

# The Fermanagh Trust

## Shared Education Programme

The Fermanagh Trust Shared Education Newsletter | Issue One | December 2009

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Next Round of Funding

## £2.1m Windfall for Fermanagh's Schools

The new academic year in schools across County Fermanagh has been filled with energetic activity and an air of excitement especially for pupils and teachers involved in the Fermanagh Trust Shared Education Programme. This ground breaking programme has been awarded £2.1m funding from the International Fund for Ireland and The Atlantic Philanthropies.

Primary and post-primary schools across Fermanagh are benefiting from the Programme, which enables schools to deliver part of the curriculum jointly with a partner school on a cross-community basis.

*The Fermanagh Trust Shared Education Programme aims to develop linkages between predominantly Protestant and predominantly Catholic schools in the County and to build bridges between our two main communities, contributing to increased understanding and mutual respect and leading to more cohesive and sustainable communities in Fermanagh.*

*It is hoped that the Programme will promote positive relations between schools and create the potential for future joint working, sharing and collaborating across the community.*

Currently over 1,500 primary school pupils - which is more than a quarter of all primary school pupils in County Fermanagh and 160 post-primary pupils are benefiting from the scheme in the first year alone. It is anticipated that these figures will multiply as the Programme is rolled out to more classes within the schools, over the next two years. The schools presently involved are listed on pages 5 and 6 of this Newsletter. Valued at £2.1m over three years, the Shared Education Programme is a significant additional investment in education in the County and a welcome spin-off for the local economy, during the current economic climate.

*"The Fermanagh Trust is delighted to support Shared Education in Co Fermanagh. The potential outcomes of the Programme are immense, including reconciliation, educational and economic benefits of sharing and collaborating between schools".*

*Joanna McVey  
Chairperson, Fermanagh Trust*



*“The Fermanagh Shared Education Programme is unique in that it will also create cross-border educational links”*



Learning Drumming together as part of the Shared Education

*“The Reconciliation & Human Rights Programme in NI aims to encourage sharing, cohesion, and integration”*



## A Word from the International Fund for Ireland

Denis Rooney CBE, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland, has welcomed the development of school projects which got underway this term with support from the Fermanagh Trust. Principals and teachers have worked hard in recent months planning and organising joint classes which are now up and running.

Mr Rooney, Chairman of IFI said: “Our Sharing in Education Programme, which is managed by the Department of Education, seeks to provide strategic opportunities for young people from different community backgrounds to learn and work together.”

“In addition to furthering community relations by linking schools representative of the two communities in Northern Ireland, the Fermanagh Shared Education Programme is unique in that it will also create cross-border educational links. The positive contribution this initiative will have on the academic and personal development of young people in Fermanagh is vitally important and we are pleased to have provided funding for its implementation.”

## Support from The Atlantic Philanthropies

The Atlantic Philanthropies, one of the funders of the Fermanagh Trust Shared Education Programme, is an organisation dedicated to bringing about lasting changes in the lives of disadvantaged and vulnerable people.

Its Reconciliation and Human Rights Programme in Northern Ireland aims to encourage sharing, cohesion, and integration by strengthening advocacy efforts, particularly by the communities most affected by the legacy of the conflict.

The Atlantic Philanthropies focuses on four critical social problems:

1. Ageing,
2. Children and youth,
3. Population health, and
4. Reconciliation and human rights.

It funds Programmes in Australia, Bermuda, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, South Africa, the United States and Vietnam. The Atlantic Philanthropies believes all people should be treated with dignity, respect and fairness, and have full and equal access to civil, political, social and socioeconomic rights.

## Philanthropist has roots in Fermanagh

Founder of The Atlantic Philanthropies, Charles J. Feeney (Chuck) has roots in Fermanagh. Brought up in a working-class neighbourhood in Elizabeth, New Jersey, his father's mother came from near Kinawley, Co. Fermanagh.

Chuck Feeney, made his fortune as co-founder of Duty Free Shops and secretly transferred all of his wealth to The Atlantic Philanthropies in 1984. Mr Feeney now aged in his 70's hopes his example of giving now to make a meaningful impact, will encourage other philanthropists to increase their charitable giving while alive. He intends “Giving While Living” to be his legacy.

# Research Leads to Fermanagh Trust Shared Education Programme

The Shared Education Programme was developed as a result of comprehensive independent research in Fermanagh. The research investigated the views of the following stakeholders towards 'Sharing and Collaborating' between Catholic managed schools and Controlled schools:

- (a) Parents
- (b) Community representatives and
- (c) School principals.

## (a) Feedback from Parents

Telephone interviews were conducted by MillwardBrown (Market Research Consultants) with a sample of 400 parents in Fermanagh (51% Catholic, 38% Protestant and 11% Other or Not Specified). The key findings from the survey included the following points:

1. 92% reported that good relations could be fostered between the two main communities through more mixing of the two communities;
2. 91% said they would like to see enhanced opportunities for children to participate in Shared Education;
3. 88% reported that Shared Education would help promote mutual respect and understanding between children from different religious backgrounds;
4. 59% would like all types of schools retained as they are, but if two local primary schools of different religions were faced with closure, 85% would favour either merging of both schools into one viable school or sharing a campus, rather than having to close the schools and the pupils having to travel significant distances.
5. Where there are gaps in educational provision, support for different measures were as follows:
  - 89% would support schools sharing facilities such as a Technology Laboratory or Sixth Form Centre;
  - 81% would support Catholic and Controlled schools sharing a campus;
  - 74% would support children travelling to neighbouring schools to be taught subjects unavailable in their own school;

- 83% would support teachers travelling to neighbouring schools to teach subjects unavailable in their current school.

## (b) Feedback from Community Representatives

A total of 10 focus group meetings were held in various locations throughout Fermanagh, facilitated by Greenhat a community-based consultancy. Attended by 150 community representatives (65% Catholic and 29% Protestant), with 66% having pre-school or school age children, the feedback largely reflected the findings of the telephone survey above. 95% of participants at the workshops would like to see enhanced opportunities for Shared Education in Fermanagh. They felt that it should be introduced at primary level, building up to secondary level; be optional and not enforced; and introduced gradually and sensitively.

## (c) Feedback from School Principals

Consultations with school principals were undertaken by Peter Quinn Consultancy Services. Individual primary school principals provided detailed feedback and the post-primary schools responded through the Fermanagh Learning Community, of which all 16 are members. There was very positive support for Shared Education. While acknowledging that there may be potential logistical challenges in bringing pupils together for classes, it was widely recognised that the community relations and educational impacts could be very significant. A number of principals highlighted that for local educational provision to be sustainable, especially in rural areas, cross sectoral options need to be considered.

## (d) Research Conclusions

The feedback from the key stakeholders clearly showed a will to engage in Shared Education for the benefit of the pupils in Fermanagh. As a result, the Fermanagh Trust Shared Education Programme was developed. The Programme commenced in January 2009 and it will provide financial assistance to schools in the County for cross-community Shared Education activities for a period of 3 years.

# Fermanagh Schools form Partnerships to deliver Joint Classes

Teaching staff and principals from neighbouring schools got together at the beginning of 2009 to identify how they could work jointly to deliver the curriculum in a way that would enhance the educational provision for their pupils and build good relations

between schools from different communities. The schools submitted their joint Action Plans for funding and to date, a total of 19 Shared Education Partnerships have been approved for funding, involving 39 primary schools and 5 post-primary schools.

This represents over 90% of all primary schools in the County and 30% of the post primary schools. Pages 5 & 6 list the schools that are currently benefiting from the Shared Education Programme.



Primary School Principals and Teachers that are involved in The Fermanagh Trust Shared Education Programme

## Primary School - Shared Education Partnerships

It would not be possible within the confines of this Newsletter to give a description of all of the Shared Education Projects that are taking place. A sample of three primary school partnerships are outlined on Pages 8-10 to give a flavour of the type of joint work that is taking place between schools. Future Newsletters will feature the excellent work that is also taking place in the remaining partnerships.

In addition to the primary school partnerships, the post-primary schools have also been active. A cluster of five post-primary schools in Enniskillen have come together to provide Shared Education. The Partnership and their work is summarised on Pages 6 and 7.

*Two small Church of Ireland primary schools across the border are also benefiting from the Shared Education Programme, having joined forces with two Catholic Maintained primary schools in Fermanagh, to deliver joint classes. They are:*

- *Fairgreen National School, Belturbet, Co Cavan; and*
- *Kilbarron National School, Ballyshannon, Co Donegal.*

# Primary School - Cross Community Partnerships

## Catholic Maintained Schools

## Controlled / Integrated Schools

1	St Mary's Primary School, Tempo	Tempo Primary School
2	St Mary's Primary School, Brookeborough St Eugene's Primary School, Knocks	Brookeborough Primary School
3	St Paul's Primary School, Irvinestown	Irvinestown Primary School
4	St Ronan's Primary School, Lisnaskea	Moat Primary School, Lisnaskea
5	St Mary's Primary School, Mullymesker	Florencecourt Primary School
6	St Patrick's Primary School, Derrygonnelly	Florencecourt Primary School
7	St Joseph's Primary School, Ederney	Lack Primary School
8	St Davog's Primary School, Belleek	Kesh Primary School
9	Killyhommon Primary School, Boho	Derrygonnelly Primary School
10	Tattygar Primary School, Lisbellaw	Lisbellaw Primary School
11	Holy Trinity Primary School, Enniskillen	Lisbellaw Primary School Enniskillen Integrated Primary School. Jones Memorial Primary School, Enniskillen
12	St John the Baptist, Primary School, Roscor	Belleek Primary School
13	St Columban's Primary School, Belcoo	Ballinamallard Primary School
14	St Joseph's Primary School, Donagh St Mary's Primary School, Newtownbutler	Newtownbutler Primary School
15	St Mary's Primary School, Maguiresbridge	Maguiresbridge Primary School
16	Cornagague Primary School Corranny Primary School	Aghadrumsee Primary School

## Catholic Maintained Schools

## Church of Ireland Schools (ROI)

17	St Mary's Primary School, Teemore	Fairgreen National School, Belturbet, Co Cavan
18	St Martin's Primary School, Garrison	Kilbarron National School, Ballyshannon, Co Donegal

The table above shows the cross-community Primary School Partnerships which have been approved for funding and which have commenced their joint classes. The majority of schools are working with their nearest neighbouring school from a different sector, that are within a short travelling distance of each other. Applications are in the pipeline from further schools that wish to start their Shared Education in January 2010.

*"The Transferor Representatives' Council welcomes this educational initiative in the Fermanagh area as a positive means of sharing and collaborating in the provision of the curriculum and at the same time promoting good community relations. In learning together in a purposeful way this project will help children to develop new friendships and a better understanding of their neighbours."*

*Rev Ian Ellis, Secretary to Transferor Representatives' Council*

# Post-Primary Shared Education Partnership

A group of 5 Post-Primary schools in Enniskillen have come together to jointly provide a range of courses for sixth form pupils in the area of Personal Development and Enrichment. The schools are listed in the table below.

<b>Enniskillen Cluster (Post 16 Enrichment Programme)</b>
1. Devenish College
2. Collegiate Grammar
3. St Fanchea's College
4. St Joseph's College
5. Erne Integrated College

The Enniskillen Cluster of Post-Primary Schools listed above have synchronised their timetables to free up one afternoon a week throughout the academic year, to provide a total of 10 different Personal Development / Enrichment courses for 158 pupils aged 16-18 years. It is planned that a further 50 pupils will be able to join the Shared Education classes in January 2010.

The ten courses, which are all cross-community in make-up, are being held across the 5 partner schools and the local leisure centre, with pupils travelling to the course of their choice on the Shared Education afternoon. The courses currently being provided in the various venues are listed below.

*The Enniskillen Cluster is an excellent model of Shared Education. It represents a cross community focus, connecting people with a diversity of faiths and cultural backgrounds, as well as providing opportunities for pupils from grammar and non-selective schools to interact and learn together.*

*The schools are pooling and sharing resources, facilities and expertise. Everyone is a 'winner', and most importantly, the pupils are benefiting from the range of Enrichment Courses on offer.*



Pupils from the Cluster of 5 schools in Enniskillen meet every Friday afternoon. Above pupils learning Self-Defence techniques.

<b>Course</b>	<b>Venue</b>
Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme & President's Award	Erne Integrated College
Life Saving	Lakeland Forum
Dance	St Fanchea's College
Photography	St Joseph's College
First Aid	Collegiate Grammar School
Sign Language	Devenish College
Yoga / Pilates	Lakeland Forum
Self-Defence	Lakeland Forum
Archery	Lakeland Forum
Trampolining	St Joseph's College

The range of courses will be increased as the project progresses over the next three years, with further schools joining the cluster.

# Principals Praise New Opportunities Available to Students

Elizabeth Armstrong, Principal Collegiate Grammar, said feedback from pupils has been very positive.

“There is a cross-over in terms of staff too. One of our teachers Robin McIntosh is trained in coaching trampoline, and usually we would have hired a trampoline elsewhere. St Joseph’s College has a trampoline, but no qualified instructor. Since the schools are near each other, pupils and the teacher walk to St Joseph’s to use their trampoline,” explained Miss Armstrong.

“The fact that they are going to another school isn’t worrying pupils. They seem to have adjusted to it well, and the feedback informally is very positive. They are enjoying the activities very much,” she said. “Working this way, in conjunction with other schools, enables us to increase the range of activities on offer. And there is a grammar- secondary mix and pupils from other communities,” she said.

The shared education project is running parallel to learning options already running through Fermanagh Learning Community, she said. “This enhancement and personal development programme is as much a crucial part of learning, as ‘A’ level exams. Pupils are taking themselves out of their comfort zones, and are trying new things, and are doing it in the context of people they would not usually be with. It is very valuable, and the outcomes will show this.”

Mervyn Walker, Principal Devenish College said: “We are very pleased with the way this has kicked off. Schools would not have been able to run this type of project in the past, this is a great opportunity. In Fermanagh nothing has been tried on this scale before, with all the activities, tutors and with cross-community links of this magnitude”.



Pupils enjoying Archery classes provided through the Fermanagh Shared Education Programme



Pupils learning First Aid Skills on Friday afternoons through the Fermanagh Shared Education Programme

## Monsignor McGuinness Welcomes Positive Impact of Shared Education

Reverend Monsignor Joseph McGuinness as Chairman on the Board of Governors for St Fanchea’s and St Joseph’s colleges, said the Shared Education Programme has been a very positive addition to the curriculum provision at the two schools. “It has been extremely helpful in broadening the educational experience of pupils, and it has allowed greater social interaction, bettering the lives of pupils and school communities. If you can integrate more courses into the curriculum, you can broaden pupil experience. The programme enriches their educational experience and adds to the life experience they are getting through school”.

# Aghadrumsee, Corranry and Cornagague Primary Schools Learn Together



Story Telling at Aghadrumsee

Aghadrumsee Controlled Primary is working with two Catholic Maintained Primary Schools, Cornagague and Corranry (all within a 3.5 mile radius), on a music and dance joint education project. Principal Florence Pryce Aghadrumsee School said: “The children are really enjoying the activities. They are learning through movement, fun, rhythm and beat. For P3 and P4 pupils it is preparation and laying foundations for those who would like to play a musical instrument. The pupils are also enjoying interactive story telling – to promote literacy skills.”

According to Deirdre Boyle, Principal at Cornagague Primary School, feedback from parents and children suggests they are enjoying every minute of it. “Pupils are integrating with children of the same age in their community but who go to different schools. They are working together in what we believe are three fun activities in three small groups providing opportunities to build good relationships,” said Mrs Boyle.



Pupils from the 3 Partner Schools in Deep Discussion

“In a rural area such as ours, which is known as a socially disadvantaged area, the Shared Education Programme provides us with a unique opportunity to bring novel activities into our schools which otherwise would not normally be available to our children. The leaders of the three schools have a harmonious relationship and have been pivotal in promoting cross-community relationships. This Programme gives us an opportunity to further utilise this important starting point,” she explained. Caroline Rooney, Teacher, Corranry PS said “This offsite learning provides an excellent opportunity for children to integrate with one another, and to develop their creative skills in a secure and enjoyable atmosphere”.

*“Ting-a-layo was my favourite song, I like it when it says my donkey walks, my donkey talks, my donkey eats with a knife and fork. I met a new friend called Alisha. We found out both our Mummies are teachers.”*

*Amy P3, Aghadrumsee*

*“ I liked the PE and I liked singing, so it is nice to do it at school.”*

*Leah P3, Corranry*

*“My favourite was the avalanche song. I love singing.”*

*Daire P4, Cornagague*

## Board of Governors Member says Let’s Grasp Opportunities for Sharing

*The Shared Education Project is not just about learning the skills, it’s about the realisation that we do share God’s earth with different languages, different colours, different cultures, different heritages and different religions to name but a few. Two people live beside each other, they feed each other’s cats when they are on holiday or help each other with the round hay bales; they support each other even though they don’t have their children baptised in the same church. Yes we have differences but is that such a problem? Let’s share this world as we all seek to prepare to share the next one.”*

*Walter Pringle, Parish Pastoral Assistant  
Aghadrumsee Controlled Primary School*



# New Learning Curve for Newtownbutler Schools and St Joseph's Donagh



Getting to grips with ICT

Creativity, photography, script-writing and making animated films have fired the imaginations of pupils at Newtownbutler Controlled Primary school, St Joseph's Primary Donagh and St Mary's Primary Newtownbutler. Working together through the Fermanagh Trust Shared Education Programme, the project is helping to foster skills in a new generation of potential actors, producers, sound engineers, script writers, journalists, broadcasters and computer technology experts. Having been out and about taking photos, the pupils are learning how to crop and edit images, create frames, and slide shows and to produce and personalise their own DVD's.

Teachers Cormac Jordan St Josephs; Christine Rusk Newtownbutler Controlled and Paul Fitzpatrick, St Mary's are jointly delivering the project in the schools, having firstly been tutored in computer animation skills themselves, learning how to make a story board, script writing and digital film editing.

Mr Jordan said: "This is the first time all the staff from these schools have worked together. We had to plan the delivery of the project and work out the logistics of getting together." He said the teachers are delighted with the financial and educational investment, in cutting edge technology, which includes Apple iMac computers and resources for each of the schools.

Mrs Rusk said: "We would never have been here together, only for this project. Pupils are learning to accept and respect each other's identity. If they work together, they do not grow up having the prejudice our generation had." Some pupils from her school had never been to Donagh nor St Joseph's school before embarking on the Shared Education Project. Pupils see symbols in other schools and everything is very open, she said. "It is quite an undertaking in what is often perceived as two polarised areas. Because the project is so unusual, the pupils are mixing well".

Teacher Paul Fitzpatrick of St Mary's said the project embraces many aspects of the curriculum including literacy, ICT, personal development and mutual understanding, thinking skills and personal capabilities. Schools are sharing expertise and the teachers are being tutored in new skills, introducing longer term sustainability for schools delivering curriculum subjects. If the schools were not in the Shared Education Programme, they would be able to do less of these activities. "The Shared Education Programme has opened up computer animation and extra scope and breath within our lessons. It is bringing schools closer together," he said.

The groups of creative pupils have been developing their film scripts on topical themes; for example, welcoming a new pupil into their school and outsmarting the bullies. They are working out story boards and character lines before producing their animated films. Pupils have volunteered for acting, directing, and producing roles.



Young film-makers in Action



Photo taken by Pupils at Crom

*"We sat down together and wrote the ideas, and we are drawing up the characters."*

*Lauren P7 Newtownbutler Controlled*

*"In this film we are bullying the teacher. Lauren and I ask if the teacher wants her desk cleared, but we sweep it all onto the floor. We get detention, she falls asleep and we tie her to the chair. It will all take some time, as we have to cut the scenes, and add music and speech."*

*Codie P7 St Joseph's PS*

# Tempo Village Primary Schools Work Together to Create Sculpture

Pupils involved in the Tempo Shared Education Project are working together on a sculpture project, which will link Tempo Controlled Primary and St Mary's Primary school. When completed each school will install their part of the sculpture on their school grounds, that will visibly connect the schools, which are literally across the road from each other.

At the moment, the schools are sharing the expertise of Jon Kelly, artist from Genevieve Jon Designs, in joint art workshops. The eager P6 & 7 learners are making life-size drawings exploring their own identity, image and that of new friends, in an exercise which asks "Who am I?" They are also starting work on willow sculptures and will begin to brainstorm ideas for the final sculpture piece. Research on the sculpture, will also involve a trip to Stormont, home of the Northern Ireland Assembly, for Tempo pupils, where they will explore artistic structures at the heart of Government.

Principal Fergal McCann, St Mary's Primary, said: "The exciting thing is the fact that there will be a sculpture. It will be almost like jigsaw pieces - one at each school. It is about linking the two schools. We are basing the project on the local community and buildings linked to the community. We are working as partners and developing links".



P7 pupils from the Partner Schools making Self-Images

Teacher David Hardy, Tempo Controlled School, explained that the project fits really well into the curriculum with the focus on art, local history, community and environment and personal development and mutual understanding. "The workshops also generate good ideas for things we can do in class. The children are drawing local buildings and using tissue paper to create texture and I'm learning new things at the same time," he added. "The next thing we will focus on is the sculpture using willow and what makes us part of our community. It takes time for friendships to form, even in classes at school it takes time, but we are going well," he said.

Artist Jon Kelly explained that working together the 40 children will cover a lot of art techniques, tools and colour and provide an opportunity to take time to think about themselves. Use of mosaic, drawings, clay, models and willow sculpture, will take pupils through different scales of creativity, he explained. "Towards the end of next term we will start designing the large sculpture piece, and everyone will be involved in the design," said Mr Kelly. He explained that initially children were partnered with one person from another school for the life-size drawing. "They were very good at sharing that piece of work with a child from another school".

*"It has been a big help to have the support and encouragement of both schools Board's of Governors and parents, who have welcomed the whole idea of cross-community working. Not so long ago, we would not have had these opportunities. The whole idea is to promote cross-community learning and everyone seems to be making a concerted effort to work with it and promote it."*

*Mr Hardy  
Teacher, Tempo Controlled Primary School*

# Friendships Renewed in Tempo after Seven Years

The Shared Education Project in Tempo enabled two young pupils to renew their friendship after seven years.

Zoe a P7 pupil in Tempo Controlled School and Aine a P7 pupil at St Mary's Primary School, who both attended Tempo Community Pre-school Playgroup, recognised each other when their classes came together for the Shared Education project. After their time at the cross community playgroup, they went to separate primary schools in Tempo. Now in their final year of primary school, Shared Education has brought them together again.



Zoe and Aine catch up on seven years during the Joint Art & Design classes

## Importance of Cross-Community Linkages among Schools

Mary O'Neill, Principal, is a member of the Advisory Committee for the Fermanagh Shared Education Programme. Mary states that the Shared Education Programme in Fermanagh has come at a time when cross community work has become increasingly important for all schools. "The Programme promotes collaborative working between schools but also allows schools from the various sectors to maintain their own unique identities and celebrate diversity. It provides opportunities for the schools involved to broaden their curriculum and enrich pupil experiences", said Mrs O'Neill.

"The sharing of expertise among staff in schools is particularly important in the primary sector as teachers deliver a total of seven areas of learning as well as a range of cross-curricular skills. Most teachers will agree that it is difficult to have expertise in every area of learning and in the range of cross-curricular skills. By sharing expertise in the planning and delivery of each project, staff (in each school) are developing professionally in new curricular areas. This will inevitably enhance the learning experience for pupils".

"The fact that the funding will be provided over a three-year period also gives staff opportunities to maintain and enhance their cross-community relationships and curriculum expertise. Again, the duration of the project enables schools to think about how pupil relationships across the sectors might be developed over the next few years and beyond" she said.

Mary stressed that without the financial and professional support provided for the Shared Education by the Fermanagh Trust, it would be very difficult for schools to run similar projects successfully.

*Speaking about the benefits of the Shared Education Partnership between the two schools in Brookeborough (St Mary's and the Controlled Primaries) and with St Eugene's Primary School in the Knocks, Mr Sam Blair, is pleased that the schools are able to avail of this Programme to build on the good community relations work in which the schools have been involved previously. "The two schools in Brookeborough, previously worked together through the EMU project and the WELB Schools Community Relations Programme, and now through the Fermanagh Trust Shared Education Programme, they are building on that cross-community work. The location and proximity of the schools is a benefit to Brookeborough village and surrounding area, providing opportunities for pupils to mix. Geographically, it is easier for them to work together."*

*"It is important that the Shared Education Programme is on-going, as the children grow up and move on to post primary schools, so it has to be there for the new children coming up, to be able to develop friendships across the community. For children moving to post primary education, it is an advantage that they have made friendships before moving on."*

*Sam Blair, Transferor's Representative  
Brookeborough Controlled Primary School*

# Achievements due to hard work by Principals and Teachers



L-R Principals: Brendan McCusker, St Mary's PS, Maguiresbridge, Honor Irvine, Maguiresbridge PS, Hazel Gardiner, Brookeborough PS and Siobhan Maguire, St Eugene's PS, Knocks.



L-R Principals: Wendy Houston, Florencecourt PS, Liam Magee, St Mary's PS, Mullymesker and Eileen Glynn, St Patrick's PS, Derrygonnelly.



L-R front row: Geraldine Higgins, St Martin's PS, Garrison, Josephine Swift, St Paul's PS, Irvinestown, Edwina Read, Irvinestown PS L-R back row: Jimmy Kirk, St Joseph's PS, Ederney, Jennifer Graham, Kesh PS, Sandra Johnston, Lack PS.



L-R Principals: Esdille Lappin, Belleek PS, Ita Jordan, St Mary's PS Teemore, Beryl Trenier, Fairgreen NS, Belturbet.



L-R Principals: Victoria Wilson, Newtownbutler PS, Cormac Jordan, St Joseph's PS, Donagh and Paula Kelly, St Mary's PS, Newtownbutler.



L-R Principals: John McCrea, Ballinamallard PS and Aidan Cox, St Columban's PS, Belcoo, with Teachers Carol Elliott and Gerard McMahon.



L-R: Fintan Murphy, Holy Trinity PS, Enniskillen, Ruth Coalter, Lisbellaw PS, Fergal McCann, St Mary's PS Tempo, Alan Williamson, Tempo PS.



L-R Principals: Eileen McKenzie, Killyhommon PS, Felicity Humphreys, Moat PS and Theresa Murray, St Ronan's PS.

The level of success of the Shared Education Programme is attributable to the Principals and Teachers of the schools involved. Without their hard work, organising meetings with their partners schools, and planning and developing projects that best meet the needs of their pupils, the joint classes would not be taking place. This required considerable effort and time on the part of those involved. The photographic gallery to the left shows the Principals planning and preparing for their joint projects.

*"The schools are to be congratulated for taking part in the Fermanagh Shared Education Programme. The participation of so many schools shows tremendous dedication of teachers to preparing all children for the 21st century challenges with pupils growing and contributing to the common good. The Shared Education Programme will reinforce the social and economic benefits of working together while genuinely accepting and celebrating diversity which our schools embrace".*

**Paul O'Doherty  
CCMS Policy and  
Development  
Co-Ordinator**

# Educational Benefits of Shared Education in Fermanagh

Schools in Fermanagh commenced their joint classes in September 2009 and already the feedback from schools and pupils has been excellent, giving early indications that the Fermanagh Shared Education Programme has a huge potential to make a significant impact, in both building good relations in the County and in enhancing educational provision.

Principals and teaching staff have been reporting the enormous educational benefits of the Shared Education Programme. According to the staff involved, it is an excellent means of helping in the delivery of the new Northern Ireland Curriculum, e.g. in areas of learning such as Personal Development and Mutual Understanding; The World Around Us; Citizenship and Employability. Schools are sharing their experience and facilities with their partner schools, and they can acquire specialist expertise (not available within individual schools) and access additional resources, enhancing pupil learning and increasing educational opportunities for the pupils involved. The teachers stand to gain from skills and knowledge transfer from partner schools and external tutors, contributing to their own professional development.

Overall, the Programme creates the potential for sustainable cross sectoral (cross community) linkages, where sharing and collaborating can help schools, particularly small rural schools provide an excellent educational experience for their pupils. It is anticipated that many of the linkages developed through the Programme will be continued after the duration of the Programme, where there are mutual benefits for each of the schools in the partnership.

# Principal's Platform

*Principal Aidan Cox  
St Columban's Primary  
School Belcoo*



Mr Cox is delighted with the Shared Education Project. His school works with Ballinamallard Controlled Primary.

For years I have been one of those who has advocated cross-community education. For example I have been to the forefront in organising community games in Florencecourt; a cross community / cross-border science project centred in Gortatole; and the Cathal Bui Educational Trail in Blacklion, Cavan to name a few. While all were commendable and worthwhile they lacked the joined-up thinking and dynamism of the Fermanagh Trust Shared Education Programme.

I feel the strength in this new innovation derives from the connected learning opportunities of the new programme. Great consideration has gone into the planning and organisation of the project. Teachers and children are actively involved in the planning. This involved much organisation before the programme was even rolled out. In our case, Mr McMahon and his counterpart, Miss Elliott, planned for connected learning ideas before they began the programme, then after initial input from the children and work done together a rolling programme evolved and this process will be continuous throughout.

Already the children have become active participants in the learning process by using Martech to link up both schools for video conferencing.

I feel this is the way forward to support shared education for the future with more classes involved and the opportunities so vast that we can help our young people to integrate more naturally and reduce tensions in our society. Overall I look forward enthusiastically to the work the Fermanagh Trust has made possible for our pupils.

*Aidan Cox*

*"The Fermanagh Shared Education Programme is a welcome initiative which will provide primary and post-primary schools in Fermanagh an opportunity to build on relationships across their communities through acknowledging and celebrating diversity whilst bringing differences together".*

*"As the Revised Curriculum has placed greater emphasis on developing skills which are key to a child's progression in education and later life; and provides children with a broader and balanced education, this initiative will provide more flexibility for teachers and schools when delivering and meeting educational needs of all our children."*

*Barry Mulholland WELB Chief Executive*

# Impact of Future Configuration of Schools in Fermanagh

Shared Education could play an important role in helping to sustain local educational provision in Fermanagh, a County which is likely to see greater changes than any other area in Northern Ireland in terms of the configuration of the schools estate and how education will be delivered. Although still in its early stages, the Fermanagh Shared Education model shows that schools from different communities can work effectively together for the benefit of their pupils, without jeopardising ethos or identity of individual schools.

Schools throughout Northern Ireland are facing many challenges due to current policies and strategies, but these challenges are compounded in Fermanagh, due to the County having one of the highest ratios of rural dwellers and consequently disproportionately more rural schools with small enrolments than elsewhere in the region.

One of the six criteria for assessing the viability of schools in the Sustainable Schools Policy (DENI 2009), is pupil enrolments.

Rural primary schools should have a minimum of 105 pupils. Applying this criterion to schools in Fermanagh would see 25 of the 44 primary schools (57%) as being considered potentially unsustainable. It is inevitable that there will be a rationalisation of the schools estate in Fermanagh. But how that takes place and the impact on communities, demographics and on community relations needs careful consideration.

Where there are minority populations (Catholic or Protestant), and therefore small schools catering for that minority (Maintained or Controlled), closure of these schools, given their small enrolments, could effectively lead to the decline of that community in the area (through migration to other areas in the County). This would result in a more segregated population and a predominance of single identity areas, which is not conducive to building a cohesive and integrative society for the future.

Rural towns, villages and communities in Fermanagh which have two primary schools, are unlikely to be able to sustain both a Controlled and a Catholic Maintained primary school, under the new policy guidelines. Rationalisation within sectors (i.e. Catholic schools amalgamating with other Catholic schools and controlled schools amalgamating with controlled schools), which are likely to take place in the absence of cross-sectoral initiatives, also risks an increasing trend towards single identity areas as young families migrate towards their nearest sectoral school (i.e. Catholic or Controlled). Over time there is a real risk that this too will lead to increasingly segregated communities and polarisation.

To develop integrative and sustainable communities, there is a need to avert this risk. There are various cross sectoral options that could be considered that could help ensure viability and sustainability of local educational provision, which do not dilute the ethos and identities of schools or communities.

## Risk of Community Segregation and Polarisation

*Areas in Fermanagh became increasingly segregated during the Troubles. There is a risk that the rationalisation of schools in Fermanagh, along sectoral lines, will lead to further demographic changes, resulting in an even more segregated population, a predominance of single identity areas and community polarisation.*

*It is important that there is an opportunity to explore cross-sectoral options for the sustainability of local education, because once the schools estate is established, the consequential changes in*

*demography will be a difficult trend to stop and even more difficult to reverse. It is preferable that discussions take place sooner rather than later, to seek solutions in various localities, where schools may be at risk.*

*A Shared Education model could provide the potential for sustaining education in rural areas through cross community working and it is an option that should be given serious consideration.*

# Are Cross-Sectoral Options being Explored in Planning Post-Primary Provision?

Post primary schools are currently facing unprecedented pressures for change, including the Sustainable Schools Policy, the Entitlement Framework and Area Based Planning. To what extent are cross-sectoral options being explored to help meet these challenges? Do the current processes allow sufficient scope for cross sectoral options to be examined? Could optimal solutions be lost due to lack of joined-up planning?

## Reconfiguration on Sectoral Basis

The Sustainable Schools Policy indicates that post-primary schools should have 500 pupils at 11- 16 years and 100 pupils at post-16. Applying this criterion to Fermanagh schools, 13 of the 16 post-primary schools (81%) would be considered potentially unsustainable.

Similar to the primary school situation, re-configuration of the schools estate along sectoral lines has implications for future demographics and community relations in the County.

## Collaboration to meet Entitlement Framework

In addition to the sustainability issue, the Entitlement Framework (EF) requires all post-primary schools from 2013, to offer a minimum of 24 courses at Key Stage 4 (14 -16 years) and 27 courses at post 16, of which at least one third of the courses must be vocational / applied. Few if any of the post-primary schools will be able to meet the EF requirements alone. Collaboration with other schools and education providers is most likely to be required. The Department of Education provides incentives for schools to enter into collaborations, but these partnerships do not have to be cross-sectoral in make-up.

## Post-Primary Reviews by Sectors

Recognising the pressures for change, two major reviews of post-primary education in Fermanagh were conducted, one by the Controlled sector and one by the Catholic sector. Each produced a separate pre-consultation document for its own sector and the two review processes are continuing on a parallel basis. The absence of a joined-up approach was raised in responses to the consultation process and it was highlighted that cross-sectoral options should also be explored to help identify a way forward for the benefit of Fermanagh pupils.

## Area Based Planning

The extent to which Area Based Planning will explore cross sectoral options is not known as the recently released Together Towards Entitlement report (November 2009), which investigated the delivery of the EF through Area Based Planning, did not set out the individual area plans. The report acknowledges some of the challenges and provides a framework for the way forward.

## In Summary

*It is important that there is an effective mechanism to explore cross sectoral options in determining the future of education in Fermanagh.*

*Does Fermanagh want a segregated and polarised society or cohesive and sustainable communities?*

*The future of our schools in Fermanagh can be the key to a shared and peaceful future in the County.*

## Closing Comments

*Here in County Fermanagh we have to think innovatively to ensure we overcome the impact of living in a largely rural segregated community. The Fermanagh Trust Shared Education Programme is a direct response to feedback we received from parents, schools and the wider community who highlighted the need and potential for collaboration between schools across Fermanagh. The initial feedback from principals, teachers and young people in schools involved in the Programme has been terrific.*

*Lauri McCusker*

*Director of the Fermanagh Trust*

# Next Round of Funding for Schools

## NEWS ALERT

### Post Primary Schools

The closing date for Applications from Post Primary Schools is 18th December 2009.

Interested schools (in association with their partner school/s) are invited to submit Outline Proposals for Shared Education, i.e. where part of the curriculum is delivered jointly on a cross community basis.

Application Forms and Guidelines are available from Catherine Ward, Programme Manager, at the address below.

## Next Round Primary Schools

The next call for applications from Primary Schools will be in February 2010. Schools not currently involved in Shared Education are invited to submit applications.

In addition, schools wishing to continue their Shared Education activities will need to re-apply for the next academic year (2010 / 2011).

**For further details on the Fermanagh Trust Shared Education Programme**

**Please contact:**

**Catherine Ward (Programme Manager)**

**The Fermanagh Trust**

**Fermanagh House**

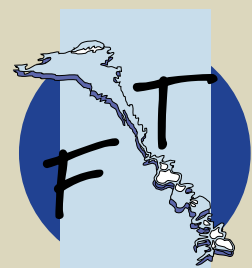
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**The Fermanagh Trust**