

# Report of a Primary Inspection

Moneyrea Primary School and  
Nursery Unit

DE Ref No 401-1699

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Education and  
Training Inspectorate  
Empowering Improvement

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Throughout the report the use of an asterisk \* denotes further information included at Appendix 2.

# **1. INTRODUCTION**

## **A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Moneyrea Primary School and Nursery Unit serves the village of Moneyreagh and surrounding areas and further afield. The school is consistently oversubscribed, and the current enrolment is 250, including 28 children who attend the part-time session in the nursery unit. Thirty-two (15%) of the children have been identified as having special educational needs (SEN), and over one-half of these children have a statement of educational need. Seven percent (17) of the children have free school meals entitlement.

The school is part of a well-established shared education partnership with St Joseph's Primary School and Carryduff Primary School. The school holds the Rights Respecting School Award\*, the International School Award\* and its second Eco Schools' 'Green Flag' Award\*.

## **B. VIEWS OF PARENTS, LEARNERS AND STAFF**

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

Almost all of the year 7 children responded to the questionnaire; a small number of whom provided written comments. The children all indicated that: they feel safe in school; the teachers and other adults treat them with care and respect; and they receive helpful information about changes that will happen to them as they grow up and develop.

The majority (65%) of the staff responded, including most (90%) of the teachers, to the questionnaire, all of whom indicated that: they are clear about the school's vision and their contribution to achieving it; their views are sought and acted upon; and they value the impact of the community links on the children's learning. The small number of written comments highlighted how the staff: enjoy their work in a happy school; value each other; and their ongoing reflective practice in a child-centred school.

Fifteen percent of the parents/carers responded to the questionnaire, with a small number providing written comments. The parents/carers reported: their child's good progress and enjoyment of school; the warmth of the staff; and the family-centred and child-focused ethos.

## **C. THE PROCESS OF INSPECTION**

ETI worked alongside Moneyrea Primary School and Nursery Unit 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 define, celebrate and embed success; and
- grows and develops an inclusive community of learning.

## **2. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS**

- Moneyrea Primary School and Nursery Unit achieves its vision through how well the staff foster a vibrant learning environment where the children thrive, love learning and flourish with a strong sense of self-belief.
- The children are respectful and responsible, living out their school's values at every opportunity; they are articulate, confident, curious and critically reflective.
- The staff plan active and exciting learning experiences across the curriculum and beyond the classroom to develop the children's creativity, curiosity, practical and transferable skills which raises their aspirations.
- Each child is celebrated and valued for their academic progress and wider achievements in art, drama, music, sporting, personal, emotional and social development.
- The school places a very high priority on equity, which is evident in the inclusive learning environment and how the staff work successfully to address any barriers the children may face; as a result, the children progress well in their learning.
- The children's awareness of, and commitment to, environmental sustainability, social justice and cultural diversity impacts very positively on their understanding and appreciation of local and global issues, and their critical thinking.
- The highly effective school council empowers the children in their learning through democratic processes and they work proactively to bring about tangible changes and improvements.
- The school, at the heart of its village, has an enriching community of learning with staff learning collaboratively through reflective practice to excite, challenge and inspire the children in their learning.
- 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.

### **3. MAIN REPORT**

#### **A. SETTING THE VISION**

The children, staff, and governors, supported by the Controlled Schools' Support Council (CSSC), live out authentically the carefully considered vision of **'learning together, caring for and respecting one another'**. The children encapsulate well their 'Acorn Values' of responsibility, creativity, kindness, resilience, respect and teamwork.

The interim school development plan (SDP) is informed effectively by extensive consultation with children, staff, parents/governors and stakeholders in partnership with the Education Authority's (EA) School Improvement Service. The impact of the associated action plans is evident in the children's love of learning and their progress in knowledge, understanding and skills across the curriculum. The action plans are reviewed perceptively with clear priorities identified for the new 3-year SDP from September 2025, including promoting further mathematical investigations and extended writing opportunities.

The governors use their combined skillset, professional expertise, and educational knowledge to support the staff and school. They are well informed about the successes of the work of the school by the co-ordinators and the identified priorities for improvement. They are passionately committed to the school at the heart of its community.

#### **B. IMPLEMENTING AND IMPROVING TO ACHIEVE THE VISION**

The school achieves its vision through how well the staff foster a vibrant learning environment where the children thrive, love learning and flourish with a strong sense of self-belief. The staff plan active and exciting learning experiences across the curriculum and beyond the classroom to develop the children's creativity and curiosity. Through effective questioning the staff promote the children's thinking skills and personal capabilities. The children share readily their knowledge and understanding, take pride in their work, and show confidence in their literacy and mathematical skills. They spoke about the importance of having 'growth mindsets\*' with 'can do' attitudes. Assessment processes including oral and written feedback, peer and self-evaluation, support successfully the children in making progress as independent learners.

The high quality curriculum for all enriches the children's learning experiences, including Ulster Scots poetry music and dance, Irish food and customs, drama, Spanish, and environmental projects, and fosters cultural awareness, creativity, and social responsibility. The school's participation in Young Enterprise\*, engagement with local businesses, and exposure to career pathways and role models are valuable approaches in ensuring the children develop practical and transferable skills, while also heightening their aspirations for the future. The key stage 1 and 2 children use their entrepreneurial and decision-making skills in planning, creating and selling products in real-life contexts.

The school community is very proud of the local heritage, and language, celebrating Robert Huddleston, the 'Bard of Moneyrea'\*. Cultural diversity, literature and history are explored and celebrated widely across the school. The children reported that the recent Culture Evening, which celebrated different cultures, including through music, dance and food was highly enjoyable and helped them understand and respect diversity. The children's awareness of, and commitment to, environmental sustainability, social justice and cultural diversity is promoted very effectively through a wide range of initiatives, practical projects and classroom activities. This work is impacting very positively on the children's capacity to understand and appreciate local and global issues and their critical thinking. The children reflected to us that their recent celebration of 'Victory in Europe' day highlighted the importance of always working for peace and reconciliation.

From an early age, the children are taught about keeping safe and are encouraged to reflect on, and express, their emotions. Feeling emotionally safe, the children are comfortable in taking risks and using setbacks to further their learning. The school has taken an insightful and considered approach to develop a proactive age-appropriate relationships and sexuality education programme, which is supported effectively with links to external agencies, including local churches, to provide informed perspectives. The children told us that they feel safe in school, know who they can talk to if they are worried or upset and know how to keep themselves safe online.

The children's physical, emotional and social development is enriched by the school's significant investment in outdoor play. The children use the stimulating resources and equipment creatively and cooperatively, setting their own challenges and creating games which support the development of teamwork and problem-solving skills and builds their resilience. The children take great pride in representing the school in a wide range of sporting events and are very aware of the benefits of participating in team sports and competitions, including for their personal growth and readiness for the next stage of education.

### **C. BUILDING EQUITY**

In line with its ethos and vision, the school community is building successfully a diverse, inclusive and equitable learning environment. The teaching and support staff work successfully together to address any barriers the children may face. Consequently, the children are well supported, make effective progress in their learning, and flourish with a strong sense of self-belief.

The children's strengths and any needs are identified at an early stage and appropriate measures, including additional adult support and withdrawal sessions are put in place; this work is informed by guidance from external services, as appropriate. This support is meeting well the children's needs both within the classroom and through the effective additional interventions.

The individual education plans provide clear targets and strategies to support the children and progress made is monitored and reviewed appropriately. The classroom assistants are highly skilled and support very well the children's learning.

The staff work very effectively to support children who experience socio-economic disadvantage; the approach to this work is very sensitive and empathetic.

#### **D. DEFINING, CELEBRATING AND EMBEDDING SUCCESS**

A strong culture of positive relationships and mutual respect is evident across all of the classes. Each child is valued and celebrated for their academic progress and wider achievements in art, drama, music, sporting, personal, emotional and social development. They appreciate gaining independence and new skills, especially through the wide range of clubs, visits and residential.

The children are articulate, confident, curious and critically reflective. Their talking and listening skills are a notable strength. The children listen actively, ask relevant questions, express their thoughts and exchange ideas readily and make connections across areas of learning. The children are avid readers who talk at length about plot, characterisation and authors' use of language. The year 7 children evaluated how some of their reading books have been portrayed in media, concluding that they prefer their books.

Digital learning is integrated well from the foundation stage, with children using a variety of digital apps to support their learning. As they progress through the school, the children become increasingly proficient in coding and using technology for research, writing and multimedia presentations. The year 7 children reflected positively on how their digital skills have improved year on year attributing this to the regular opportunities they have to apply their learning. The year 6 children as digital leaders, run a club for year 5 and also have the opportunity to be 'Dream Space Ambassadors'\*.

The children's holistic development is reflected in the 'Moneyrea Marvels' programme that honours the children exemplifying their school's values. Displays celebrate the children's learning and wider achievements, inspire further learning and foster a sense of pride in, and belonging to, the local community. The children spoke enthusiastically about how their acting and performing skills have been developed through shows, assemblies and events; the most recent school production built their confidence, strengthened relationships, and created lasting memories. The choir and a member of the Bagpipe players thrilled us with their musical talent.

#### **E. GROWING A COMMUNITY OF LEARNING**

The school, at the heart of its village, has an enriching community of learning. Staff learn collaboratively through reflective practice to excite, challenge and inspire the children in their learning. Well-targeted research-informed staff professional learning aligns closely to the improvement priorities the school has identified in literacy, mathematics and SEN. Significantly, staff work well to reflect critically and imaginatively on how best to apply differing learning strategies to meet the children's needs. In partnering with a wide range of external agencies, staff glean expertise, advice and support from other schools across Northern Ireland and through international links, EA support services, CSSC support, health and social services, local churches and higher education institutes. The children benefit extensively from the fundraising and support of the parent association.

A rights respecting ethos pervades the school. The highly effective school council empowers the children in their learning through democratic processes and they work proactively to bring about tangible changes and improvements. The children exercise strong leadership skills through group work and as buddies, Eco councillors, school councillors, prefects and as part of the 'Kindness Krew'. Significantly, the children told us about the importance to them of representing others well on the council rather than furthering their own agendas.

The children develop their mutual understanding of the importance of valuing others' cultural identities and backgrounds through the school's shared education partnership. Through educational visits and workshops, the children told us how they value learning ways to promote peace and reconciliation for the benefit of all in their community. For example, when year 7 pupils spoke about their visit to the Belfast peace walls, they understood the context for community divisions and reflected on actions that promoted community development.

## **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**

Moneyrea Primary School and Nursery Unit achieves its vision through how well the staff foster a vibrant learning environment where the children thrive, love learning and flourish with a strong sense of self-belief. The children are respectful and responsible, living out their school's values at every opportunity. They are articulate, confident, curious and critically reflective.

The ETI will continue to work with Moneyrea Primary School and Nursery Unit, including to share examples of highly effective practice from which others may learn. The aspects of practice which should be shared more widely are:

- how the staff plan active and exciting learning experiences across the curriculum and beyond the classroom, to develop the children's creativity, curiosity, practical and transferable skills and raise their aspirations; and
- the development of the children's awareness of, and commitment to, environmental sustainability, social justice and cultural diversity which impacts very positively on their understanding and appreciation of local and global issues, and their critical thinking.

## 5. APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1: QUANTITATIVE TERMS

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75% - 90%
A majority	-	50% - 74%
A significant minority	-	30% - 49%
A minority	-	10% - 29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10

## APPENDIX 2: EXPLANATION OF OTHER TERMS USED IN THIS REPORT

### Page 1

#### **Rights Respecting School**

The UNICEF (UNICEF UK) Rights Respecting School Award recognises a school's achievement in putting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into practice within the school and beyond.

#### **International School Award**

The British Council International School Award rewards schools that embed international awareness and understanding within their curriculum.

#### **Eco-Schools Green Flag**

The Eco-Schools Green Flag is an internationally recognised award for excellence in environmental action and learning.

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#### **Growth mindsets**

A growth mindset is the belief that abilities and intelligence can be developed through dedication, hard work, and effective strategies. It encourages children to embrace challenges, learn from feedback, and persist in the face of setbacks.

#### **Young Enterprise**

Young Enterprise is a charity that aims to give children the life skills, knowledge and confidence they need to succeed in the changing world of work.

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#### **Robert Huddleston, the 'Bard of Moneyrea'**

Robert Huddleston (1814-87) was a prolific Ulster Scots writer and poet from Moneyreagh who published two books of poetry and was known as the "The Bard of Moneyrea".

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#### **Dream Space Ambassadors**

The Dream Space Ambassador Programme is run by the Dream Space Team in Dublin and Belfast. It aims to help year 6/7 children who have a passion for learning and a desire to support, train, and mentor others in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education.



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