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SHARED EDUCATION PROGRAMME GOES FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

Year Three of the Shared Education Programme runs from September 2011 until June 2012 and is going from strength to strength across Fermanagh. The demand from schools to participate has exceeded all expectations and shows no sign of waning. The Fermanagh Trust has approved a greater number of applications from the cross-community schools partnerships for 2011 -2012 with the majority of primary schools and all post primary schools set to benefit from the Shared Education Programme.

46% of all primary school pupils will be participating in joint, cross-community classes with another school on a regular basis. Parents and members of the Boards of Governors will continue to come together for joint meetings, events and training. The initiative is also helping to build bridges between the school communities and this clearly has a ripple effect, with pupils learning to respect diversity.

Year 3 will also see a greater number of post-primary schools in the County involved in Shared Education. One of the new Shared Education initiatives, which has been approved for Year 3, is a further development of the linkage between two schools in Lisnaskea – St Comhghall's College and Lisnaskea High School. During the 2010-2011 year both schools, along with St Eugene's College, Roslea and St Aidan's High School, Derrylin delivered a very successful joint literacy programme.

Primary and post primary schools in Fermanagh have experienced the benefits of Shared Education over the past two years and it is obvious that this is something that they wish to see continue and grow. By working in collaboration with a neighbouring school from a different sector, aspects of the curriculum can be delivered more effectively and Shared Education has been proved to enhance the educational opportunities for pupils across the County. Shared Education requires 'thinking outside the box' and the programme helps schools provide a more holistic and enriching educational experience for their pupils. Considering the many dilemmas facing education in Fermanagh, Shared Education provides an opportunity to look at new ways to provide the best education for our children.

See pages 14 & 15 for a list of those partnerships participating in Year 3 of the Shared Education Programme



Members of the Boards of Governors, staff from St. Mary's Primary School Tempo, Tempo Controlled Primary School and staff from The Fermanagh Trust at the unveiling of the friendship tree.

ASSEMBLY SUPPORTS SHARED EDUCATION

The work being done through the Shared Education Programme in Fermanagh has received political support with the Assembly passing a motion, which was proposed by the Alliance party and backed by the other main parties, supporting Shared Education.

In the debate held on 23rd November 2010 the following motion was passed: (The Assembly) "Believes that the current education system is unsustainable; recognizes the economic, educational and social benefits that can come from integrated and shared education; and calls on the Minister of Education to actively promote a system of integrated and shared education throughout Northern Ireland.

Proposing the motion, Mr Trevor Lunn (Alliance Party) said: "We must acknowledge and promote shared learning schemes, of which there are plenty and as far as I am aware, all the political parties are on record as supporting shared education. We believe that increased sharing and integration in education to bring children together in their formative years is absolutely fundamental to creating a cohesive and integrated society".

The Minister of Education at the time, Catriona Ruane (Sinn Féin), said: "My draft policy for community relations, equality and diversity in education recognises that collaboration already exists and, more important, seeks to build on that greater sharing and collaboration. As I said, a great deal of collaboration is happening It does my heart good to see different uniforms in different schools in areas where one would not expect to see that."

"Teachers are way ahead of many politicians because they actively encourage and support collaboration. Can more be done? Yes. My Department encourages more to be done. Indeed, with any funding streams that are coming on board, whether for extended schools or shared education, we encourage clustering and schools to get together. Members would be genuinely amazed to see what goes on. Young people should be educated together. We must find ways to do that through the diversity of provision that exists at present."

Dominic Bradley (SDLP) said: "The goal of achieving sharing in education may be a long-term one, but it needs to be fostered and encouraged" and Sir Reg Empey (UUP): "The Ulster Unionist Party strongly believes that we should be rationalising with a view to sharing. We should be promoting cross-sectoral collaborations, be they formal, through the entitlement framework, or informal. We must be looking towards future rationalization, be that by exploring shared faith schools, community schools or shared facilities, predicated on community buy-in and support. Shared services and facilities might also be appropriate, if encouraged by area planning."

Local MLA, Arlene Foster (DUP), threw her weight behind the Shared Education Programme in Fermanagh saying: "Is the Member aware of the excellent work that takes place in Fermanagh through the shared future projects? Some 30% of primary-school children are involved in a shared project that gains international backing from Atlantic Philanthropies and from the International Fund for Ireland. It is an excellent project and one that should be looked at from a Northern Ireland context."

The full debate is available at <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/record/reports2010/101123.html>



Pupils at Aghadrumsee, Corranry and Cornagague Primary Schools discuss the important issues of the day



Belleek Controlled Primary School pupils and students from St. John the Baptist, Belleek designed and created these t-shirts which show what can be achieved through collaboration

BREAKING NEWS

SHARED EDUCATION CONFERENCE

On 28th September 2011 the Shared Education Learning Forum, which is made up of Fermanagh Trust, Queen's University Belfast and the North Eastern Education and Library Board will hold a Shared Education – Next Steps Conference in the Hilton Hotel, Belfast. The half day is due to be attended by the Minister for Education, John O'Dowd, who will give the Keynote address. The conference will also hear from Lauri McCusker, Director, Fermanagh Trust who will speak on the theme "What is Shared Education and what the Shared Education Programme in Fermanagh has done so far". Delegates will also hear from the other two pilot areas and speakers will examine the economic and community benefits of Shared Education. Professor Tony Gallagher from Queen's will look at the future for Shared Education, before the conference is closed by Denis Rooney, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland, followed by lunch. For more information visit the Shared Education section on the Fermanagh Trust website – <http://www.fermanaghtrust.org/cms/publish/sharededucation/index.shtml>

EDUCATION COMMITTEE TO HEAR ABOUT THE PROGRESS OF SHARED EDUCATION IN FERMANAGH

In another positive development, Fermanagh's Shared Education Programme will be one of the topics of discussion at the meeting of the Education Committee at Parliament Buildings on Wednesday, 19th October 2011. The committee, members of whom have expressed an interest in attending the SELF conference on 28th September, will have the opportunity to ask further questions about Shared Education in Fermanagh and its progress. The role of the statutory committees of the Assembly is 'to advise and assist each Northern Ireland Minister in the formulation of policy with respect to matters within his/her responsibilities as a Minister'. Fermanagh Trust, through the conference and appearance at the Committee, hope that MLAs will have a much better understanding of shared education and its potential across Northern Ireland. More information on the Education Committee and its work can be found at <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/education/2011mandate/education-home.htm>

COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP IN SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

Fermanagh Trust wishes to congratulate the 11 principals/teachers from Fermanagh who have been accepted onto the MSc in Collaborative leadership in Schools run by Queen's University, Belfast and funded by Atlantic Philanthropies and Queen's University, Belfast. Priority was given to teachers coordinating SEP programmes and teachers directly teaching shared classes. For Shared Education Programme teachers two core modules will be delivered in a closed group in a "hub" centre before the participants join the rest of the students.

SUCCESSFUL LAUNCH OF YEAR 1 EVALUATION REPORT (2009/2010)

Presentations from five participating school principals gave a flavor of the achievements of the Fermanagh Trust Shared Education Programme in its first year. Representing the primary and post primary sector, the principals shared their experiences at the launch in Enniskillen on 30th September 2010 of an independent report reviewing the first year (2009/2010).



L-R: Denis Rooney, Chair, International Fund for Ireland, Michelle Gildernew, MP, MLA, Joanna McVey, Chair, Fermanagh Trust, Padraic Quirk, Atlantic Philanthropies and children from St. Mary's Primary School, Tempo and Tempo Controlled Primary School at the launch of the Year 1 Evaluation Report

The positive impact the ground-breaking pilot initiative had on all the participating pupils and 50 schools throughout Fermanagh since September 2009 was outlined by a range of speakers. And with almost 104,000 hours of shared education having taken place during the first year, the overriding finding of the report was that the Shared Education Programme has resulted in a significant level of cross-community contact between schools and pupils. In addition, cross-border contact was delivered in some of the partnerships with the Programme including three schools from the Republic



Lauri McCusker, Director, Fermanagh Trust, addresses the launch of the Year 1 Evaluation Report of the Trust's Shared Education programme.

of Ireland.

98% of participating primary school teachers and pupils felt that the Programme resulted in greater



A selection of the crowd at the Report launch

opportunities for inter-sector sharing and collaboration. 100% of participating post primary pupils felt that the Programme helped reduce fear, suspicion and mistrust of the other community – in fact 62% felt this was either fully or mostly achieved.

Through the Shared Education Programme, schools have benefited from delivering curriculum-based courses including history, science, literacy, art and drama in a shared setting. Music has also proven to be an effective catalyst and in one partnership two primary schools in one village, Tempo established a joint brass band. At the formal launch of the report, musical entertainment was provided by a group of 12 young musicians from Tempo Primary School and St. Mary's Tempo, conducted by Simon O'Hare of the Western Education and Library



Some of the principals listen to the feedback on the first year of the Shared Education Programme: Mervyn Walker, Principal, Devenish College and Alan Williamson, Principal, Tempo Controlled Primary School

Board's Music Service.

Pupils also enjoyed gaining skills in sports not commonly taught in their respective communities – e.g. Gaelic football, rugby and cricket. The sixth form enrichment programme has fostered extensive and regular cross-community contact between over 200 pupils on a weekly basis in practical subjects such as photography, guitar, self defense, first aid and cooking on a budget.

Mr. Lauri McCusker, of Fermanagh Trust, highlighted the importance of the work taking place in schools across Fermanagh – leading into a snapshot of the Programme from some of the primary and post primary sectors involved. Focusing on three of the partnerships – a primary school partnership, a cross-border partnership and a post primary school partnership, the participating principals addressed the widely attended gathering – which included representatives of education throughout Fermanagh and other organisations supporting the Shared Education Programme.

At the launch, **Alan Williamson of Tempo Controlled Primary School and Fergal McCann of St. Mary's P.S. Tempo** referred to the difference that the project has made in their school environment and to the wider community. They decided to create a permanent reminder in the form of a sculpture – something to celebrate the differences and highlight the similarities. The children really enjoyed the experience and they reached their goal of having two sculptures in their respective schools.



L-R: Phil Flanagan, MLA and Jim Ledwith, Trustee of Fermanagh Trust

Ita Jordan, Principal of St. Mary's Primary School, Teemore and Beryl Treiner of the Fairgreen National School in Belturbet, Co. Cavan, regarded it as a wonderful opportunity to share through shared education and they acknowledged the funders. Their projects included the following: in term one drama and music, culminating in a widely attended showcase production; in term two, art and craft – the end product being two murals reflecting the children's own ideas;

and in term three they engaged in a variety of sports.

The benefits in the post primary education partnerships were highlighted by **Mr. Mervyn Walker of Devenish College** - one of a number of schools operating a post primary programme. Outlining the success of the programme Mervyn highlighted the commitment of principals and other school staff.

Guest Speaker **Denis Rooney, Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland** said both funders “consider shared education to be integral to advancing peace building and reconciliation.” He emphasised the success of the Programme’s “first year in helping to develop positive working relationships between schools both traditions is truly impressive – particularly in the context that many of these schools are located in areas that have long-term community tensions and division.”

Joanna McVey, Chairperson of the Fermanagh Trust, who felt it was terrific to see such a huge turn-out at the event, congratulated everyone involved saying: “The Fermanagh Trust is delighted with the positive response from schools, parents and children from across Fermanagh and beyond, with so many people embracing the Programme and making shared education an integral part of their learning. We particularly wish to thank the funders Atlantic Philanthropies and the International Fund for Ireland for their support.



L-R: Gerry Burns, Spirit of Enniskillen, Mrs. Florence Brunt, Board of Governors, Brookeborough Controlled Primary School and Kate Doherty, Chair, Board of Governors, Tempo Controlled Primary School

“The review of the first year of the Programme has highlighted excellent feedback from all of the participating schools and the trustees and staff look forward to building on this work in the future”, she concluded.

A REPORT ON YEAR TWO (2010 – 2011) OF THE SHARED EDUCATION PROGRAMME

The second year of the Shared Education Programme saw unprecedented growth with the number of pupils involved increasing from 1,823 to 2,728 – an increase of nearly 1000 – representing 42% of all primary school pupils in the county. 41 Primary Schools and 10 post-primary schools delivered part of the curriculum jointly with another school from a different sector. The Shared Education Programme enables schools to share resources and avail of each other's skills and expertise, resulting in enhanced curriculum delivery and an improved learning experience for the pupils involved. The Programme has also enabled schools to identify common needs and undertake joint staff development together. Parents and members of the Boards of Governors also participated, with many of the schools providing joint training with partner schools for these groups. Neighbouring school communities got to know one another and to plan further cross-community initiatives in year three of the programme. One of the highlights of Year 2 was the Respecting Difference Training, which you can read about below.

RESPECTING DIFFERENCE TRAINING

Forty-five principals, teachers and classroom assistants were awarded Certificates, having successfully completed training in the Respecting Difference Initiative, which was delivered by Early Years, in partnership with the Shared Education Programme. Parents didn't miss out either - several hundred returned to the classroom to participate in the parent workshops on Respecting Difference, which were delivered throughout the County.

The Respecting Difference Initiative is directly related to the curriculum i.e. the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding area of learning. It uses a range of play and educational resources to enable children to understand the meaning of acceptance and respect for others. It aims to:

- Increase awareness of diversity and difference issues among children, their teachers and parents;
- Help children understand what it feels like to be excluded and encourage them to be more willing to include children who are different from themselves;
- Encourage young children to demonstrate respect and actively include others who are different, rather than ridiculing, fighting or rejecting them;
- Make the Respecting Difference Initiative a very real experience for children and something that can be shared with their families.

Feedback from teachers and parents has shown overwhelming support for the Initiative and it is planned to roll the training out to all teachers and classroom assistants involved with Foundation and Key Stage 1 classes in the County in 2011-2012. Also, another series of parent workshops will be delivered, to meet the demand from parents.



Participants in the respecting difference training, receive their certificates at a special awards ceremony

UPDATES FROM AROUND THE COUNTY

SOUTH FERMANAGH POST PRIMARY UPDATE

Four South Fermanagh schools – Lisnaskea High School, St Comhghall's High School, Lisnaskea, St Aidan's High School, Derrylin, and St Eugene's College, Roslea - were delighted to have secured resources for a Shared Education Literacy Project which began in January 2011. Speaking on behalf of the newly formed partnership, Mr. Martin McBrien welcomed the new development saying:

"As Principal of St. Aidan's, I am delighted to be involved in the Shared Education Literacy Programme, which represents an important step forward in the field of post-primary collaboration between the four SE Fermanagh schools. I am certain that the St. Aidan's pupils will reap considerable and measurable benefits from their participation in terms of raising both literacy and social skills and I hope that all pupils involved will have a rewarding and enriching experience".

All participants in the project – staff and Year 9 students from the four schools, along with the coordinator – met for the first time on January 11th to enjoy a day of activities at the Share Centre, Lisnaskea, when they had the opportunity to work together and make new friends. During the following eight weeks the first three groups of 7-8 young people met together each Tuesday for a 1.5 hour session of activities enabling them to improve their skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening. With the students worked mostly in pairs and small groups, but they also had the opportunity to benefit from one to one support with their reading.

Mrs. Rosemary Cupples from Enniskillen who was appointed to coordinate the project said:

"Poor literacy skills have a long-term detrimental effect on pupils' confidence, learning and progress -not just while they are at school, but for the rest of their lives. I am delighted that the South Fermanagh schools are taking the opportunity to tackle this issue and hope that even in the limited time available each student can make measurable progress in these essential skills. I particularly welcome the opportunity for the students to learn together in a cross-community setting and to be part of building a better future for our country".

The eight week cycle ended with a special day of activities to celebrate the achievements of the students encouraging them to keep up the new friendships formed. All those involved had high expectations for its outcomes. Mr. Martin Knox from St. Eugene's College said:

"This is an important initiative and one of the first of its kind in the area. As Principal of St Eugene's College, I welcome the opportunity to involve our pupils in the project and I have no doubt they will reap significant benefits from their participation."



Principals: Martin Knox, St. Eugene's, Roslea, Martin McBrien, St. Aidan's Derrylin, Rosemary Cupples, Project Co-ordinator, Dave Rees, Lisnaskea High School, Gary Kelly, St. Comhghall's College, Lisnaskea.

ENNISKILLEN CLUSTER POST PRIMARY UPDATE

Each term sees sixth form students from five post-primary schools in Enniskillen coming together every Friday afternoon to take part in the Shared Education Programme. The programme is now entering its third year, with activities taking place in each school and in various locations around Enniskillen.

A number of the activities offered during the Programme resulted in participating pupils gaining a recognised qualification. Students had the opportunity to gain Silver Duke of Edinburgh/President's Award, St John Ambulance Public First Aid certificate, Bronze award in Life Saving and Trampolining proficiency levels from 1 up to 10. Awards such as these are a great addition to students' CVs or university applications. 2011 sees over 50 additional pupils taking part in activities, with ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence), Pencil Drawing and Spinning added to the list of courses offered. South West College has also been added to the growing list of venues. The table below details the activities taking place each Friday. The starred options are those which result in a recognised qualification. The programme hopes to continue expanding on the number of qualifications it offers to the students.

The image accompanying this article on page 9 was taken by the photography students who visited the other activities and took photographs to document the programme. This project also provided them with invaluable experience of taking action shots. These images, along with a number of video clips, are being compiled into a promotional DVD to distribute around Northern Ireland.

PUPILS PRAISE THE SHARED EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Laura Cairns, a Photography student from Collegiate Grammar, said: I enjoyed meeting people from different schools in an environment that allowed me to be creative. My favourite part of the course was learning to edit photographs using Photoshop and the outing to take photographs at Cole's Monument was also fun.

Joanna Burleigh from Collegiate Grammar said: "I did Boxercise and it was nice to be out of the usual school environment. It allowed us to mix with people from other schools and fit in some time for exercise. It was a good way to end the school week."

Daniel O'Toole, Erne Integrated School really enjoyed his guitar lessons: "My guitar lessons with the Enrichment Programme were great. It was a brilliant chance to learn guitar with a group of people I did not know and have now gotten to know quite well."

Andrew Kerr, Erne Integrated School, commenting on the Duke of Edinburgh Award opportunity, said: "I really enjoyed the Duke of Edinburgh award lessons at the Enrichment programme because I found that the experience was challenging and taught me a lot. I enjoyed meeting new people and the expeditions were the best because they were a test of character and I got the chance to do things I wouldn't usually do."

Emma Leonard from St. Fanchea's College said: "Participating in the dance classes was an excellent way to have fun and keep fit. It also gave me the opportunity to mix and form friendships with other students from other schools. Each week we learned different dance routines and styles that helped keep us all interested."

Ryan Doherty, a student at St. Joseph's College commented: "I really liked the First Aid course. It is good to know basic first aid in case we find ourselves in a situation where there is a casualty of some sort. Doing this course has given me the ability and the confidence to act in an emergency."

Course	Venue
Dance	St Fanchea's College
First Aid*	Collegiate Grammar
Pencil Drawing	Collegiate Grammar
Photography	St Joseph's College
Trampolining*	St Joseph's College
Guitar	Devenish College
ECDL*	South West College
Golf	Ashwoods Golf Club
Life Saving*	Lakeland Forum
Self Defence	Lakeland Forum
Spinning	Lakeland Forum
Archery	Lakeland Forum
Boxercise	Boxing Club

AND THE PRINCIPALS LIKED IT TOO.....

Martha Smyth, St Fanchea's College said: "The Fermanagh Shared Education Programme provided our pupils with opportunities to take part in a wide range of activities in a cross sectoral / cross community basis. Pupils were

given the opportunity to develop skills in different settings with pupils from different backgrounds. The pupils enjoyed the experience and recognised the benefits of the programme in enhancing their personal development. They welcomed the opportunity of meeting up with and working together with boys (coming from an all girls' school!!) and girls from different schools during the school day."

Mervyn Walker, Principal of Devenish College stated: "I am delighted that the post primary Shared Education programme, now in its second year, continues to grow. Two years ago the schools involved made a commitment to the programme by timetabling a Friday afternoon slot for Post 16 students and this has helped ensure the success of the venture.

"I know from talking to the students that they really enjoy the activities and value the opportunity to mix with students from other schools. The commitment of the tutors also contributes to the ongoing success and this year we are delighted that we have been able to increase the range of opportunities on offer."



Pupils involved in the Enniskillen Post-Primary Partnership enjoy their boxersize class as part of the Shared Education Programme

IRVINESTOWN PRIMARY SCHOOL AND ST. PAUL'S PRIMARY SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

BY RHONDA CATHCART, IRVINESTOWN CONTROLLED PRIMARY SCHOOL AND MARIA DOHERTY, ST. PAUL'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

For the first term of the Shared Education Project our P5 and P4/5 classes embarked upon a series of Drama and ICT projects simultaneously. The pupils were split into equal groups of 30 and worked on a rotation.

DRAMA

The children worked together on performance poetry, focusing on acquiring the skills needed to perform, including fluency and expression, acting, position on stage and team work. The pupils really enjoyed this experience and had a lot of fun playing games and working together. It was a great experience in many respects, particularly in the making of new and lasting friendships.



Pupils work together learning in their shared classes while also having fun



Pupils also make friends as well as studying key parts of the curriculum

ICT

The children worked in pairs to put together a PowerPoint presentation about 'Themselves' with the guidance of class teachers. The process began with the children drafting information about their hobbies, interests and preferences. They then worked in partnership pairs to complete their presentation. When these were finished, they presented them to the rest of the class, hence providing an opportunity for them to learn about each other as well as developing their ICT skills. Through this experience the children discovered that they share many common interests and are in many ways the same.

THE LISBELLAW/TATTYGAR PARTNERSHIP

BY INGRID LOGAN, LISBELLAW CONTROLLED PRIMARY SCHOOL AND JOHN PRUNTY TATTYGAR PRIMARY SCHOOL

In 2010 -2011 the Lisbellaw CPS and Tattygar Primary School embarked on three different projects. In Term 1, the theme was ICT this was a great success, linking in to the school's ICT accreditation and further developing the children's ICT skills. In Term 1, the pupils also participated in basketball together. In Term 2 the subject was drama and basketball and in Term 3 – Media Studies and Aerobics. In addition to the joint classes the schools also organised a joint choir for the Christmas tree lights switching on ceremony in Lisbellaw on 3rd December, which was a fabulous night.

BENEFITS:

- The children have become well acquainted in a fun environment. At the Share Centre to start the year, we had team building games and activities
- Schools can develop links with a post primary institution which the children from both schools may attend together in the future
- Children had opportunity to play in a team with children other than their own class mates

CROSS COMMUNITY IMPACT:

- The children were able to perform in a joint choir at the Christmas tree lights ceremony in the village and everyone mixed and had a fun night
- The pupils performed their drama piece on stage for their family, school community as well as members of the wider community
- Relationships were built up year on year – not only in school, but in community

EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS

- The children developed ICT skills. E.g. used appropriate ICT tools to communicate their work and presented it to an audience
- They used contemporary digital methods to communicate, exchange and participate in a range of supervised on-line activities
- The pupils developed a positive attitude to physical activity and developed their knowledge, understanding and skills of netball and basketball. They understood the relationship between exercise and good health.
- They had the opportunity to work together to produce a multi-media product including text, sound, music, still and moving images.
- The children understood the importance of "netiquette" i.e. acceptable online behavior and developed their drama skills
- The teachers got "upskilled" by learning from experts who came in to teach

CHILDRENS COMMENTS (YEAR 6)

"Shared Education is fun and you get to make new friends" (Kirsty Young)

"You get to play different new games with different people" (Rhiannon and Molly Irvine)

"You get to know more about different schools and children" (Wayne Nicholl)

"We get to bond with the other children from another school" (Katie Dillon)



Students develop their ICT skills together



Pupils engage in joint music classes together

BELLEEK PRIMARY SCHOOL AND ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST, ROSCOR

BY MARIE O'SHEA, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST AND ESDILLE LAPPIN, BELLEEK CONTROLLED PRIMARY SCHOOL

"The best kept classroom and the richest cupboard are roofed only by the sky"; Margaret McMillan (c1925).

Play is a fundamental part of the Early Years curriculum in any school and St. John the Baptist P.S. and Belleek P.S. decided it was time to tackle the issue of developing their practice in the outdoor environment. The schools have had a long established working link and were enthusiastic about developing this further with the Early Years and Key Stage 1 children under the Shared Education umbrella.



The Shared Education Programme provides pupils with the opportunity to be creative

As Eco schools, both outdoor environments have had quite a bit of focus over the last number of years as the schools have worked on developing their physical environments with additions of sensory areas, climbing equipment and a lot of green fingers work in the polytunnels and planting areas. Much of this work has been supported with funding and support workers through projects with Key Stage 2.

But why not start younger we thought...and so the plan began. As two small schools in rural communities we are used to sorting a lot of things out ourselves and a few heads together are always better than one, so the teaching team of Elaine Mc Morris (Belleek P.S.), Marie O'Shea & Gail Goan (St. John the Baptist P.S.) set about organising the programme for the year.

"Setting one day in the week at a specific time has been really important to make this work - both staff and children have benefited from making this part of our weekly routine. We are really pleased at how it is working out!" Marie O'Shea, St. John the Baptist P.S."

Planning is often the most difficult part, but the teachers were overflowing with their own ideas and those of the children who played an active role in the programme. Joint planning was put in place so there were shared experiences in both schools and we met once every six weeks to look at the next topic of work.

We also organised the children into mixed play groups which were balanced with children from all age groups from reception to P3 and equal numbers from both schools. The staff made use of a wide range of shared resources and often brought things to each other's schools to add to the planned Shared Education Programme.



The Pupils work together on various projects including playing outdoors and also have their classes outdoors

Sharing ideas and teaching strategies has added to everyone's confidence in being able to participate fully in Shared Education. It was not only the children who had to be encouraged back in at the end of the session but often the teachers too.

"I was really getting into the Den building. I found myself going back to the way we were as kids. There is so much scope for language development and imaginative play which could be developed into

imaginative writing for the older children.” Elaine Mc Morris, Belleek PS

The involvement of the parents in this programme has been vital. They needed to be aware of the reasoning behind why we were promoting this project this year and how they can support it throughout the year. So we explained to them that to us play is about sometimes getting messy, having fun and letting off steam! When we talk about children playing outdoors, the possibilities are endless. It might mean hanging around on the monkey bars of a newly refurbished play area. It might mean chasing each other across a wide open field. It might mean inventing a game around a picnic bench with their friends that only they understand.

We needed parents to understand we would be working alongside the children and encouraging them to take calculated risks at their own level and appropriate to their age and confidence. We explained they would get messy, but they should send in wellies, a warm coat and hat and even some spare clothes. They have been great about this and more importantly the children have felt free to explore their environment a bit more without fear of being told off for getting messy.

“The freedom that the children experience in the outdoor environment during play time is so refreshing to see...they are so happy and excited and something new happens for them each day... you can see the eyes sparkle as they succeed in rolling tyres down the hill the furthest!” Eileen Duffy, CA, St. John the Baptist P.S.

Throughout this work we have called on a range of specialists and experts to help us. The Playboard team in Belfast provided us with excellent resources and facilitated training which made us think about things on a practical level. We found their enthusiasm for getting children up and active in the outdoor environments really inspirational.

“I was sitting in the Playboard training session listening to some of the activities being discussed and thinking...I could try that. The children would love that. It’s all about having the confidence to give it a go and together as a group we support each other to make it happen...It’s marvellous!” Gail Goan, St John the Baptist P.S.

We have just completed our first term of this grand plan and already we are getting prepared for phase two. We are delighted with the feedback from the children.

I like meeting new friends at Belleek P.S. – Lucy
The forest den is the best bit – Kevin
We get to set up our outdoor area, we are good at our jobs – Ultan
We get to go and visit our friends at the other school and play with them – Mya
I liked playing in the mixed up groups, we bring things to share at the other school – Caleb
I enjoyed getting new friends, I liked when we dressed up as bears – Darragh
I liked playing lots of different games – Sarah
We were able to build a Bear Cave – Aoife



Pupils participate in the outdoor classroom as part of the Shared Education Programme.

“Tremendous work has been carried out on the grounds at the schools. Every possible space has been used for something which adds greatly to the World Around Us curriculum and supports so many more areas along with it. The WELB is delighted to support the work going on in these schools and would welcome an opportunity for the school teams involved to have the opportunity to share their experience and practice with other schools in the future. All of this couldn’t have been achieved without the support provided by the Shared Education Programme”. Oonagh Mc Nelis, WELB CASS Officer

SHARED EDUCATION IN MAGUIRESBRIDGE

BY HONOR IRVINE, MAGUIRESBRIDGE CONTROLLED PRIMARY SCHOOL AND BRENDAN MCCUSKER, ST. MARY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

Over the last few years the pupils of St. Mary's Maguiresbridge and Maguiresbridge Controlled Primary School have been busy building links with each other through the School Community Relations Programme. Whilst a good start had been made both schools are aware that much work needed to be done to further strengthen these developing relationships. The schools were delighted to secure resources through the Fermanagh Trust's Shared Education Programme. These resources allowed both schools to continue to foster good relationships through the medium of exciting and interesting programmes of study involving up to ninety children from the village of Maguiresbridge.

In year one of the Programme (2009 - 2010) years 3 and 4 were involved in drama, music and art. Years 5 and 6 were involved in a wide variety of sporting activities and ICT. Both schools really enjoyed the opportunity to work together, make new friends and learn new skills.

The schools were able to continue the valuable work in 2010/2011 that had been started and years 3 and 4 met every Wednesday in Maguiresbridge Primary School. The programme commenced with an exciting "Ice Breaker" day when the children played a variety of "Getting to Know you Activities". For the remainder of the term, the children divided into two groups completing ICT activities and developing their football skills. The children also had snack and playtime together each day. Both the teachers and pupils are really enjoying all aspects of the programme.

Calum, then in P4 said: "On Wednesdays I learned about football and computers and best of all the St. Mary's came to our school".

Thomas, also then in P4 said: "I like playing with St. Mary's Children and I have made a lot of new friends".

The Year 5 and 6 children now welcome each other with smiles and greetings each Tuesday. In St. Mary's Primary School, they have been further developing their Tag Rugby skills. The children from both schools were united into two mixed teams during a recent Tag Rugby tournament at Mullaghameen Rugby Club. The teams performed really well showing a determined yet friendly team spirit as they played against other schools.

Kelly and Kyle, then in P5, said: "We found the programme fun, exciting and liberating".

We have broadened this to include children from throughout the school and we are delighted that the collaboration between our two schools is beginning to reach out to the local Maguiresbridge community. The Shared Education Programme is featured in each of the Maguiresbridge Rural Community Development Association newsletters. Children from both schools sang together at the switching on of the Christmas tree lights.

Rev. David Skuce, Chair of the Board of Governors of Maguiresbridge Primary School and member of Maguiresbridge Rural Community Development Association said: "The programme is a very positive and encouraging way for children to gain a better understanding of their own and others' cultural identity".



Pupils get to know one another through the Shared Education Programme



A crafty experience for the pupils from Maguiresbridge Controlled Primary School and St. Mary's Primary School, Maguiresbridge

THE FERMANAGH TRUST SHARED EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Primary School: Cross-Community Partnerships (2011 – 2012)

Partnerships	Catholic Maintained Schools	Other Sectors	Classes	Pupils
1	St Mary's P.S., Tempo	Tempo CPS	P1-7	194
2	Tattygar P.S., Lisbellaw	Lisbellaw CPS	P1-2 & P5-7	120
3	St Paul's P.S., Irvinestown	Irvinestown CPS Ballinamallard CPS	P3-6	188
4	St Ronan's P.S., Lisnaskea	Moat CPS, Lisnaskea	P3-7	180
5	St Mary's P.S., Maguiresbridge	Maguiresbridge CPS	P1-7	185
6	St Eugene's P.S., Knocks	Brookeborough CPS	P1-7	95
7	St Mary's P.S., Newtownbutler St Joseph's P.S., Donagh	Newtownbutler CPS	P1-7	221
8	Cornagogue P.S. & Corranny P.S.	Aghadrumsee CPS	P3-4 & P6-7	72
9	St John the Baptist P.S., Roscorr	Belleek CPS	P1-7	96
10	St Patrick's P.S., Derrygonnelly	Florencecourt CPS	P6-7	38
11	St Joseph's P.S., Ederney	Lack CPS Kesh CPS	P1-7	157
12	Killyhommon P.S., Boho St Patrick's P.S., Derrygonnelly	Derrygonnelly CPS	P1-7	120
13	Holy Trinity P.S., Enniskillen	Lisbellaw CPS Enniskillen Integrated P.S. Jones Memorial CPS,	P4 & 7	335
14	St Columban's P.S., Belcoo	Ballinamallard CPS	P5&6	52
15	St Mary's P.S., Mullymesker St Mary's P.S., Killesher St Naile's P.S., Kinawley	Florencecourt CPS	P1-7	258
16	St Patrick's P.S., Mullanaska	Enniskillen Model CPS	P3-4 & P7	176

Primary School: Cross Border & Cross-Community Partnerships (2011 – 2012)

Partnerships	Catholic Maintained Schools	Church of Ireland Schools	Classes	Pupils
17	St Mary's P.S., Teemore	Fairgreen National School, Belturbet, Co Cavan	P1-2 & P6-7	87
18	St Martin's P.S., Garrison	Kilbarron National School, Ballyshannon, Co Donegal	P1-2 & P6-7	73
19	St Columban's P.S., Belcoo	Masterson National School, Manorhamilton, Co Leitrim	P7	34

See next page for a list of Post-Primary Partnerships in Year 3 of the Shared Education Programme.

POST PRIMARY PARTNERSHIPS YEAR 3

	Partnerships & Projects	Catholic Managed Schools	Other Sectors
1	Enniskillen Cluster Post 16 Personal Development and Skills Programme	St Fanchea's College St Joseph's College Mount Lourdes Grammar School	Collegiate Grammar School Devenish College Erne Integrated College
2	South Fermanagh Cluster Reading Intervention Programme	St Eugene's College St Aidan's High School St Comhghall's College	Lisnaskea High School
3	Lisnaskea Partnership Year 9 Art Project	St Comhghall's College	Lisnaskea High School
4	Lisnaskea Partnership Year 11 Art Project	St Comhghall's College	Lisnaskea High School
5	Fermanagh Learning Community Key Stage 4 Foundation Learning Programme	St Joseph's College St Mary's High School, Brollagh	Devenish College Lisnaskea High School
6	Enniskillen Schools Sports Project	St Joseph's College St Michael's College St Fanchea's College Mount Lourdes Grammar School	Devenish College Collegiate Grammar Erne Integrated College Portora Royal School

LOOKING FORWARD TO YEAR 3: WHAT SOME OF THE PARTICIPANTS SAID

One P7 pupil said:

"It doesn't matter what religion you are you can still get along and it's not fair to leave someone out because of their religion".

Parents have also shown their support and welcomed the opportunity their children are being given to interact with others from a different community background. Feedback from parents included:

"A great opportunity for the children to visit another school in the locality - it is great for all schools working together as a community".

Principals and teachers commented that Shared Education had many benefits with feedback from school staff suggesting the Programme was breaking down barriers between communities. One Primary School principal said:

"Pupils and staff from both schools have bonded and formed better working relationships. The children and staff have had the opportunity to find out about each other and the community in which they live through fun and practical activities ... and because of this interaction the children have a more positive attitude towards their partner school – reducing fear and suspicion.

Shared Education is an effective way of delivering the curriculum commented another primary school principal:

"Key Stage 2 Citizenship project which included visits to Fermanagh District Council and the NI Assembly. The children's understanding of this has helped them take a more active role in the school council work and gain a better understanding of each other's political viewpoints."

POLITICAL PARTIES SUPPORT SHARED EDUCATION



SDLP Fermanagh District Cllr Frank Britton said: "The Fermanagh Shared Education Programme is a huge success here in Fermanagh and it is definitely the way forward in creating more peaceful communities here. All those who have been involved are to be commended. There is clearly a desire for this sort of programme within the education sector. By educating children in a shared way local educational resources can be used more efficiently and effectively."

Tom Elliott, MLA, UUP said: "I am pleased to have witnessed at first hand the project of shared education in Fermanagh that is funded through Fermanagh Trust and delivered by the schools involved. In the absence of having a system that is acceptable to many to have our children educated together, this project provides opportunities for the children of Fermanagh to work, develop, share and receive some education together. This project provides the basis for education bodies to work together without any dilution of their religious ethos in schools."



Arlene Foster, MLA, DUP said: "The Shared Education Programme in Fermanagh is an exemplary model of how children can learn together, how people can work together and how communities can be brought together for two main purposes: 1. To share resources; and 2). To further reconciliation and good community relations. In terms of education, the programme provides a model for the future".

Michelle Gildernew, MP, MLA from Sinn Fein said: "Sinn Fein is delighted to lend its support to the Cross-Community and Cross-Border Shared Education Programme being managed by Fermanagh Trust. Given the current economic situation and budget cuts across departments, the future sustainability of rural schools is an issue which concerns us all. The Shared Education Programme brings schools together enabling them to work collaboratively to enhance curriculum delivery. Shared education also provides schools with the potential opportunity to explore future models for educational delivery."



Alliance Education Spokesperson Trevor Lunn MLA said: "The Alliance Party supports shared education given its potential to achieve savings to the education budget. For many years we have been advocating against the duplication of services. The Fermanagh Trust's Shared Education Programme has another benefit in that it offers reconciliation, and community as well as economic benefits. The Alliance Party proposed an Assembly motion supporting shared education and we wish Fermanagh Trust every continued success with year three of its programme."

For further details on the Fermanagh Trust Shared Education Programme, please contact:

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