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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
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**Department of Education
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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Focused Inspection

**Limegrove School
Limavady**

Inspected: November 2006

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Limegrove School provides education for pupils, aged three to 18 years, with moderate learning difficulties. The school is situated in Limavady and the pupils come from the surrounding area and as far away as Coleraine. Since the last inspection, the number of pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and emotional and behavioural difficulties has increased noticeably; as a consequence, the school has developed its provision to meet the needs of these pupils. In addition, the school provides an Outreach service to 46 pupils with special educational needs in 21 local primary and post-primary schools.

1.2 The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for parents to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (BoG) and a group of pupils from years 11 and 12. Sixty-three questionnaires were issued to parents; almost 27% were returned to the Department of Education (DE) and seven contained additional written comments. The majority of the comments indicated a high level of satisfaction with the work of the school in relation to pastoral care and child protection. The sample of pupils interviewed indicated they were satisfied with the procedures and the inspection findings confirmed that the confidence expressed is well placed. The few matters of concern raised by the parents through the questionnaires were discussed with the Principal and the BoG.

1.3 The Western Education and Library Board has plans for an amalgamation of the school with Glasvey School, Ballykelly in a new build on the Limegrove site.

1.4 At the time of the inspection two members of staff were absent on sick leave and substitute teachers were employed.

1.5 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 Limegrove School has many good features but there are some areas that require planned action to promote improvement. There are important strengths in the provision for nursery and early years pupils, school leavers (including very effective specialist teaching in technology and design, art and design and home economics), pupils with ASD and the pastoral care and child protection of the pupils. The Outreach provision is of an excellent quality and is a major strength in the school's provision. The areas for improvement include the need to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning in some classes improves and that more effective management arrangements are established to ensure that the co-ordinators evaluate regularly the effectiveness of the learning experiences of the pupils and take appropriate action to promote consistent practice.

2.2 The school's programme for the promotion of health and well-being has many strong features. Attention is given to the development and implementation of programmes which encourage the pupils to develop healthy lifestyles. There is a developing commitment to promoting healthy eating and opportunities are provided for the children to participate in a range of physical activities.

2.3 The inspection findings indicate the following achievements and standards:

- the strong emphasis of staff on recognising and celebrating achievement;
- the caring environment in which the pupils feel secure;
- the good progress the pupils make towards achieving the appropriate and challenging targets written in their individual education plans;
- the developing use of key skills by the majority of the pupils in communication, numeracy and information and communication technology;
- the social and communication skills acquired by pupils with ASD in the nursery to aid their involvement with learning and the effective links established with the parents of these pupils;
- the good range of appropriate external links, in particular with the Limavady Learning Partnership, to enhance the quality of the pupils' learning experiences and preparation for adult and working life;
- the many strengths in the leavers' programme including the participation of a wide range of agencies in a well-planned and co-ordinated transition programme for pupils in key stage (KS) 4, ensuring that appropriate decisions about the pupils' future pathways match their abilities and aspirations;
- the good quality work in the specialist practical areas where the teachers have created high expectations from the pupils and give them good support as they prepare for life after school;
- the appropriate range of accreditation pathways at entry level for the post-primary pupils, including the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment entry level art and design, technology and design, English and mathematics and the consistently high pass rates evident here; and
- the very good quality work of the Outreach team in planning and liaising effectively with mainstream schools and in providing early intervention support and good quality teaching.

3. **THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING**

3.1 The teachers are hard-working and committed to the pupils' learning and development. They know the pupils well and respond appropriately to their needs and interests. The quality of teaching varies across the school and ranges from satisfactory to excellent; in most of the lessons observed it was good or better. Overall, approximately 30% of the lessons were graded consistently good or better. A further 39% had strengths in a number of areas while a minority were of a lower standard.

3.2 There are many strengths in the quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection. The school has procedures in place which implement the guidance outlined in the relevant DE Circulars and has identified appropriately a few minor areas for improvement which it is currently implementing. Among the strengths are the advice given to parents on discipline through the dissemination of a school booklet on promoting good behaviour, the review of the discipline, pastoral and anti-bullying policies by the Vice-principal in the summer of 2006, the use of parental and pupil questionnaires to inform the review of the anti-bullying policy and the good classroom management strategies to deal with misbehaviour. The few minor areas for improvement include additional training for designated teachers and the need to ensure that there are clear written guidelines for teachers working on a one-to-one basis with pupils.

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

- the effective assessment and planning characteristic of the best practice;
- the positive ethos which is underpinned by the very good and supportive working relationships between the majority of the teachers, support staff and pupils, and the extensive opportunities which the pupils have to develop their personal and social skills;
- the teachers' high expectations of the pupils regarding appropriate behaviour and the good use of praise and positive reinforcement;
- the good quality of the teaching in many areas of the school which focuses on appropriate and challenging learning outcomes for the pupils; and
- the well-planned and co-ordinated transition programme for KS4 pupils.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 The Principal, Vice-principal and senior management team (SMT) manage the school well. There is a purposeful ethos, a sense of orderliness, good routines and a positive tone to much of the work of the school.

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

- the sound commitment of the Principal, supported ably by the Vice-principal and the senior staff, to ensuring that the pupils' needs are prioritised and their achievements celebrated;
- the commitment of the Principal, Vice-principal and SMT to ongoing improvement and to considering new initiatives, identifying areas for improvement and putting systems in place to achieve them;
- the sound management routines and policies which ensure the orderly organisation and running of the daily school business; and

- the staff's thorough knowledge of the pupils, their families and the community which promotes good home-school working relationships and procedures.

5. OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

5.1 The overall effectiveness of the school shows strengths in many aspects of the work and a few important areas for development which need to be addressed.

5.2 The main strengths of the provision are:

- the sound management of the daily routines of the school;
- the good working partnerships throughout the school and with other schools receiving Outreach support;
- the warm, secure and caring ethos;
- the sound preparation for the pupils' transition to adult and working life;
- the good quality teaching in many areas of the school;
- the good quality Outreach work; and
- the good quality of the leadership in, and development of the provision for pupils with ASD.

6. AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

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

- to ensure a more effective system of monitoring and evaluation to involve all staff and, in particular, the co-ordinators, in classroom observation and discussion of the teaching and learning so that they can evaluate the impact of their work and improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning; and
- for the Principal and SMT, in their strategic planning, to focus more purposefully on teaching and learning.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 In the areas inspected, the school has strengths in many aspects of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified a few areas for improvement in important areas which need to be addressed to meet effectively the needs of all the learners.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing these areas for improvement.

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