



Donaghadee Primary School

Collaboration through the school development plan to ensure school improvement

Donaghadee Primary School and Nursery Unit is situated in the centre of the town. The school shares a site with Killard House Special School and has an enrolment of 447, with some 52 pupils in the nursery unit.

This case study focuses on the school's continuous efforts to ensure school improvement through the school development plan and the emphasis on developing the ICT skills of all staff.

The school was inspected in November 2014 when it was evaluated as 'outstanding'. The inspection report noted positive comments from parents and staff relating to the leadership of the school. The inspection also highlighted the culture of self-evaluation which was collegial in its approach and the work the school was doing to address underachievement.

The Sustaining Improvement inspection in 2017 reported that the school, "continues to demonstrate a high level of capacity for sustained improvement."

A strategic vision

The Principal attributes the success of these two inspections to a comprehensive school improvement plan beginning with the school's review of its mission and vision which began in 2013.

The strategic vision for the school is understood and shared by all, and underpins all improvements.

Whilst the school's achievements have been recognised as outstanding, the leadership of the school has a strong focus on continuous improvement.

Clear management structure

An important factor in the school's provision is a clear management structure. The senior leadership team (SLT) is made up of the Principal, Vice Principal and three co-ordinators for foundation stage, key stage one and key stage two.

Teams were formed in core subject areas to ensure that expertise, at different levels and in

various areas, informed development. The team leaders in literacy, numeracy, ICT, creative and expressive and the world around us receive clear guidance about expectations and access relevant training where available.

Considerable time has been invested in staff reviews and the negotiation of new job descriptions which have matched staff skills with particular roles or subject responsibilities.

Some new allowances were introduced, new posts created and some roles were removed when members of staff departed.

Time is provided for school improvement with co-ordinators of the main action plans allocated additional days out of class. Directed time on Tuesday afternoons is timetabled for team meetings when required.

Work is monitored and evaluated continuously through this team structure and the minutes of these meetings reflect whole staff involvement with the focus on children's learning and improvement in teaching practice.

Reviewing the ethos

Once these structures were in place, the leadership team focused on a review of the school's ethos. The school concerned itself with how the school's ethos needed to change in order to prepare pupils for the twenty-first century.

In 2013, the school consulted with all stakeholders, governors, staff and pupils on how the school's ethos should evolve. Time was invested in this audit with the school closed on two afternoons to enable focus groups of parents, governors and staff to meet and discuss the way forward.

A new vision statement with a focus on learning was generated along with a motto 'create, discover, achieve'. The groups also agreed a set of school values that would underpin all work in the school.

This focus on ethos took a year to complete.

School development plan

The school development plan (SDP) has been refined into a more robust and relevant document reflecting a more distributed leadership model. The plan is useful to all staff and everyone has input into its content.

The SDP is evidence-based and informed by data analysis, questionnaires, book dips and consultations. The core section of the plan describes the three main action plans selected as priorities following comprehensive consultation with stakeholders.

The renewed leadership structure depends on each member of staff taking some responsibility for school improvement. The necessary interventions to meet the main targets in the action plans are led by coordinators.

Co-ordinators are accountable to the senior leadership team and also report to the Board of Governors when their subject is a priority area. Co-ordinators in non-priority subjects still submit a mini action plan and report back to the SLT on an annual basis.

There is more flexibility in the new SDP and it is a more active document as there are regular reviews on progress.

Reflective practice, investment in planning time and a strategic and creative vision have resulted in an inclusive culture of strong staff relationships, accountability, at both team and individual levels and a strong leadership structure built around a series of staff teams.

This has led to clearly focused target and action planning and ultimately achievement for both pupils and staff.

ICT provision

A significant area of development in the school has been evidenced in the school's ICT provision. The school has held the NAACE Excellence in ICT award for six years.

This has been a controlled programme which has introduced new technology in a manageable way for staff.

A full audit was organised through NAACE and staff have gradually become more skilled in their use of this technology.

Investing in staff ICT skills

A highly skilled ICT Co-ordinator is in place. The school has invested in the appropriate training for this member of staff and other colleagues have benefited from training cascaded by the co-ordinator, leading to a steady process of developing the skills of all members of staff.

All classroom teachers have been trained in the use of interactive boards and panels. Training has been provided in the use of the C2k system, iPads, relevant apps, BUG club, Mathletics and Book Creator.

Coding training has also been arranged in-house and staff have been trained in the use of digital technologies through support from the NERVE centre.

The 2017 inspection commented on the confident use by staff of ICT and their positive response to training.

For further information, please contact:

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