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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**

**Roddensvale Special School**  
**Larne**

**Inspected: May 2007**

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## STATISTICAL INFORMATION (SPECIAL SCHOOLS)

1.1 i. **School: Roddensvale Special School**    iii. **Date of Inspection: 21.05.07**

ii. **School Reference Number: 331-6514**    iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

1.2

School Year	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Total Enrolment	66	70	71	78	74

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: 92.23%

1.5 i. Number of Teachers in School:                    11            on Outreach Programme: 0  
(including the Principal and p/t teachers)  
(f/t equivalent = 25 teaching hours)

ii. PTR (pupil/teacher ratio):                    6.7

iii. Average Class Size:                    8

iv. Number of Classroom Assistants:                    16

v. Ancillary Support:  
Number of Hours per week:

Clerical Support:                    45

vi. Percentage of children in receipt of free  
school meals:                    20%

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Roddensvale School is situated in the Roddens area of Larne and shares a campus with a post-primary and a primary school. It is a new, purpose-built school, and provides education for pupils aged three to 19 years who have severe learning difficulties.

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 Governors (governors), and also with a group of pupils from the older classes. Approximately half of the parental questionnaires issued were returned to the Department of Education (DE) and 20 of these included a written comment. All of the parental responses were very positive and supportive of the work of the school. At the meeting with the governors, they expressed their strong support for the school and outlined clearly their involvement in its management. In discussions with the inspection team, the pupils stated that they were aware of what to do if they have worries about their care and well-being; they spoke very appreciatively of all the staff in the school.

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

## **2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS**

2.1 Roddensvale School is a very good school in which very effective leadership and a high quality of teaching make a significant contribution to the pupils' achievements and personal development. A notable feature is the excellent ethos of celebration and the breadth of enriching curriculum activities which are offered to the pupils. There is an explicit and clear sense of purpose shared by the staff and underpinned by high expectations of the pupils.

2.2 The school has a welcoming and positive learning environment; high quality accommodation and facilities enrich the opportunities for the pupils to enjoy and benefit from practical, imaginative and well co-ordinated curriculum activities.

2.3 The school gives consistently good attention to promoting health and well-being and has appropriate policies and programmes in place which encourage the pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles. There is evidence of commitment on the part of the staff to promoting healthy eating and to improving the pupils' eating habits. There are opportunities for the pupils to participate in a wide range of physical activities. The pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the importance of making healthy life choices.

2.4 The inspection findings indicate the following strengths in achievements and standards:

- the culture of success within the school, where the achievements of all of the pupils are recognised and celebrated;
- the promotion of the pupils' health and well-being throughout the school;
- the staff's detailed planning for learning, based on realistic assessments, high expectations and a thorough knowledge of each pupil; and

- the very good quality of the school's programme for transition and leavers, with its emphasis on promoting personal independence, social and life skills.

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

3.1 A strength of the school is the high quality of most of the teaching. Approximately 70% of the teaching observed during the inspection was of very good quality, with some 20% characterised by excellence and underpinned by very effective assessment and planning. The pupils learn well and develop self-esteem and levels of independence matched to their abilities. Those pupils with complex learning needs are helped to develop their levels of awareness through well-planned sensory activities.

3.2 The curriculum is broad and balanced, and considerably enriched by a wide range of appropriate practical activities. There is a strong emphasis on creative and expressive activities and the imaginative use of information and communication technology (ICT).

3.3 The school has procedures in place which implement fully the guidance outlined in the relevant DE Circulars. The governors, staff, parents and pupils are aware of the school's procedures and have had the opportunity to contribute to a range of helpful policies which guide the work in this area.

3.4 The inspection findings indicate the following strengths in the quality of the provision for learning:

- the very good quality of most of the teaching, with 20% of the lessons judged to be outstanding;
- the excellent planning for learning and the comprehensive assessment and recording of the pupils' progress in all classes;
- the positive climate for learning and achievement, created by the very high expectations all staff have of the pupils' participation and involvement in lessons;
- the very good use of ICT and the strong emphasis on the creative and expressive area of the curriculum to support and enrich the learning experiences of all the pupils;
- the very good teamwork between teachers and assistants who provide invaluable support to the pupils' learning; and,
- the effective inter-disciplinary collaborative working, evident in the planning and sharing of information.

### **4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

4.1 The quality of the leadership and management is very good. The Principal, very ably supported by the Vice-principal, demonstrates a strong commitment to improving the range and quality of experiences for all the pupils. He has done much to achieve this aim and has introduced sound and effective procedures and policies to promote high standards and a strong sense of teamwork throughout the school.

4.2 The inspection findings indicate the following strengths in the leadership and management:

- the high quality of the leadership of the Principal, very ably supported by the Vice-principal, and his commitment and dedication to the future development of the school;
- the strong collegiality and very good collaborative working relationships among the teachers, classroom assistants, therapists, ancillary and auxiliary staff;
- the staff development programme which provides very good opportunities for further training and professional development; and,
- the involvement of the governors who are kept fully informed of the work of the school.

## 5. **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS**

5.1 The overall effectiveness of the school shows strengths in all aspects of the areas inspected.

5.2 The inspection has identified the following strengths:

- the culture of success which permeates the life and work of the school;
- the quality of the school's programme for the promotion of the pupils' health and well-being;
- the staff's detailed planning for learning, based on the clear assessment, thorough knowledge and realistically high expectations of the pupils;
- the very good quality of the school's programme for transition and leavers;
- the consistently high quality of most of the teaching;
- the positive climate for learning and achievement fostered in all classes throughout the school;
- the breadth and balance of the curriculum and the very good use made of ICT and practical activities to enrich the pupils' learning;
- the collaborative work between teachers, classroom assistants and therapists to plan and share information in the interests of the pupils; and,
- the strong support of the parents and the governors for the work of the school.

## 6. **CONCLUSION**

6.1 In the areas inspected, the school has major strengths in its educational and pastoral provision. The educational and pastoral needs of the pupils are being well met. The parents can have confidence in the school's capacity for sustained self-improvement.

No follow-inspection is required.

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