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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
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**Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Focused Inspection

**Glencraig Curative School
Craigavad, Holywood**

Inspected: March 2007

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Glencraig Curative School is part of the Camphill Community, Glencraig situated on a very pleasant estate of approximately 100 acres in Craigavad, near Holywood in County Down. It is an independent boarding school that caters for children and young people with special educational needs, including very challenging and complex behaviours, many of whom have been unable to have their needs met in special schools. There are 26 pupils including six day pupils, ranging in age from eight to 19 years. The school was last inspected in 2000.

1.2 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 Management and a group of pupils from the school. Of the 25 questionnaires issued to parents; some 40% were returned to the Department of Education (DE) and ten contained additional written comments. The few concerns raised by the parents were discussed with the school co-ordinator.

1.3 The focus of the inspection was on the quality of provision to meet the individual needs of the pupils and the arrangements for child protection and pastoral care.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 Glencraig Curative School is an effective school with many good features and very good levels of care. It meets well the needs of children and young adults with significant demands and needs.

2.2 The strengths of the school include:

- the pleasant and calm working and living environment which is used well throughout the extended teaching day;
- the strong, positive ethos which permeates the life of the school;
- the extensive local community involvement in the school;
- the expectation of positive behaviour from the pupils with appropriate strategies to encourage individual improvement;
- the strong emphasis on promoting and teaching independence, self-help skills and preparation for adulthood;
- the development of external accreditation opportunities which motivate the pupils towards achievement;
- the wide range of therapies designed to meet the complex needs of the pupils;
- the extensive range of leisure pursuits available to the pupils; and

- the emphasis on social interaction and appropriate behaviour during break and meal times.

2.3 The school gives excellent attention to promoting health and well-being and has an appropriate practice in place, which ensures the pupils adopt healthy lifestyles. There is strong evidence of commitment on the part of the staff to promoting healthy eating and to improving the pupils' eating habits. There are many and frequent opportunities for all pupils, where appropriate, to participate in a wide range of physical activities. The pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the importance of making healthy life choices.

3. **QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING**

3.1 The staff are committed to the pupils' learning and development and skilled at meeting the complex and challenging needs of the pupils. They know the pupils well and respond appropriately to their needs and interests. The teachers plan appropriate individual education plans (IEPs), and identify achievable learning targets for the pupils. The quality of teaching varies across the school; all of the lessons observed were sound and most had many good features. During the inspection, the staff managed the pupils' behaviour calmly and patiently, dealing appropriately with the reluctance of some pupils to engage in the learning activities. There is a strong emphasis on teaching useful skills for life, which promotes a sense of purpose and direction to the work of the school. There was little use of information and communication technology during the inspection to support lessons.

3.2 There are significant strengths in the quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection. The school has procedures in place, which implement fully the guidance outlined in the relevant DE Circulars. The Board of Management, staff, parents and pupils are aware of the school's procedures and have had the opportunities to contribute to a range of helpful policies, which guide the work of the school.

3.3 Among the strengths of the quality of provision for learning are:

- the appointment, in 2004, of an assistant principal social worker to the school by the Eastern Health and Social Services Board;
- the reporting, recording and monitoring procedures for child protection and pastoral care adopted by the school;
- the establishment of a database for the recording of all incidents within the school;
- the introduction of risk assessments drawn up for all pupils; and
- individual work and therapy sessions agreed with the parents.

3.4 The main strengths of the quality of provision for learning are:

- the calm and quiet environment, excellent care and guidance provided for the pupils alongside careful monitoring resulting in improved behaviour and a willingness to participate;

- the detailed, relevant and well-structured planning which supports the pupils' learning;
- the teachers' ongoing assessment of the pupils' progress and their self-evaluative practice;
- the staff's willingness to be flexible and adaptable in their teaching in order to meet the complex and often unpredictable behaviours of the pupils;
- the active learning approach for many of the lessons taught;
- the clear routine, structure and visual teaching approaches of lessons;
- the sense of community evident alongside a willingness to help one another;
- the wide range of activities and good deployment of staff to support the pupils;
- the strong emphasis on outdoor play, nature study and seasonal activities for the pupils promoting understanding of their community and healthy lifestyles;
- the strong motivation of the majority of the pupils to complete their work and assessment units;
- the excellent facilities for practical activities including craft work and home economics in the training college;
- the enjoyment by the pupils of their individually planned and varied programmes; and
- the good examples of music, movement and therapeutic speech sessions resulting in engaging the pupils in helpful and enjoyable activities.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 The quality of leadership and management of the school is good. The school co-ordinator and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the Camphill Community ethos and school. This is reflected well in the school planning, policy and practice. There is effective deployment of staff and use of the school environment to meet the needs of the pupils as they participate in a wide variety of activities. Self-evaluation within the school is in the early stages of development and should be developed further to inform overall assessment and planning.

4.2 The main strengths of the leadership and management of the school are:

- the weekly teachers' meetings for the sharing of information, planning and notes;
- the bi-annual meetings with parents to share pupil progress;

- the collaboration of the school co-ordinator and teachers in the writing of pupil targets;
- the development of IEPs with the main targets supported by indicators of success;
- the collaborative working arrangements between teaching and therapy staff resulting in effective sharing of pupil preferences and progress; and
- the integration of school and community life resulting in effective and secure learning for pupils.

5. **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS**

5.1 The inspection has identified strengths in the teaching and learning throughout the school with particularly suitable and supportive educational experiences for those with significant and complex learning difficulties.

5.2 The main strengths of the provision are:

- the pleasant, calm working and living environment which is used well throughout the school day;
- the caring community ethos practiced successfully by all;
- the good quality of planning for teaching and the broad range of appropriate and practical activities, including therapy provision;
- the enjoyment by pupils of their individual and varied programmes;
- the improvement in the majority of the pupils' social and educational progress;
- the high quality of pastoral care and child protection; and
- the sound management and leadership of the school co-ordinator.

6. **AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

6.1 The inspection findings indicate that the following areas for improvement need to be addressed:

- the further use of ICT for teaching and learning within the classroom; and
- the formalisation of self-evaluation processes throughout the school.

7. **CONCLUSION**

7.1 In the areas inspected, the school has important strengths in its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified minor areas for improvement which the school has the capacity to address.

The school's progress on the areas for improvement will be monitored by the District Inspector.

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