12th December 2017



Mr Kevin O'Neill Principal St Colman's PS and All Saints' Nursery Annaclone Banbridge Co Down BT32 5LS

Centre of Excellence Review Date: 23rd November 2017

Summary

I had the privilege of visiting St Colman's PS and All Saints Nursery on 23rd November 2017. It was a warm and welcoming school where exceptionally well behaved, enquiring pupils enjoy a broad and outward looking education enhanced by extracurricular activities.

There were many opportunities for me to observe the interaction between the children and all staff. It was clearly evident that mutually respectful relationships exist which reflect the Catholic and inclusive ethos which the school is very proud of. The children were polite, showed confidence, spoke eloquently and understood the strengths of the school and the improvements they were making.

The school has engaged with many partners in the community to give the pupils a real sense of community and a perspective on their role within a European and global society. The Erasmus and Shared Education projects have been outstanding examples of the horizons which a small Primary School can achieve.

Working seamlessly with these projects is the school's self-evaluation process signposting future improvements and their impact on the pupils' learning. A detailed, consultative School Development Plan outlines the school's priorities with the theme of 'Progress through Partnership'.

This visit highlighted for me the significant work done to realise the action plan for year three of Centre of Excellence. I can report that most of the objectives have been achieved and Centre of Excellence sustained. Those partially achieved remain priorities for a new action plan which will outline how the school will proceed towards Flagship status.

This is a school well embedded in its inclusion values and is in no doubt a centre of excellence where the principal, staff, parents and Board of Governors are committed to an educational experience second to none for its pupils.

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Company Registered Address: Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd Grove House Lutyens Close Chineham Basingstoke Hampshire RG24 8AG I recommend, without reservation, that St Colman's PS and All Saints' Nursery retains its status as an Inclusion Quality Mark Centre of Excellence and considers moving to Flagship status at this stage and is reviewed annually for the next three years.

Assessor: Teresa McNamee

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

J. Melas

Joe McCann MBA NPQH Director of Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd





Sources of Data and Supportive Evidence:

- Tour of the school with two P7 pupils
- Meeting with the Principal of Fairhill PS
- Meeting with a group of parents
- Meeting with pupils (School Council and House Captains)
- Meeting with SENCO/Inclusion teacher
- Meeting with teacher responsible for Trusted Colleague Network/Self-Evaluation
- Meeting with the Principal
- Meeting with Chair of Governors
- Informal observation of Assembly, break and lunch time
- Visit to the Nursery
- Informal chats with the caretaker, canteen staff, classroom assistant and teachers
- Informal visits to P4 and P7 classes
- The school website

Documents:

- School Development Plan 2017-20
- Pupil Friendly version of SDP 2017-18
- Parent Information Booklet and Nursery leaflet
- Newssheet
- Mentoring record sheet
- All Saints Nursery transition report and primary reports
- Child Protection information
- Nursery and Numeracy Action plans
- Individual Education Plans
- Complimentary letters
- Overview of SA data
- Erasmus Booklet
- Pupil Questionnaires on bullying/homework
- E-Safety survey
- Self-evaluation surveys to teachers and support staff





Element 1: The Inclusion Values and Practices of the School.

This school is in a beautiful rural setting in the village of Annaclone, Co Down. This name derives from Irish meaning 'marsh of the haunch-like hill'. Although magical by name the geography of the school tells the reality of the site of the school surrounded by rolling hills and marsh land.

I visited on a beautiful winter day when the countryside looked its best. The children and parents were arriving and at the gate were the caretaker in his high visibility jacket and the Principal, Mr O'Neill, both welcoming the children for the start of a new school day.

First impressions for a visitor are very important and give an immediate insight into the warm, friendly, family ethos of a school.

Part of the new vision statement declares that the school strives to be "an inclusive, caring school where childhood and community are valued...". Childhood should be inclusive of happy experiences and all the smiling faces strongly suggested that St Colman's provided this caring educational experience for all its pupils.

During the whole school assemblies for morning prayers and announcements the pupils' behaviour was exemplary as they filed into the hall and listened to information about rehearsals for the Christmas nativity and carol service. As a Catholic school, it was obvious that the spiritual development of the children underpinned and supported the inclusion values of the school.

The children were friendly and enquiring, proud of their school and determined to showcase all their achievements. My tour guides, equipped with clip boards, were confident and articulate, showing how pupils were trained to be organised, take responsibility and help the teacher and support staff with their many everyday jobs, such as numbers for the school dinners. There was little need to reference their notes as the two P7 pupils not only knew all the staff, what was going on in relation to extra-curricular activities but also pointed out that some of the noticeboards reflected the school's curriculum. Teachers valued the work of every child and displayed all work not just 'the best'.

The village setting belies the global approach to inclusion. The pupils have had and continue to have an education which embraces the values of inclusion and diversity across countries and communities. They have learnt through the recent Erasmus project to appreciate and comprehend the contribution of other countries and cultures to their broader education and the curriculum topic 'The World Around Us" has a real and meaningful impact on how they now view the world.

This school has undoubtedly sustained and further embedded its commitment to inclusion values in the daily life of the school where 'small acts of kindnesses' are rewarded. These values are reiterated through its Shared Education programme with Fairhill Primary School where the nursery children playing together also learn how to share and meet new friends. At key stage 2 pupils can explore the more difficult issues





of diversity and religious divide in their own country. They bring their positive experiences of working with their peers in Fairhill to influence their parents and break down barriers for the benefit of the local community and beyond.

The school now has Mr O'Neill as permanent Principal and the Board of Governors is in the process of appointing two senior teachers for January 2018. This will allow the school to progress the priorities of the School Development Plan (SDP) and give the Principal a senior leadership team. This is an excellent opportunity for the development of leadership skills within the staff. Under the guidance and enthusiasm of Mr O'Neill the school continues to grow, embracing change and self-evaluation with a greater knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses. St Colman's PS and All Saints Nursery are very worthy holders of the award of Centre of Excellence which recognises the commitment of all staff in the pursuit of excellence for the pupils in their care.

Element 2: The Learning Environment, Resources and ICT

The pupils attend a bright, warm and inviting school. The teachers and classroom assistants ensure that noticeboards are covered in pupils' work and these appear to be changed regularly to reflect the taught curriculum. My tour guides showed me enthusiastically around the school ensuring I saw the new building which provides two additional classrooms and a resource area. This was much needed accommodation for the children although P7 are in a mobile outside of the main building. There are no covered walkways although it would be difficult to make such provision with the school site having different levels. There are many steps but also ramps for disabled access. Inside the large classrooms there are attractive displays and the teaching and learning is enhanced by interactive whiteboards used effectively by the teachers. In P7 the pupils were being inspired to try their water painting skills referencing the work of Monet via the whiteboard.

Two P4 pupils were using the I-Pads while the rest of the class were involved in some comprehension work. These are a valuable resource for the school and it will be essential to evaluate their contribution to pupil progress. ICT is a priority for the school and central to its effective use in St Colman's. There has been staff training to date with plans to further upskill the teachers in January 2018.

The school has a multi-purpose hall used for assemblies, school lunches and physical education. The children are very fortunate to have a hot, healthy midday meal available or can choose to bring in their packed lunches. There is the unfortunate situation that this room cannot accommodate all the children, leading to three different break and lunch times for a school of just over 200. Linked to this problem is the small outdoor play area, even more squashed since the new build and with no facility for the usual playground games. It remains an immediate priority to acquire some additional land and have an all-weather pitch for pupils. The Board of Governors, Parents' Association, CCMS and Principal are aware that this provision would enhance the pupils' social skills, give opportunities to learn through play and allow the ECO council to put their ideas into practice. The enthusiasm of the parents, Chair of the Governors and Principal to achieve this objective was much in evidence during my visit and it was obvious that a concerted effort by all the stakeholders would see this work completed within a year for a very deserving school.





I enjoyed my visit to All Saints Nursery which is situated in purpose built accommodation with attractive facilities and outdoor equipment. The children were very well behaved, and all settled into their new environment. The provision is stimulating with interesting corners to allow role play and team work. I noted how independent the children were, their newly developed skills allowing them to take responsibility, share and explain coherently what they were doing.

Having the nursery school on site is excellent for parents and siblings who know their older brothers/sisters are nearby. Many of the pupils from the nursery transfer to St Colman's PS.

Due to a recent injection of additional finance from the Education Authority, new teaching and learning resources have given teachers the opportunity to support the SDP with the purchase of additional software for numeracy. The children were also consulted in relation to new resources. This school has an active Parents' Association who fundraise consistently to support the needs of the pupils.

ICT is an effective tool in St Colman's for communication with parents and the wider community using a school website, texting service and social media responsibly. The school propose to apply for the Schools' Social Media Award having already achieved Digital Mentor School. Most definitely a primary school leading the way in ICT!

Element 3: Learner Attitudes, Values and Personal Development

St Colman's has a holistic approach to the education of its pupils ensuring that they have opportunities to develop skills which will prepare them for life. In conversation with the pupils it was clear that they respected each other and were immersed in the inclusion values of the school. They recognised the additional needs of some pupils but were protective and caring. During my assessment, I observed impeccable manners from all the pupils.

These values and attitudes are a credit to the teachers and support staff who are mutually respectful and teach the children from nursery through to P7 that everyone is important and worthy of a voice. This pupil voice is now well developed in St Colman's with a fully representative, and democratically elected Pupil Council. Indeed, the idea of the Council came from a boy in P5 who is the Chairperson. His idea came from the Shared Education project where he saw this good practice and believed that it would also benefit the P3 to P7 pupils in St Colman's. Some of the pupils I spoke to were class captains who took their leadership roles very seriously. They explained about the sticker awards which pupils earned for 'good work and good behaviour'. The class which achieved the most stickers had the privilege of choosing a reward such as 'wearing their own clothes'.

The children feel very valued in their school which is pupil centred in every respect. They are consulted and now have their own pupil friendly copy of the SDP. This is an innovative approach to inclusion and a reminder to the school community of the journey of self-evaluation and progress ahead. The strapline Progress through Partnership which the school has adopted to sum up the new SDP 2017-20 plans coherently how learner values, attitudes and their personal development will be





enhanced. The children already know that teacher expectations are high and that 'the school will become even better than it already is'.

The SDP explains that the pupils will continue to work with Fairhill PS. There will be a greater focus on diversity and conflict resolution. These aspects of the Shared Education programme will be exceptionally important in a society which is slow to change attitudes and accept other cultures. It is through the generation of children at St Colman's that we can hope for such a society. Already the children have made small steps, those of friendship, rejecting differences and accepting their peers for the people they are. Shared culture and language days gave a boy from Fairhill PS the opportunity to play Gaelic football which he has since taken up. The personal development which this and the previous Erasmus project have given the pupils is second to none and will be remembered long after the teaching and learning of the NI curriculum. St Colman's and All Saints nursery has already been cited as an 'outstanding example of a rural school community' by Queens University and the Education and Training Inspectorate (Nov 2016).

The Principal and Chair of the Governors believe in the recognition of the outstanding work of the school to progress and improve. In this respect, application has been made to achieve Investors in Pupils and this should be acknowledged imminently. The Pupil Council was also anxious to achieve the ECO green flag as the Eco monitors were working very hard on promoting recycling and conserving energy.

The pupils are actively involved in charitable work throughout the school year and are enthusiastically supported by the staff, parents and the community. The values of care, collegiality and kindness permeate all the experiences provided by this school. It was wonderful to see some of the younger pupils waving to the staff through a window onto the corridor and of course, the teachers waved back!

Element 4: Learner Progress and the Impact on Learning

The school has a wealth of data available through standard assessment tests and has begun the process of analysis to determine where the school is at and where it needs to be. The children are making progress and are at either a parallel or better stage than like schools in their sector. The Principal, supported by the staff are aware of the process of self-evaluation and have completed comprehensive questionnaires which give a clear direction for the SDP.

I met with the teacher who has been leading the initiative of Trusted Colleague Network and has found the process to have a positive impact on 'marking for improvement'. The trust element has been essential for this change of culture to be successful. All teachers were advised to be positive and take away one element to apply to their own books. There was a substantial amount of feedback which quickly identified writing as a priority. Across the year groups more progression was needed. Indicators provided staff with the necessary tools for implementation and before Christmas it was planned to have a follow-up review of writing to evaluate success.

The teacher works closely with the Special Needs Coordinator to identify from data and other sources, the need for intervention. The Reading Partnership programme uses the





valued resource of the classroom assistants (CA's) to work one to one with the children. The reading scores are recorded before and after the intervention to determine success. Classroom assistants shadowed those who had been trained before and this proved to be an effective use of personnel.

There are detailed action plans for literacy and numeracy reflecting the school's development plan. The documents supplied show in-depth planning by the coordinators who are committed to improving learner progress, at whole class level and for the individual. At the heart of this is the desire to make the experiences of the child exciting, motivational and successful. The teacher reported that in St Colman's every child does matter and that differentiated teaching and learning was policy within the school. The pupils also reported to me that they had individual targets, although even with extension work some felt they needed more challenge.

The SENCO was confident in relation to the intervention strategies and showed me exemplars of Individual Education Plans. The use of the I-Pads was considered a very useful resource to support literacy and numeracy. They are very recent additions to classrooms and their effect on learner progress has yet to be formally evaluated.

The work of the staff is fully appreciated by the Principal who has excellent relationships with his colleagues. Staff have used the Shared Education partnership to plan and share good practice with continuous staff development seen by Mr O'Neill as pivotal to pupil progress.

I was unable to ascertain if the quality planning was being implemented by teachers as my visits to P4 and P7 were informal. Due to industrial action the TCN process has not developed to allow colleague observation (except for PRSD) and ensure consistency of delivery. This may impede the full ETI cycle of self-evaluation as it looks unlikely that the dispute will be resolved this academic year. However, it was clear from my informal discussion with the respective teachers that they are professional, committed people who want the very best for the children entrusted to them.

Element 5: Learning and Teaching (Monitoring)

Monitoring 'Learning and Teaching' is a strand of the SDP which remains an area of development. Many new resources have been purchased to support teaching and learning. Pupils are included in the development planning process through their own colourful, child friendly plan. There are bold statements such as 'We're going to make sure that teaching and learning in maths is even better than it already is.' The school uses IXL for maths and now has IZAK9 cubes to engage the pupils in problem solving skills. The next stage will be to assess the effectiveness of these innovative resources on pupil progress and decide 'how' to determine if teaching and learning is getting better. The Shared Education programme has given teachers in both schools opportunities to share good practice. The Principal of Fairhill PS explained that this is extremely beneficial if you are the only specialist teacher in the school. Engagement of the classroom assistants working with the pupils is well planned and teachers were keen to let me know that their contribution was highly valued. Like most schools, teachers in St Colman's would like the support of more classroom assistants in large classes of mixed ability.





Pupils could tell me about their involvement in peer assessment and found this an interesting and helpful strategy to improve their learning. At key stage 2 further opportunities can be sought to monitor teaching and learning using the 'pupil voice'.

Learning outside the classroom is valued by the school. There is a menu of after school clubs and I saw and heard about the popularity of their cross-country club organised by the P7 teacher. I visited the after-school wrap around care provision which on that day had 18 attending. The pupils were enjoying a tasty snack before heading outside to enjoy some play before the light was gone. The pupils also complete their homework. Some of the pupils are in school from 8.15am through to 6.00pm which is a long day but unquestionably a valuable and affordable service for the working parent/carer.

The Principal has identified the need to assess the impact of all the additional support on attendance and levels of attainment. Once again, the voice of the pupils will be invaluable to determine their success. However, it is difficult not to admire the commitment of the staff and the diverse provision available to pupils and parents by St Colman's and All Saints Nursery.

Element 6: Parents, Carers and Guardians

During my visit, I met with four parents with children in nursery and across both key stages. Two parents had children with statements and both could not be more praiseworthy of the inclusion ethos of the school. They reported that Mr O'Neill and the staff go the 'extra mile' to provide their child with opportunities to achieve their potential without making their child appear different. They are very content with the communication from the school and cited the website, Twitter, newssheet, parents' guides and text help to keep up to date with events, practice and policy. Parent/teacher meetings allow the class teacher and parent one to one time to discuss their child's progress and their individual targets. Parents expect to be involved in homework and appreciate the fact that no homework is given on Fridays. One parent explained how she approved of a teacher who gave the week's homework on Monday and made the child responsible for their own time management. Parents are also full participants in the school's preparation of children for the transfer test at 11.

The parents I met spoke highly of the teachers and support staff, one describing the 'loving and caring' attitude towards the children. The parents see the school as an extension of the family and community, find the teachers approachable and had little or no cause to complain. The 'Open Door' policy means that as small issues arise they can be dealt with in a timely fashion. All parents were aware of the safeguarding policy and knew that information was displayed in the front foyer. One parent was aware of anti-bullying week and that this topic was addressed at the school assembly.

The parents are strong ambassadors for St Colman's and show their support in very practical ways. The Parents' Association has raised significant amounts of money, most recently buying the I-Pads. One parent has been both supportive and practical in moving forward the plan for an all-weather play/sports ground. With such determination, it is obvious that this plan will come to fruition by winter 2018. The SDP (Progress through partnership) identified the need to engage parents in curriculum development and school target setting. Unfortunately, meetings were not





well attended, and the school now plans to hold these at the beginning of the academic year. Some parents can have several meetings especially if their child is receiving any of the sacraments. Striking a balance between engaging parents and keeping goodwill is important in maintaining effective relationships. Parents trust the judgement of the teachers to make the best provision for each child, whether it is through booster classes or more challenging work. One parent described how the children learn 'through enjoyment and fun' and this was certainly evidenced during my visit. While this is a very 'busy' school', especially at this time of year I was heartened by the continuous positivity towards the children and motivating comments on pupil work.

Element 7: Governing Body and External Accountability

St Colman's benefits from a pro-active governing body which supports the work of the Principal to lead a progressive, inclusive school. The Board meets regularly, and the Principal not only informs but consults with members about the self-evaluation process and more recently how to monitor implementation and the impact on school improvement. The Board of Governors is fortunate to have members with skills to support the on-going journey of improvement. These skills relate to finance, business, marketing and education.

I met with the Chair of Governors who is also a parent. She was most informative with the unique perspective of understanding fully the context of the school as a parent but also comprehending the need to look at whole school provision and ensure the pupils reach full potential across the ability range including the 'gifted and talented'. She is aware of the Board's responsibility and accountability for self-evaluation and some work on this has already been completed.

The Board of Governors now has a permanent Principal, Mr O'Neill who had been Acting Principal. There is great admiration for the work ethic and enthusiasm he brings to the school which is enhanced because of his 'excellent people and communication skills'. The Board of Governors was consulted about the new School Development Plan and their role is also explained to the pupils 'Our governing body is going to become expert at checking that things are going well in school'.

The Board of Governors is delighted with the change in culture which now deals with complaints promptly and effectively with an outcome which puts the child first. The Chair is enthusiastic in her support of the Assertive Mentoring programme which is at present a pilot project within the school and will be evaluated at the end of the academic year. The Board of Governors, with sound evidence of success in other schools has identified this as a priority development area. The SENCO is involved in the process of identifying the pupils who will benefit most from mentoring. Training of additional mentors will be completed before September 2018.

The Board of Governors has already taken cognisance of the ETI self-evaluation parent survey, and the implementation of important policy such as the Safeguarding Policy. The members are fully supportive of the Shared Education programme and see the benefits beyond the school environment. The Chair looks forward to an opportunity for both Boards of Governors to engage in the evaluation of the project using both qualitative and quantitative evidence of the impact on children's learning.





It is obvious that the two-way communication between the Board of Governors and Principal allows for a transparent organisation. Both work in tandem to make St Colman's and All Saints an outward looking school which the Chair described as 'progressive, innovative, digitally aware and pushing above their weight'.

There remain challenges such as budget restraints, demographics and union action but these do not impede the substantial work planned by the Governors to monitor and evaluate the use of data, engage with teachers, appoint two senior positions, market the school and develop the mentoring programme. It is commendable that this Board of Governors, all volunteers as we know, is so committed to St Colman's and its Catholic, inclusive, and caring ethos.

Element 8: The School in the Community

St Colman's is a cornerstone in the local rural community of Annaclone. Its position on a raised site ensures its prominence in the village. Its doors are open daily from 8.00am to 6.00pm serving well its parents and children. This location belies how wide the school doors are - they have opened wide to embrace a European and global opportunity for the children of St Colman's and All Saints Nursery. The high point of the Erasmus project was the hosting of visitors from seven European partner schools in March 2017. This was no mean feat but the culmination of so much work by the school community, its many partners and the teamwork of all staff in the school. The evidence of the success of this visit was everywhere – in the press, display work, the website, the British Council International Award and ultimately through the enjoyment the pupils experienced on the day of the visit. This legacy, as the Principal explained will be continued in the SDP through the theme of 'Progress through Partnership'.

Parallel to this is the Shared Education programme with Fairhill PS giving the children from both schools opportunities to play, learn and share each other's cultures. This has already been designated as an example of an outstanding rural partnership by Queen's University, Belfast. This year will see the exploration of the theme of diversity moving towards conflict resolution, themes which are pertinent to our NI extended community.

The Principal of Fairhill described how supportive his parents are towards the partnership and the shared learning it provides for both communities. His only difficulty is how this work can be sustained once funding ends as transportation alone is expensive.

A short distance from the school is the parish church of St Colman's. There are very close associations with the parish, teachers working closely with the priest to prepare for the sacraments and during my visit rehearsals for the carol service and nativity play. The local Gaelic club and Historical Society also work closely with the school to enhance the children's learning experiences. In fact, the P7 pupils work on a local history project before they leave school with the Historical Society providing prizes. The Principal is very appreciative of its community support, recognising that in a small school this engagement has meant projects such as the all-weather sports field are progressing at pace - the Principal, Board of Governors, CCMS, parents and the GAC all working with the common objective of ensuring the best provision possible for all the pupils. An exemplar of inclusion working at its best!





Recommendations

Element One

- A new housing estate, presently being built will bring new families to the school. The Principal and staff should prepare an effective induction programme which highlights the inclusion ethos of the school. Some of the present pupils can become 'buddies' for the new intake.
- Celebrate the Centre of Excellence award by placing the logo on the home page of the website.
- Review all main school publications to ensure the new vision statement is accurate.
- Appoint new senior teachers with job descriptions which prioritise the action planning of the SDP.

Element Two

- Monitor the use of staff training on scratch and code in relation to learner progress.
- Re-paint the school's zebra crossing and playground.
- Continue the objective to provide an all-weather sports/playground.
- As recommended by the SENCO progress the equipping of a multi-sensory room to support pupils with additional needs.
- Source and apply for other revenue streams outside the LMS budget e.g. Awards for All. Use this to purchase outdoor equipment for play.

Element Three

• The school has advanced this element to a high standard and has already identified how the Shared Education programme can explore diversity and conflict resolution. The school Council could explore some case studies in preparation for working with Fairhill Primary School.

Element Four

- Senior leaders could lead this objective by inviting colleagues to observe their teaching and learning. While cover could be difficult, the class could be recorded and used on a staff development day to share good practice. The objective is to 'share good practice' in an atmosphere of trust and confidence.
- Progress the self-evaluation cycle to the stage of monitoring, evaluation and review e.g. has writing improved? Are the ipads improving learner outcomes?





Element Five

- This is an on-going objective to analyse data, set targets and review improvement.
- Seek registration for Day Care provision.
- Develop the mentoring scheme, recruiting and training new mentors. Identify pupils who may benefit.
- Develop a culture where class teachers ask the pupils about the lesson.

Element Six

- Inform parents about the curriculum at the beginning of September 2018. Survey parents to find out best times for the meetings.
- Try to reduce the amount of information available to parents. Identify the key areas and put more photographs on the website. Look at the colourful prospectuses provided by post primary schools which give important but summary information to parents.

Element Seven

- Board of Governors to seek opportunities to monitor school improvement with access to more 'user friendly' data.
- Board of Governors to self-evaluate using ETI document April 2017.
- Support for the Assertive Mentoring Programme discussing what the school wants to achieve from the programme.

Element Eight

- This is a well-developed aspect of life in St Colman's PS and All Saints Nursery and the school should continue to engage with its community for mutual benefit.
- The Principal and staff will engage with St Patrick's College, Banbridge to improve curriculum links and transition for P7.

Assessor: Teresa McNamee

Date of Review: 23rd November 2017