particularly those with autism who need individual help with aspects of their learning.

Evidence and feedback from numerous sources celebrate the value of the approach and provide positive testament to the practical outworking of the efforts of individual members of staff in the special school. The report is offered as additional evidence and of the careful research undertaken to develop a practical resource which increasing numbers of teachers across mainstream schools find helpful.

Rossmar Special School and Roe Valley Integrated Primary

“the commitment of both teachers and the support of both Principals overcame all of the obstacles”

Such was the commitment from **Rossmar Special School** and their partner **Roe Valley Integrated Primary School** when pupils from both schools worked together creating an exhibition of art material which was showcased to parents from the schools. The use of a cross curricular theme based around art allowed the pupils to participate actively. The added bonus was the evening sale of art and craft material produced for the Christmas Fair which was a huge success as the children, with and without learning difficulties, worked alongside one another co-operatively. Two sign language performances made this a special Christmas for parents, pupils and staff and the recorded DVD helped to reinforce friendship and mark a new beginning for more frequent collaborative working. Pupils from the special school developed their self esteem and confidence while pupils from the mainstream school developed their empathy and widened their understanding of the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities.

“Pupils from each school developed friendships and life long skills. Both teachers involved found the experience so rewarding that they intend to continue the link in the spring term with a different theme. The pupils have already expressed an interest in a future project”

Sperrinview Special School and Drumglass High School

Enjoying the course and progressing toward accreditation ensured the success of the Occupational Studies Technology and Innovation CCEA course run by Sperrinview School (special) and Drumglass High School. The course provides the opportunity for accreditation at both Levels 1 and 2.

Pupils in both schools worked on this practical course gaining skills and using equipment in real conditions. The social interaction and self esteem improvements noted, underlined the value of collaborative planning and shared teaching. By the end of the course, staff in Drumglass had developed their understanding of special needs and working with pupils who learn differently and at differing paces, while Sperrinview staff improved their approach to examination entry and completion.

‘Overall, a way forward for special and mainstream schools within the Area Learning Communities’

Tor Bank School and Bloomfield Collegiate Grammar

In their collaborative working with Bloomfield Collegiate Grammar, Torbank Special School focused on Performing Arts and Community Service. The project included awareness training for staff at Bloomfield to inform them of the nature of disability and how best to support students to learn and socialise in differing settings.

The strength of the project was the emphasis on practical learning and individual support for collecting the evidence required of the course. The project provided opportunity for accreditation for pupils from both schools; Performing Arts - Life and Living Skills for the Tor Bank students and GCSE certificate of Personal Effectiveness for pupils from Bloomfield Collegiate. The students enjoyed greatly the drama performance lessons and the social spins offs which saw good interaction among all the students. Placing some 30 students from Bloomfield into Torbank on work experience as part of the community service course offered the students the opportunity to appreciate and respect the specialist provision provided. The inclusion opportunities that the project offered have been invaluable and it has created learning opportunities for everyone - staff and students alike. Both schools have now included collaborative working in their three year school development plans.

‘Award ceremonies in both schools were the icing on the cake and as a consequence students from both schools now attend ‘Kids in Control’, a community drama club and will perform in the Lyric Theatre later in the year’



A Guide to Collaborative Practice

