

Report of a Primary Inspection
Edendork Primary School

September 2024

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1. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Edendork Primary School is a maintained, co-educational school located in a rural setting between Coalisland and Dungannon. The school has a wide catchment area, with children attending the school from both towns. The enrolment has remained steady over the past four years and stands currently at 288 children. Forty-six (16%) of the children have been identified as having special educational needs (SEN). The number of children who have a statement of educational need has risen significantly in the past three years to 12 children in 2024. There are currently 26 newcomer children. Seventeen percent of the children have free school meals entitlement. A new school build has recently been approved.

The principal is supported by eleven full-time teachers (two of whom were appointed in September 2024), one part-time teacher, 13 classroom assistants and three additional support staff.

Through Extended Schools funding and charitable donations, the school operates a breakfast club and after school club. The school is part of a well-established shared education partnership with Howard Primary School in Dungannon.

B. VIEWS OF CHILDREN, PARENTS AND STAFF

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) issued online confidential questionnaires to year 7 children and all staff and parents/carers in advance of the inspection. A summary of all the questionnaire responses was shared with the principal and representatives from the board of governors.

All year 7 children responded to the questionnaire and almost two-thirds provided written comments. All of the children indicated that they feel safe in school, are treated with care and respect, understand their feelings and how they should act upon them, and know that there is someone they can talk to if they are worried or have a problem. In the written comments the children told us about their helpful and caring teachers and classroom assistants who keep them safe, the fun activities they enjoy with their friends and the different roles and responsibilities they carry out to support others.

Almost all of the staff responded to the questionnaire and most of the teachers provided written comments. All of the staff indicated that they are clear about and contribute to the school's vision, and that staff wellbeing is promoted effectively in their school. The teachers praised the leadership and highlighted the importance of their support for one another as they strive to do their best for every child.

Forty-four percent of the parents/carers responded to the questionnaire and thirty-six provided written comments. All of the parents/carers indicated that their child is happy at school. The parents/carers wrote about their children's progress and how their needs are being met by the hardworking staff, their appreciation of the effective communication between home and school, and their confidence in the leadership. A small number of parents/carers made suggestions as to how the provision could be enhanced further and these were shared with the principal and representatives of the governors.

C. THE PROCESS OF INSPECTION

The ETI worked alongside the school to consider how well the school:

- has identified and articulates its vision;
- prioritises actions to achieve the vision;
- overcomes the main challenges it faces;
- monitors and reviews progression to identify, celebrate and embed success; and
- grows and develops an inclusive community of learning.

2. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- The children make a valuable contribution to achieving the vision; they are friendly and welcoming and delight in telling visitors about their school, their learning and their successes.
- The leadership, staff and governors have a clear understanding of the child-centred vision and collaborate effectively with the whole school community to achieve it.
- The very successful whole-school approach to developing the children's thinking skills is underpinned by the skilful questioning by the staff and meaningful, planned opportunities for paired and group work.
- From an early age, the children are taught to reflect on and express their feelings and to empathise with, and respect, others.
- The children with SEN use a range of strategies, often independently, to support themselves in, and enhance, their learning.
- The children have opportunities to carry out important roles and responsibilities and understand how their role makes a difference to school life, develops their own skills and supports their peers.
- The staff analyse effectively a wide range of information to monitor the children's progress, set targets and review the children's outcomes.
- The staff professional learning is aligned well to the school's priorities and is impacting positively on the children's learning experiences and outcomes.
- The school embraces collaboration and opportunities to learn with and from others through meaningful partnerships in the local and wider community, which benefits the children and staff.

- At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by the school demonstrates that the arrangements for child protection align to the current statutory guidance.

Area for consideration:

- the further development of the planning for, and assessment of, play-based learning.

3. MAIN REPORT

A. SETTING THE VISION

In August 2022, the staff revisited the school's vision to align it to the changing needs of the children and school community in the post-Covid context. Central to the vision is the holistic development of the children; catering for their physical, emotional, spiritual and academic needs, **'to realise and achieve their potential'**, keeping them safe, and preparing them for life in an everchanging world **'in a happy, secure, caring, well-resourced and stimulating learning environment.'** The vision highlights the beliefs of the Catholic faith in empowering the children to be **'caring, responsible individuals and contributors to their community.'**

Guided by the strategic and empowering leadership, staff and governors have a clear understanding of the child-centred vision and their role in making it a reality. Self-evaluation processes are well embedded, priorities for development and associated professional learning align closely to the vision and staff regularly and collegially reflect on the impact of their work. The governors have an informed oversight of the challenges and opportunities facing the school, and use their wide skill set to support and, as appropriate, challenge the school's leadership.

The children make a valuable contribution to making their school a **'happy, secure and caring'** place. They are kind to others and have fun learning with, from and about one another, and through their leadership responsibilities, the older children play an important role in keeping the younger children safe.

B. IMPLEMENTING AND IMPROVING TO ACHIEVE THE VISION

The staff set high expectations for the children and themselves. They create a supportive, inclusive indoor and outdoor learning environment with well-established routines. The teachers plan for, and exploit incidental, opportunities for the children to connect their learning and build successfully on previous learning. In the best practice, the teachers' planning for the progressive development of the children's digital skills is embedded naturally across the curriculum.

A key strength of the learning and teaching is the priority given to the development of the children's thinking skills. Through skilful questioning and effective paired and group work, the staff enable the children to reflect on, develop and explain their ideas and responses, and to consider carefully the views of others.

Effective monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum has identified the further development of play-based learning as an ongoing area of focus, in particular, the planning for, and assessment of, the children's learning through play.

The importance given to the children's health and wellbeing is reflected in the effective preventative curriculum. From an early age, the children are taught to reflect on and express their feelings, and to empathise with and respect others. In discussions with children, we heard about the different strategies they use if, for example, they feel sad or angry. The children who have a role as wellbeing ambassadors told us how they care for their peers and give them tips on how to manage their feelings, such as breathing techniques and taking some time out. In focus group discussions, the children reported that they feel safe and know what to do if they have any concerns about their safety and wellbeing.

C. BUILDING EQUITY

A welcoming and inclusive ethos permeates all aspects of school life, promotes equity and fairness and enables all children to participate and experience success. The children play an active role in promoting inclusion through recognising and celebrating the unique gifts and talents of others.

The staff know the children well and respond sensitively to their needs to help them overcome barriers to learning. Children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are identified early and benefit from tailored support from teachers, classroom assistants and external agencies, and from well-structured intervention programmes and targeted withdrawal sessions. Strategically planned staff professional learning is building the capacity of all staff to meet the wide range of learning needs and is impacting positively on the children's learning experiences and outcomes. The children with SEN, including those with regulatory and sensory needs, choose and use a range of strategies, often independently, to enhance their learning and help them manage their own emotions.

D. DEFINING, CELEBRATING AND EMBEDDING SUCCESS

The children are well behaved, friendly, inquisitive and keen to learn. They are caring and respectful towards others and are proud to be members of their school community. The children spoke positively to us about their learning experiences, including those with their shared education friends, and afterschool activities. They delighted in showing and telling us about their successes and those of their peers; the year 7 children presented with confidence to us the many ways in which they are developing their digital skills.

The children's achievements, both inside and outside school, are celebrated, and the children are encouraged to showcase their skills and talents, for example, during assemblies, which develops their confidence and encourages others to have a go at something new.

The children's thinking skills are very well developed; they use thinking frames to organise, structure and plan their work. They engage enthusiastically with others in discussions, problem-solving and investigative activities to make choices and find solutions. The children are well supported in setting their own targets and samples of work show how feedback from the teachers enables the children to reflect on and improve their work.

The older children can articulate how, through taking on a wide range of roles to support their peers, they are developing responsibility and skills such as, teamwork, communication and resilience which they explained will be useful when, for example, they have a job. The children in the digital leaders' role play an important role in helping their peers understand how to stay safe online.

The staff analyse effectively a wide range of information to monitor the children's progress from their individual starting points, set targets and review the children's outcomes.

E. GROWING A COMMUNITY OF LEARNING

The leadership creates a positive, supportive and nurturing learning environment for all members of the school community. Staff professional learning is responsive to the children's needs and the school's context, and staff are empowered to lead and deliver professional learning to their colleagues.

The school values the contribution of others to helping it achieve its vision and embraces collaboration and opportunities to learn with and from others. The highly effective, strategic approach to, and rationale for, external collaboration has led to meaningful partnerships in the local and wider community with businesses, support groups and sports clubs which benefit the children and staff. Representatives from post-primary schools, further education, local businesses and parents who make up the collaborative network met with us and spoke positively about the mutual benefits of working together.

The school has established a range of ways to communicate with parents/carers, including information leaflets, newsletters, apps and questionnaires. The parent support group organises a wide variety of activities for the children and has been instrumental in raising significant funds to support and enhance the provision for all children.

F. CHILD PROTECTION

At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by the school demonstrates that the arrangements for child protection align to the current statutory guidance.

4. GOING FORWARD

Edendork Primary School is successful in living out and achieving its vision. The children are learning and achieving in a happy and inclusive learning environment where their talents and successes are celebrated, and their needs are met.

ETI will continue to work with Edendork Primary School, including to share examples of highly effective practice from which others may learn. The aspect of practice which should be shared more widely includes:

- the very successful whole-school approach to the development of the children's thinking skills.

The school is well placed to take forward the area for consideration detailed in this report.

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