



## **Gorran Primary School**

### **The development of outdoor play**

Gorran Primary School is located on the outskirts of the town of Garvagh in Co Londonderry. Enrolment has remained steady over the past five years and at the time of inspection in December 2016, it stood at 81 pupils.

The evaluation of achievements and standards and provision for learning in numeracy highlighted many strengths.

The inspection team identified the school as having a high level of capacity for sustained improvement. All key areas, *i.e.* achievements and standards, provision for learning, and leadership and management, were found to be very good.

The focus of this case study is the school's engagement with parents and their development of an outdoor play area.

#### **Development of outdoor play**

The school, through its own monitoring and evaluation processes had identified problem solving and investigations as an area for improvement and this was supported by the inspection team.

Following inspection, staff took the opportunity to focus on the development of the outdoor play area and to link this to the development of problem solving and investigative approaches.

#### **PTA contribution**

The school benefits from the contributions of an effective Parent Teacher Association (PTA). Over the past year, the efforts of the staff team and PTA have been channelled into resourcing the practical elements of the outdoor play area.

The PTA has led successful fundraising events and the money has been used to purchase permanent wooden structures for the area. A number of trees have been cleared to create the 'Welly Woods' area.

Other resources contributed by the PTA include a mud kitchen, bird table and painted tyres to create colourful flower beds.

### **Team working**

Teaching and non-teaching staff work well together as a team. There are good working relationships and staff work closely together to monitor, evaluate and plan to ensure all children's learning needs are met and different learning styles facilitated.

Staff have embraced extending this to the use of the outdoor play area.

### **A resource for all**

The outdoor play area is used by all children in the school.

In the Foundation Stage (FS), Gorran Primary School's effective indoor play practice, recognised by ETI during the inspection, has been extended to the outdoors. FS children avail of the area twice a week and experience themed activities to achieve learning outcomes within the whole school play programme.

Key stage one and key stage two children also benefit from using the outdoor play area. For the older children, the use of the outdoor area is at the early exploratory stages and the school intends to develop this further and to integrate the use of the outdoor play area into the whole school approach to planning, learning and assessment.

The ETI report stated that consistent high quality learning and teaching is a key strength of the school's provision. The school plans to maintain and develop further these high standards in the outdoor play area: to link explicitly with problem solving and investigations and to the curriculum areas of personal development, mutual understanding and the world around us.

The outdoor play area has been extensively developed over the past year and the school has plans to enrich it further by purchasing more outdoor equipment and a chicken coop.

To support learning in the outdoors, the school avails of the forest school initiative, a programme provided by the Garvagh and District Development Association.

The entire school benefits from the outdoor play area and staff, in particular, have recognised the benefits for older children. Its continued development is a priority on the school development plan and next steps include developing further meaningful links with the Northern Ireland curriculum.

**For further information, please contact:**

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