



General Teaching Council
for Northern Ireland

General Teaching Council for NI

termtalk

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termtalk



Welcome to the February 2008 edition of **termtalk**. Since the last edition, in November 2007, the educational environment has

continued to change rapidly, and at this time of change, the Council continues to remind the wider education service of the dedicated and vital work undertaken by the teaching profession in Northern Ireland.

Before Christmas every registered teacher should have received a copy of *Teaching; the Reflective Profession*. This important document sets out revised teacher competences and includes the Council's Code of Values and Professional Practice and the Council's Charter for Education.

In this edition of **termtalk** I have asked the Chief Inspector, Marion Matchett, to identify some of the key messages that have emerged from her '2004 to 2006 Report', and to reflect on how the profession can work with others to help ensure better outcomes for all learners. In addition, this edition has a 'specific feature' on Special Educational Needs, which I hope you will find informative and useful.

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ETI ... Key Messages



On 24 April 2007, I launched the Chief Inspector's Report for 2004-2006 which provides an evaluation of the full range of the Education and Training Inspectorate's (Inspectorate) work for the Department of Education (DE), the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) and the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure (DCAL), during those years.

The report draws on the evidence collected from some 1,490 inspections and survey visits carried out between September 2004 and June 2006 across all phases and sectors. These inspections and visits involved some 5,000 teachers, trainers and other workers.

When I launched the report to key stakeholders, I outlined the many

good features of our education system, of which we can be proud, notably that during this period most of the learners in Northern Ireland were working hard and with notable success.

In identifying only the strengths from the report, I am aware that I would not be fulfilling the Inspectorate's mission statement of: 'promoting improvement in the interests of all learners'.

The report, therefore, also outlines areas which require improvement including the gap between the highest and lowest achievers, the quality of the leadership in some schools and youth settings, the provision for children with special educational needs and the need to improve further the quality of teaching.

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GTCNI - a new voice for teachers

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But outlining the strengths and areas for improvement is not, in itself, enough. I want to provide a wider overview, to promote discussion and debate about what each of us can do to effect improvement.

“

How can I bring about improvement, alone or alongside others?

”

For my part, I feel that reporting inspection findings alone will not bring about the necessary improvement. For that reason, I have

been meeting all those with an interest in education to report on the published findings and encourage action to improve further the quality and standards in education. I have met with the Minister for Education, the Minister for Employment and Learning, the Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure, the three Departmental Boards, for which we provide inspection services, and I have also held a series of six open meetings for some 500 leaders and teachers, so that they could hear the report findings at first hand and discuss how we might go forward. In the report, I urge everyone to discuss the report, consider the findings and decide on how to bring about improvement, just as the Inspectorate is continually seeking to improve its work.

I also urged everyone to listen to the voice of learners. The Inspectorate listens to young people during inspection, and for the first time, at the launch of the report I invited a representative group of young people to talk to the audience about what they saw as good education and training. All those who attended

the launch were humbled and invigorated by what the young people had to say. The young people talked of the importance of good teachers, of everyone having the same chance, of having support which enabled them to go forward and make important decisions about their future, of having the opportunity to develop personally and professionally and of the importance of acquiring the skills to help others.

The three key messages emerging from the report are:

- **helping learners to reach their full potential;**
- **connecting better for learners; and**
- **leading at a time of change.**

When we think about ‘helping learners to reach their full potential’ we need to decide how:

- to close the gap between those who achieve very well and the unacceptable percentage of young people who leave formal education with no qualifications;
- to support, more effectively, those young people with special educational needs, emotional, health or personal problems; and
- to educate the whole person.

When we think about ‘connecting better for learners’ we need to ask if:

- the high-level initiatives are being managed well, in the best interests of the learner;
- the different departments and groups are willing to review their practice so that a more coherent service can be developed; and
- on a personal level, each of us is exploring all the opportunities available to work together in the interests of young people.



Chief Inspector, Marion Matchett, CBE.

ETI ... Key Messages

When we think about 'leading at a time of change' we need to ask if:

- the leadership provided is as effective as it can be;
- agreed desirable outcomes have been set in the interests of the learner;
- there is clarity of purpose and direction at all levels; and
- planning for successful learning is evident.

There are so many challenges facing the education service: demographics and sustainability, pastoral care and child protection, the development of a more diverse culture in Northern Ireland, the increasing number of young people presenting with health, emotional and personal difficulties and the implications of structural and curricular changes. It is my view that teachers have the capacity to deal with these challenges when there is a degree of certainty and where they have effective support, and this is the message I have given to the departments and those involved in formulating policy.

Teachers cannot do it all on their own. There needs to be a coherent service where everyone is working for the benefit of the learner and is willing to review practices and protocols and remove constraints to joint working.

In the meantime, however, I feel that we can all make a difference. Each small development, when joined with others, will move the journey forward. I urge you all as professionals to seek improvement for learners, so that we can promote:

'Better outcomes' for the individual leading to 'Better outcomes' for society.

The full Chief Inspector's Report 2004-2006 is available on the ETI website:

www.etini.gov.uk or from
Inspection Services Branch
02891279726



The Problem with Languages ...

In the article that follows Bill Brodie, an adviser with the NEELB, provides a thought provoking analysis on how modern language teaching can be improved in local schools. He starts by commenting:

“

Something is wrong with our present framework; the statistics and general malaise are telling us so. I want to encourage educational leaders to try radical new approaches.

”

They really don't fit into the school curriculum.

At least, not with the current post-primary school framework they don't. Pupils who are voting with their feet in hundreds of thousands are giving us this message. Despite twenty years of our best (and very expensive!) collective efforts, GCSE numbers have fallen to below their 1988 level, and are sinking fast. Curriculum reform and re-reform have simply not had the effects we wanted. It is surely time for a totally new direction.

The Real Thing

As post-primary language teachers – within the present system – it is nearly impossible, in modern language classes, to do other than spend most of our time with pupils in practice for 'the real thing'. The new focus of the 1988 GCSE was meant to be the salvation of languages in UK schools. But the central principle of 20 years of 'transactional' GCSE (*Imagine you are in France. This is the language and skills you will need*) is proving very tenuous as a motivation to endure five years of drill. It is just not working for the majority of our pupils.

Healthy human beings enjoy using language. We are equipped genetically to use it: purposefully, meaningfully, creatively and autonomously. Teachers may argue that the present syllabuses and course materials promote a communicative approach. So why don't more pupils experience this? In reality, most of what we are foisting on our pupils under the heading of communication is in fact just preparation for communication... somewhere, sometime; there is very little real application.

Exceptions

There is some very good practice in schools by individual teachers, able to import intrinsic interest into classroom activities, so that now and then, the illusion works: the inauthenticity is buried by a tacit suspension of disbelief; pupils become so engaged in winning a point, or solving a puzzle, that they go along with the silliness (let's face it!) of using a foreign language to interact with fellow native English speakers crammed together in a classroom. But within the current system there is only so far we can go with this.

A significant minority of pupils also enjoy studying a language in a more abstract, reflective way. The present post-primary arrangements actually suit these pupils. Additionally, there are those pupils whose main motivation is academic success, pure and simple. They will apply themselves well to any course of study.

But when these pupils have a choice, do they choose GCSE French, or something they perceive as more useful and more interesting?

What do we do?

Despite some success stories, such as the recent boom in Spanish, and the blossoming of languages in primary schools, it is generally acknowledged that language teaching is facing a crisis. We urgently need to make fundamental changes in our provision. The following are suggestions to stimulate 'thinking outside the box', rather than a precisely constructed manifesto for post-primary language teaching:

- schools should not compel pupils to sit a GCSE in 'Languages', as advocated by some. This will not create a nation of linguists!
- let's use the freedom of the new Key Stage 3 to do exciting things with languages. Instead of weekly timetabled classes in Key Stage 3, language experiences could be offered as a series of clubs or intensive events. During two or three special 'Language Weeks', staggered for each year group, pupils' normal timetables would be suspended and they would only do MFL work. A menu of mini-modules could involve pupils in cookery; producing a foreign language drama; ICT based project work; music and poetry workshops. A school trip could count as a module.



Bill Brodie, Adviser, NEELB

- pupil groups should be no larger than 15. We cannot develop oral skills properly with classes of thirty in periods of thirty five minutes. This industrial model is desperately in need of replacement for language studies.
- pupils should get experience of a range of languages for varying lengths of time. It is increasingly absurd in this 21st century to force pupils to focus on one language only.
- schools should budget to ensure that at least once in Key Stage 3, every pupil undertakes a field trip to a target-language region. Much useful language work could be done in preparation for this event and after it.
- a greater emphasis than at present should be placed on knowledge of target-language regions.
- pupils could also engage in intensive residential language weekends in youth centres nearer to home. Teachers should get time off in lieu.
- teachers should be allowed very substantial non-contact time for developing school links; applying for EU funding; and managing exchange programmes with partner schools. In view of child-safety issues, teachers should have sufficient time and financial support to pre-inspect foreign venues and meet host families, at least on a sampling basis;
- explore the new potential of video-conferencing. Much useful language work and integrative motivation can arise from this medium; and
- for the significant minority of pupils wanting to proceed to a traditional course with accreditation, preparatory classes would give them a taster for what is involved in following a more rigid, linear syllabus.

For the full text of this article, see www.neelb.org.uk/teachers/cass/languages

Special Educational Needs

The new competence model for teachers in Northern Ireland recently published in *Teaching: the Reflective Profession* commits all teachers to, “develop a knowledge and understanding of their responsibilities under the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice and to know the features of the most common special needs and appropriate strategies to address these.” This section of **termtalk**, therefore, examines a range of issues associated with special needs. It begins with an article by Martin McGlade, the principal of Harberton Special School and Outreach Services, in which he discusses the changing role of the special school. This is followed by two articles on specific special educational needs; the first is on Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD), written by Derek Shuter from the National Autistic Society (NI), the second is on Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) and is written by Gayle Nixon who is a Senior Educational Psychologist with the Belfast Education and Library Board. In the final article, Olivia McKnight, a teacher in Ballycarrickmaddy Primary School gives a personal reflection on her role as a SENCO.

The Changing Roles of Special Schools

The Special Education Needs and Disability Act 2001 (NI) Order 2005 places great emphasis on the inclusion of children with special educational needs into mainstream schools.

This has led to many of the Local Education Authorities (LEAs) in England closing their special schools and placing all of their pupils with special needs in mainstream schools, regardless of the severity of need. Whilst it remains the right of every child to be educated in their local neighbourhood or parish school, in my view, each case should be judged on its own merits and should take into account the needs of the child as well as the views of parents and the child itself.

In many of the LEAs, in England, the closure of their special school has resulted in huge rises in costs (not to mention enormous inconvenience for both children and pupils) to transport children to specialist provision in other Authorities. There have also been many ‘tribunal decisions’, which have resulted in pupils being enrolled in private special schools (often residential), to ensure that their needs are met.

In the words of one parent:



I'd also like to highlight the dangers of going down a road of blanket inclusion. Our local LEA has just closed a special school in our area. None of the mainstream schools in a 40 mile radius has special expertise in managing children with autism spectrum disorders. And sadly for us, inclusion has seriously affected our son's self-esteem and well-being. The principle seems sound but is not borne out by a real funded provision in our area, particularly at secondary school level.



In Northern Ireland the Department of Education has indicated that it does not intend to go down the route of closing our special schools. Rather, special schools are being asked to plan strategically for the next ten years taking into account how they can support children with special needs in mainstream schools. At the moment, much of this support is offered through the outreach services that already exist, or are currently being developed in many special

schools. One note for consideration is that, under the Education and Skills Authority, much of the funding that is currently held by the Education and Library Boards may be allocated directly to schools. Will it then be a case for mainstream schools ‘buying-in’ the services of the special schools? If this is the case, principals of special schools will need to ensure that they have highly skilled and knowledgeable specialist staff that are an attractive option for mainstream schools to ‘buy-in’.

In 2004-2005, under the management of Dr John Hunter, of the Education and Training Inspectorate, all special schools in Northern Ireland were surveyed by questionnaire and every special school, all forty nine of them, responded. The report, compiled as a result of the survey, highlighted the important contribution that special schools have to make to raise the standards of achievement of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools.

One of the key findings was the need for increased professional collaboration between special and mainstream schools to ensure, that

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together, they work as effectively as possible for the benefit of all the pupils they serve.

In my view, by keeping the best interest of our pupils at the heart of the decision making process and by consulting widely and planning strategically, special schools are emerging as forward thinking centres of excellence, which are well equipped to meet the needs of all children and young people, through a variety of support mechanisms such as:

- full time special school placement;
- fixed-term special school placement, e.g. one year with

follow up outreach support when the child returns to mainstream;

- dual enrolment in special and mainstream schools and colleges of further education with support from the special school when the child is in mainstream;
- outreach support to pupils in mainstream schools; and
- advisory support to teachers in mainstream schools from special school teachers and therapists.

There is no doubt that special schools are becoming more specialist in teaching and caring for

children with increasingly complex and profound needs and in supporting pupils with additional needs in mainstream schools. Are we, therefore, at a point where we should be dropping the old fashioned descriptors of schools for 'Moderate Learning' or 'Severe Learning Difficulties' and be afforded recognition as being 'Specialist Schools'?



Special Educational Needs

Thinking about Autism

The Department of Education Census Return for 2005-06 indicates that there are almost 3000 Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) pupils in mainstream schools. Prevalence rates for autism vary but they suggest that every teacher will have pupils with an ASD in their classes at some time or another.

A lifelong condition

Michael has autism. He explains, "... because I have high functioning autism, it affects my communication skills...I cannot interact very easily... I find it difficult keeping calm whenever I'm frustrated over something." Perhaps the surprising thing is that Michael is 57. He is proof that autism is not just a childhood condition. Michael understands his condition. He realises that it impairs his ability to make sense of aspects of life. At 57, as Michael admits, "it is still difficult to get to grips with the real world outside." (www.think-differently.org.uk)

A hidden condition

The parent of an ASD child refers to autism as a hidden condition. She explains that, "it's hidden inside the child...hidden in that they maybe look, talk and walk all right..." However, the problem is that visible signs are absent. This makes it difficult for people to show understanding whenever they interact with a person with autism. The parent's experience has been that too often, "Society sees only unacceptable behaviour, the spoilt child, bad parenting."

A spectrum condition

A *lifelong* condition. A *hidden* condition. Just two of the strapline phrases used to focus our attention on the condition that is autism; add in, a spectrum condition, which reflects the variation in individual manifestations of autism. It is, thus, difficult to predict the range of characteristics displayed by people with an ASD.

Chris M, diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome, expresses a wish that people become more aware that autism is a spectrum condition. He refers to the individual nature of the condition. He talks about his, "path through Asperger Syndrome." He asks people to lay aside their assumptions and to focus on, "*who* the person is, rather than *what* the person is."

Increased awareness

Public awareness of autism has increased. The work of organisations, both voluntary and statutory, and media coverage of autism have contributed to this. In education, inclusion has been encouraged while the training provided by ASD teams, throughout the province, has laid a foundation on which greater understanding might be built.

Positive Attributes

The focus is often on the difficulties experienced and presented by people with an ASD. However, accuracy requires that these are considered alongside learning potential and positive attributes. Attributes including: a close attention to detail; well-developed powers of memory; an exhaustive interest in a topic of special interest; an adherence to rules and procedures, are often a key part of an autistic child's make-up. Within an appropriately inclusive environment, these enhance the capacity to learn.

A Framework of Understanding

Since 1962, the National Autistic Society (NAS) has worked to provide services for people with autism. It has helped to develop a framework for understanding the main characteristics of autism.

The spectrum nature of autism means that individuals will be affected in different ways. However, those diagnosed will all share difficulties and impairments within three areas: communication, social interaction and imagination. Space

does not allow an exploration of these in any detail (for full information, see www.autism.org.uk). Suffice it to say that these are areas fundamental to human development. Teachers will be aware of the implications of these for a child's experience of the classroom and for their management of that child's needs.

Implications

A child with an ASD is likely to have difficulty in using and understanding language. Words and expressions may be limited and will be understood literally. Non-literal uses of language will confuse and frustrate (think: 'Raining cats and dogs!' 'Blood out of a stone!').

Communication problems will affect understanding of non-verbal language as well, for example, tone of voice, facial expressions and gestures. Hence, children with autism may have difficulty in interpreting what others say and mean. Equally, they may fail to appreciate the social norms which others take for granted. They may not understand the unspoken nature of much of everyday behaviour. Children with autism, then, often find themselves being considered gauche, aloof or obstructive. At worst, they are thought of as misbehaving or they are bullied. In extreme cases, when understanding of autism is limited, school life leads to social alienation for ASD pupils.

The nature of autism makes it difficult for those with a diagnosis to adjust to the reality which they find around them. A pupil with an ASD may not always understand the need to adjust to a school's expectations and routines. Those with the responsibility of meeting the special educational needs of children with an ASD are left with the task of seeing how they can make reasonable adjustments to classroom practice, to take account of both the attributes and the impairments implicit in the condition.

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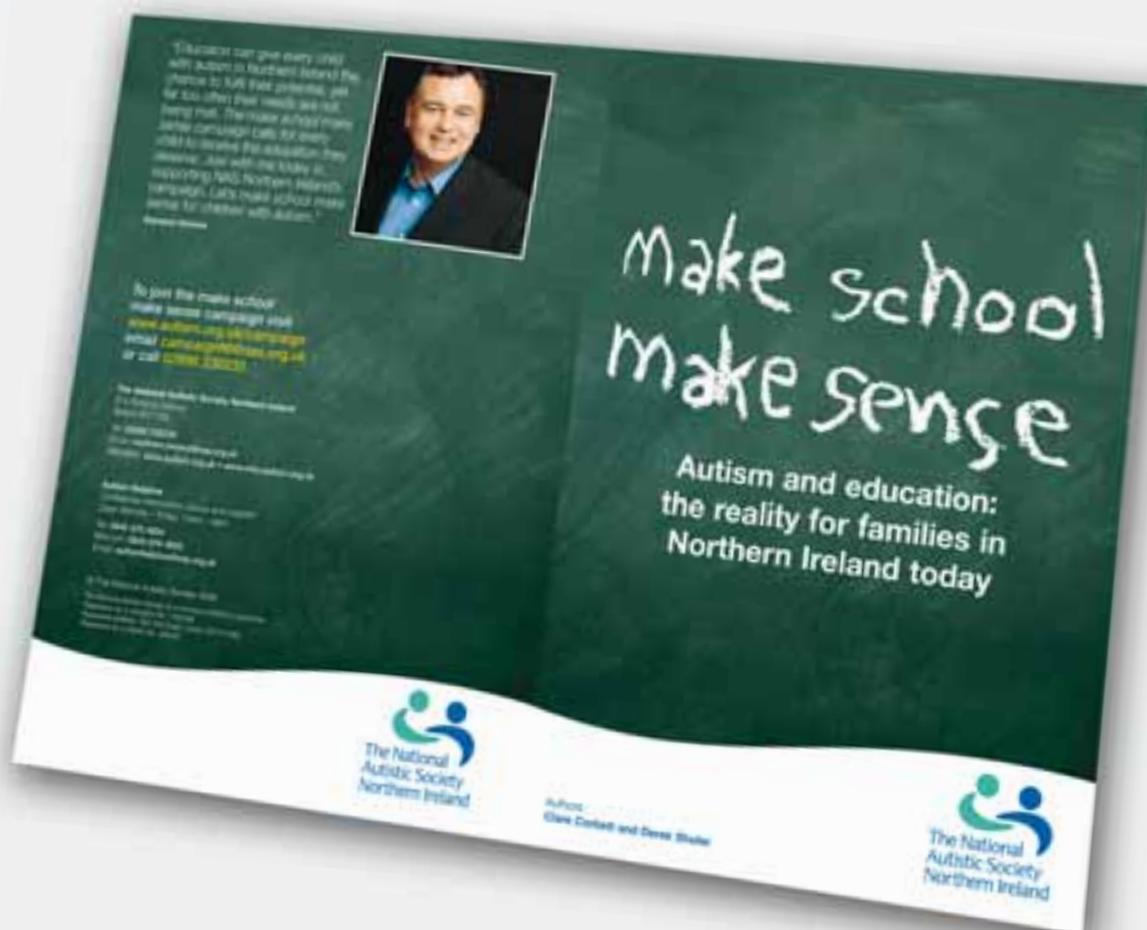
Final Thoughts

The recent campaign of the NAS* has encouraged the public and decision-makers to *think differently about autism*. Initiatives by other groups (e.g. AutismNI) are moving autism up the local political agenda. There is no assumption that we will all acquire a specialist knowledge of

what is a complex condition. Teachers' work involves an understanding, not just of autism, but of a variety of learning difficulties. However, people with autism and those who work to support them will feel encouraged if members of the public and professionals add to their understanding of autism and are

sensitive to what is behind this lifelong, hidden and spectrum condition.

* Information on NAS (NI) services and resources can be obtained by telephoning 02890236235 or emailing northern.ireland@nas.org.uk



Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

ADHD is a condition that is commonly discussed but is frequently misunderstood. Understandably, ADHD is often thought to refer to attention-seeking behaviour. Although the name may seem to suggest this, that is not what it means.

ADHD is a development disorder that affects 3-5 per cent of the population. It is a lifelong condition although its effects seem to be most marked in childhood. It cannot be caught, transmitted or caused by environmental factors such as diet,

parenting or education. Rather it is caused by neurotransmitter dysfunction in the frontal lobes of the brain.

The three core features of ADHD are:

- **inattention:** the impaired ability to ignore distractions and focus attention on a task;
- **impulsivity:** the inability to think before acting and inhibit words or actions; and
- **hyperactivity:** the inability to moderate activity levels to suit context.

Understanding these core features allows us to imagine the world through the eyes of a child with ADHD. It's not surprising then that school can be difficult place to succeed (and even to survive!).

Schools are busy places full of noise, activity and exciting distractions. This can make it very difficult for children with ADHD to settle, concentrate and manage their behaviour. Imagine yourself sitting in a lecture trying to concentrate while a film is showing in the background, your phone is

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ringing, your friend is waving through the window and the person next to you keeps chatting to you. School might be a little like this for the child with ADHD.

Children with ADHD often find themselves in trouble, despite their best efforts and good intentions and this can be very disheartening for them (as well as for their teachers!). The impulsivity associated with the condition can mean a child can act first and think later. It's not that the child didn't know it was a bad idea to throw the pencil across the class; it's just that they knew it after it was thrown!

For a child who is trying very hard to cope within a difficult environment and achieving little success, one of the most

important contributions a teacher can make is simply to show empathy for the child, acknowledge their positive efforts and good intentions (even when these don't bring results) and express a desire to support them in making progress. It can make a huge difference to these children to feel that someone understands a little of how hard life can be in school and believes in them, even when things are not going well.

With appropriate understanding and support (both medical and educational) children with ADHD can thrive and blossom in school, and come to be appreciated for their spontaneity, creativity, energy and warmth!



The Role of SENCO

I am now in my tenth year as a teacher and in my third year as the SENCO in a medium-sized rural school on the outskirts of Lisburn.

Becoming a SENCO

My career development to SENCO was motivated by the desire to ensure that all my pupils reached their full potential, including those with special educational needs. I, therefore, enrolled on a master's course specialising in special needs. Learning more about the education system and the learning difficulties many pupils had widened my understanding and empathy with pupils who found the road through the school system difficult. My journey as a reflective teacher continues every day, and with every experience teaching pupils who have differing needs, I travel further down the road of discovery.

The highlights of being a SENCO

The journey with parents is a special journey. This can be a painful pathway for parents often involving the recognition, and coming to terms, with their child's special needs. This experience and frustration is often made worse for parents when they have to struggle, alongside schools, for the necessary

resources to support their child's needs.

The SENCO is in a privileged position and relationship with parents at such a vulnerable time in their lives. One of the highlights comes at the end of the journey by seeing a child's needs met through school facilities or a placement in which the child finds the education system less frustrating and distressing.

Another highlight is finding support from outside agencies to help a family through a difficult period. This can involve simply providing a 'listening ear' or making a referral for professional counselling and support.

The frustrations of being a SENCO

One significant frustration is the financial constraints under which all schools operate and the consequent limited resources available to meet the needs of pupils with special needs in the classroom. As all teachers know, effective special educational needs intervention is often resource intensive.

Another, personal frustration is when a child with whom you have been making good progress, moves to another school because the family has moved house. However, this is

just part of professional life, I suppose.

To conclude, every teacher has a part to play in helping their school meet its responsibilities with regard to its special educational needs provision. It is not just the role of the SENCO! However, the SENCO will provide the support, encouragement and hopefully the access to resources and expertise necessary to support colleagues. It is an honour and a privilege to be a class teacher but in a way a special honour and privilege to be a SENCO.



Olivia McKnight.

Prof John's WebSights

A regular feature book-marking educational resource and information websites: *this issue focuses on special education.*

Recommendations this term come from **Lisa Brown** and **Norma Perceval-Price**, popular educators who are in much demand to provide free support on special education to both mainstream and special schools. (nprice@c2kni.org.uk and lbrown@c2kni.org.uk)

If you'd like to share your favourite websites on this, or any, educational theme, please email your links and comments to profjohn@gtcni.org.uk



Free ready-made curriculum-based resources for Clicker 5. Highly popular both for mainstream and special needs learning.

www.learninggrids.com/uk



Designed around popular teen interests, Mencap's is a fun website where teenagers can register and publish their own pictures, words and audio.

www.y-a-p.org.uk



Truly sparkling, ready-made, free and low-cost printable teaching resources for foundation and KS1 (and soon, KS2) literacy, numeracy and a wide range of curricular topics. Highly recommended!

www.sparklebox.co.uk



Great, printable and free art and craft activities for all curricular areas, supported by a discussion board for teachers and parents.

www.dltk-kids.com



One of the top three educational websites is published by award-winning Woodlands Junior School in Kent. Three pages of educational games support literacy, maths and science.

www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/Games/educational/index.html



David R Wilson's links catalogue of Special Educational Needs advice and SEN resources for Primary and Early Years practitioners. Detailed and comprehensive.

www.specialeducationalneeds.com/sen/primary.html



The definitive site for Widgit (Rebus) symbol-supported stories, and activities for inclusion education. Not only excellent for special communication needs, but great for EAL pupils too!

www.widgit.com



Superb social stories which can be personalised to suit the needs of individuals. An annual subscription site with supportive advice for teachers.

www.sandbox-learning.com



Cost-free teaching and learning resources for students with special needs and learning disabilities. SENteacher provides printable resources, interactive games and loads more - click on the menu bar. A great catalogue of free interactive resources.

www.senteacher.org



A successful visual reading approach for visual learners who struggle with reading. Very helpful advice in the FAQs, with a direct email to the author. Created by NI special school teacher Rosemary Starrett, and beautifully illustrated by Jane Feeney.

www.abusyday.co.uk

From Finaghy PS to Finaghy Campus

Alastair Mackay has been principal of Finaghy Primary School for 8 years and has led a radical transformation from a local traditional school to a full-service community campus: comprising a breakfast club, daycare centre, community SportsZone, public library and a programme of evening classes, recreational activities and parent partnerships.

It was with this in mind **termtalk** asked Alastair how this transformation has been achieved, and what follows is his overview of the journey, the destinations reached and the impact that 'Finaghy Campus' is now having on the community it serves.

Aspire!

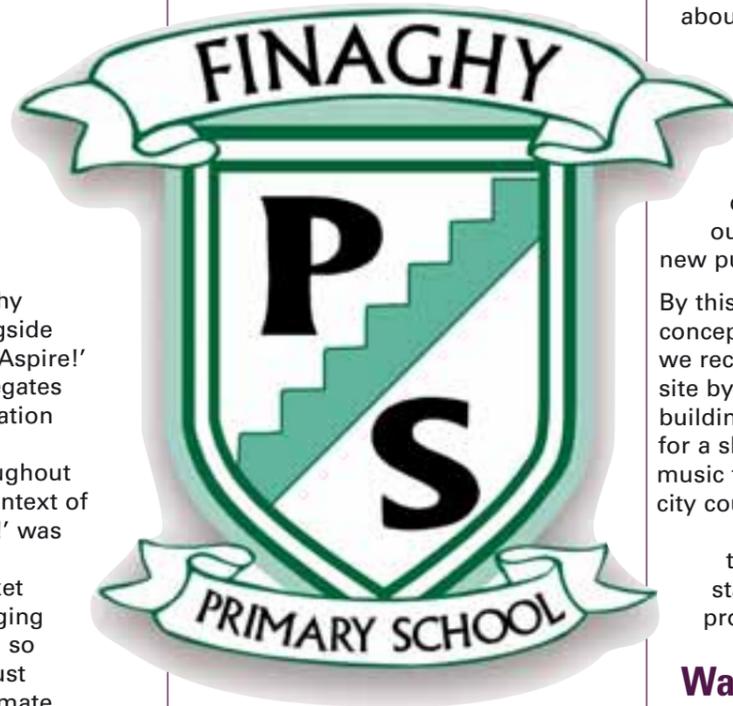
On 10 October 2007 Finaghy Primary School staff, alongside invited guests, presented 'Aspire!' to an audience of 300 delegates drawn from schools, Education and Library Boards and community agencies throughout Northern Ireland. In the context of Extended Schools, 'Aspire!' was an attempt to provide an antidote to the 'supermarket sweep' approach to managing change that is prevalent in so many organisations (not just schools!) in the current climate.

From the heart ...

The 'Aspire!' Conference was delivered in a theatre, with music, drama, video and multi-media all employed to full effect. The idea was to try to appeal to the 'right-brain' of the audience (the creative, emotional, aesthetic side). If 'left-brain' thinking (logical, rational, data-handling) dominated, no one would leave inspired to try to make a difference. Indeed, we would only be adding to the hundred good reasons that we can already think of for not taking on another project, another initiative, another time-consuming burden. We encouraged delegates to try a new approach. Instead of 'charging through the supermarket', trying to fill our

trolleys indiscriminately, and often emerging without a complete meal, leaders should take time to reflect, consult and ask really honest questions before embarking on any more changes.

Amongst the questions we asked at Finaghy were: 'what do we want to achieve?'; 'what are the needs in this community?'; 'what opportunities are coming our way?' and 'what should be our starting



point?' There was a consciousness that, as a school, we needed to widen our perspectives, that community needs were changing and that, as a new millennium dawned, we could build on an emerging sense of hope. In short, we needed to find a project that everyone would 'have a heart' for.

First steps

We opened our Breakfast Club to 70 hungry children on the first morning. Run as a cash-cafeteria, parents drop children off from 8.00am and head on to work. As this was our first 'Extended School' project, success was crucial. We needed to convince parents, governors and staff that such a

venture could work, could meet a real need and would be seen by teachers as an asset, rather than an additional burden.

The next obvious step was to consider a service at the other end of the school day, hence, our Daycare Centre was born. We considered 'buying-in' a service, but decided to open our own business in order to have control over ethos and cost. Parents were canvassed, a business plan was constructed, staff were employed and, after 3 successful years, the centre is about to employ its sixth member of staff.

Then, a bid to Big Lottery enabled us to build a school/community SportsZone (now open 7 days a week), and a corner of our site has been given over to a new public library.

By this stage, the Community Campus concept was gaining momentum and we received requests for use of the site by outside agencies. The school building is now used in the evenings for a slimming club, adult education, music tuition and youth club. A local city councillor recently described us as, "the jewel in the crown of the Finaghy Community"; a statement that made us feel very proud of what we have achieved.

Was it worth it?

We have now experienced a paradigm shift in what we offer and what we stand for as a school, as a centre for children's services and as a community campus. As projects proved their worth, fear of change diminished and 'buy-in' increased. School enrolment is growing, the community has a sense of ownership of the campus and we feel we are a microcosm of the sense of aspiration and hope that currently exists in Northern Ireland.

How we did it

The crucial factors:

- carefully devolved principles on which all of our projects operate:
 - all projects are designed to be financially and operationally self-sustaining in the long term. (Not dependent on grants, or on constant micro-management by the Principal or senior management team);
 - all projects must meet real needs;
 - all projects must have the support of all stakeholders; and
 - mechanisms exist for regular evaluation, review and feedback.
- internal staff development occurred in tandem with project development. As our vision grew, we accessed training for our senior management team, and we led sessions with teaching staff and governors on emotional intelligence, team development, managing change and managing relationships; and



- engaging the support and commitment of school governors led to much closer working relationships with staff and enabled the oversight of projects via sub-committees. If we didn't have the talent available internally, we seconded someone who did!

Reflections

Each school is unique in terms of challenges, opportunities and dynamics. Each must find its own starting point. Long-term success requires long-term planning, the creation of a shared vision and a strategy to translate vision into action.



The Leonardo Effect



Academic staff in St Mary's University College have been exploring new approaches to subject integration, the *Leonardo Effect*, that will encourage creativity in pupils' learning. In the article that follows, Deirdre Robson, Ivor Hickey and Mary Flanagan describe some of the results obtained so far.

On the 7th December 2007 the results of the *Leonardo Effect*, a UK wide pilot project to deliver 'revised curriculum' goals, were presented to an audience gathered from across the British Isles, in St. Mary's University College, Belfast. This pilot project was funded by the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts.

Mick Waters, Director of Curriculum at QCA, gave the keynote address. He spoke of the crucial importance of creativity in children's learning and the underestimation in education of the opportunities for collaboration between the arts and the sciences.

The event focused on the results obtained from an experimental teaching methodology developed by art and science lecturers in St. Mary's. Recognising that new approaches for integrating subjects were being sought internationally, these lectures devised a method which they describe in pedagogic terms as 'synchronised integration.' The approach goes beyond the conventional concept of cross-curricular teaching, working at a much deeper level by identifying subject commonalities, and using joint learning outcomes. One teacher described it as, "completely different to the way I would normally teach, but it really works and you get the hang of it quite quickly." In contrast with cross-curricular teaching both art and science have equal importance.

Key to the whole venture was two days of 'hands-on' training for teachers prior to the launch of the pilot.

The *Leonardo Effect* pilot has achieved remarkable success which was communicated at the 7th of December 'event' in presentations from teachers and principals. Their views have been mirrored by: parents; pupils; government departments; inspectors; curricular bodies across the British Isles and coverage in the national press, on TV and at national education conferences.

In addition to supporting learning in science and art and developing children's creativity, the *Leonardo Effect* produced other desirable outcomes. Commitment to literacy showed dramatic improvement. One teacher described oral language development as, "going through the roof." Many teachers spoke of, "disaffected learners engaging with learning."

Encouragingly, principals have commented, "We have changed our whole-school planning" and "We plan to extend the methodology throughout the school."

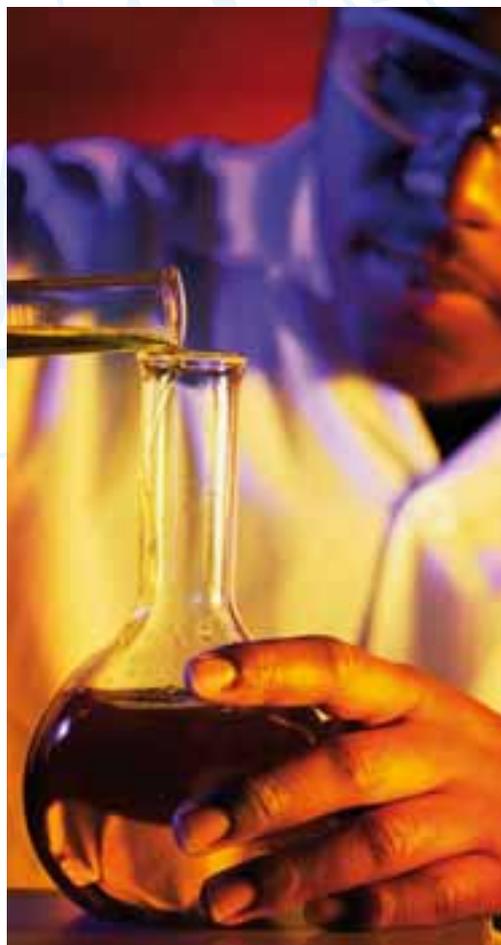
Importantly, not a single child indicated that they would prefer to

return to their usual style of learning, "Made science more interesting – Big Time."

The results show that the *Leonardo Effect* is effective in delivering revised curricular goals at primary level. Post-primary results indicate that the model can be successfully applied, but the contextual challenges will require further investigation through a large scale KS3 pilot.

If you have any comments or would like to introduce this exciting method of teaching into your school please email: info@leonardoeffect.com

Initial results and the report from the pilot can be obtained on <http://arts.gtcni.org.uk>



Schools Receive Awards

The GTCNI is pleased to use this edition of **termtalk** to celebrate the success of local schools who recently received prestigious awards for their outstanding and innovative work. The GTCNI, on behalf for the wider profession, congratulates the schools involved and wishes them every success for the future.

The British Council's International Schools Awards



Nine schools from Northern Ireland have recently received the British Council's International School Award. The award, accredited by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, gives recognition to the international dimension in the curriculum. The nine schools honoured were:

Fleming Fulton, Grosvenor Grammar, Stranmillis Primary, Taughmonagh Primary, Ballymena Primary, Limegrove, Loreto Convent Primary, Omagh High, and St Mary's Girls Primary.

There was particular delight at Fleming Fulton, the Belfast-based special school serving disabled pupils from all over Northern Ireland, as this was the school's second International School Award, following on from its first success in 2003.

Fleming Fulton has a long and successful history of international work. Among many past activities pupils have conducted research into wheelchair access in major cities across Europe, have hosted other disabled teenagers at a European pupil 'summit', created animated films about the experience of being disabled for an international film festival, sung and given musical performances in Boston, Paris and Cologne, and attended and competed in the Paralympics at both Atlanta and Sydney.

Indeed the good practice at the school has not gone un-noticed by other educational bodies. Jeremy Taylor, Deputy Head and Co-ordinator for the school's international programme, was

recently seconded to the Education and Training Inspectorate with the brief of identifying the benefits of international links for schools. Jeremy commented: "What I discovered when on secondment to the Inspectorate echoed our own experiences at Fleming Fulton. Every single school I visited testified to the enormous benefits from international links both for pupils and for staff. Without exception, everyone spoke in the most positive terms about what had been gained from international involvement.

Importantly, the benefits are seen throughout the whole school community: pupils, teachers, and school leaders. The biggest winners of course are the pupils, they get a chance to practise lots of the skills that are so central to the revised curriculum, particularly writing and ICT skills, and they get to do so for a real purpose and to a real audience.

I also found that pupil values and attitudes are positively affected, self-esteem, tolerance and motivation all increased. Teachers also benefit, there are great opportunities for professional growth and learning; younger teachers get to develop their CVs and motivation and teamwork noticeably improve.

In today's world, schools have to look to the future and recognise that they are helping develop global citizens. There are so many programmes, supported with funding, available and I would encourage schools to become involved. They will be pleased they did."

Anyone interested should take a look at the British Council's websites: www.britishcouncil.org/nireland or www.globalgateway.org – or contact the British Council on 028 9024 8220. Jeremy Taylor can be contacted at Fleming Fulton School: 02890 613877 (school), 02890 627975 (fax), or jtaylor245@ffs.belfast.ni.sch.uk



Schools Receive Awards

St Mary's Primary School, Altinure wins UK Excellence Award

St Mary's Primary School, Altinure, has recently been named as the winner of a prestigious award for business excellence in the United Kingdom.

This announcement follows an eleven month judgement process during which all applicants underwent a rigorous assessment of the implementation of the EFQM Excellence Model.

St Mary's Primary School is situated on the outskirts of Park Village about 20 miles from Derry, in the foothills of the Sperrin Mountains. There are presently 206 pupils at the school, eight full-time teachers and six classroom assistants.

The school has always been to the forefront of academic achievement and sporting excellence and, through its involvement in self-assessment, gained the School's Curriculum Awards in 2000 and 2002. St Mary's also achieved the Education Technology Award for best ICT practice in 2003 and 2004. The school gained Investor in People recognition in 2002 and 2005, and is currently seeking 'Investor' status for the third time.

In 2005 St Mary's became involved with the Excellence Model and in 2006 won the Northern Ireland Quality Award. In November last year, the school also achieved a Grade 1 in an inspection carried out by the Education and Training Inspectorate.

Speaking at the event in London, the Principal, Mr Tom O'Kane, commended the hard work and dedication of all the staff and, in particular, thanked Mrs Mary Jamison and Mrs Mary Redmond for producing the successful submission, which he said highlighted the rich, broad and varied educational experienced and achievements of the pupils.

He also thanked Miss Imelda McDaid, from RTU, who facilitated and mentored the journey of improvement over the past number of years and the Centre for Competitiveness, which was also very supportive.

He said the occasion demonstrated the quality and excellence of the

educational experiences provided by the school. He finished by saying, "I believe we are a professional learning community, where all staff are encouraged to develop themselves for the benefit of the pupils. This award is for the pupils of Altinure!"



*St Mary's PS Staff receiving UK Excellence Award at the London Hilton.
L - R Mrs M Redmond, teacher, Miss I McDaid, RTU, Mr T O'Kane, Principal and Mrs M Jamison, Vice-Principal.*