



Longstone School

How a Rights Respecting School award enriches pastoral care

Longstone School currently provides education for children aged 3-16 who have a range of complex learning difficulties. It serves a wide catchment area which includes children from the North Down and the Greater Belfast areas.

This case study focuses on how the school has enriched its pastoral care provision through its involvement with UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools Award.

The school has been included in the EA's Annual Action Plan for 2017/18 with a view to reconfiguring provision so that the school will provide an education for children aged 3 to 19 years old.

The school was last inspected in February 2016. The school's achievement and outcomes plus provision for learning were reported to be very good. Leadership and management was reported as good, and the school's unit provision and outreach support were deemed to be outstanding.

The inspection report concluded that the school had the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interests of all learners.

Pastoral care provision

The school believes its provision for the pastoral care of its pupils to be a significant strength and pastoral care was reported as outstanding at inspection. The inspection report stated that by the time the children leave school they are able to express themselves confidently and communicate very well with one another and with staff and visitors.

Senior pupils are reported to be good role models for the younger children and are involved in decisions about their post school pathways. Pupils achieve well in external examinations and in vocational and occupational studies.

The school has an inclusive ethos and nurturing environment that permeates all aspects of school life. Furthermore, the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding pupils and young people.

A Rights Respecting School

The school's status as a UNICEF's Rights Respecting School (RSS) is an acknowledgement of the achievement in putting the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) into practice within the school, at the centre of the school's ethos and curriculum.

The RSS initiative focuses on four key categories. These include:

- leadership and management's commitment to the CRC
- knowledge and understanding of the CRC
- rights respecting classrooms
- children actively participating in decision making throughout the school.

The initiative's strengths are clearly evidenced in the life and work of the school. The children are involved in school decision making. For example, they influence the content and direction of the school development plan (SDP), participate in a very active school council, work respectively and cooperatively in lessons and contribute to the extra-curricular life of the school.

Giving pupils a voice

Pupil voice is very much in evidence at the school. Pupils have played a prominent role in developing a number of the school's policies particularly the school's promoting positive behaviour policy.

A child-friendly anti-bullying policy has been created which outlines, in easily understood language, what to do if they or someone they know is being bullied.

As an extension of this focus on the promotion of positive behaviour and children's rights, pupils can use the 'feeling safe box' to report concerns or worries they may have to the Vice Principal in charge of pastoral care.

Pupils decide what clubs they would like to establish at the school and also choose the destination for their year group's end of year reward trip. The Eco-School committee is very active and as well as designing the school's 'nature nook' it was also responsible for choosing the three key areas of focus for the Eco-School's action plan, namely biodiversity, waste and energy.

In September 2017, nursery provision was established at the school and pupils decided on the name for the nursery.

Pupils are involved in the writing, reviewing and evaluating of their individual education plans (IEP). There is a section on the IEPs for the pupils to complete and the evaluation of their targets is timetabled and takes place once a week. Moreover, pupils have the opportunity to evaluate teaching and learning at the end of units of work.

Key stage four pupils work closely with the Vice Principal and the careers advisor when making decisions regarding post-16 pathways and are empowered to explore appropriate transition pathways and to choose a relevant work experience.

Reinforcing key principles

Wall displays throughout the school outline clearly the criteria and levels of attainment which are characteristic of a Rights Respecting School.

Attractive posters, photographs of the children's work, academic achievements, certificates, minutes of council meetings and activities initiated by the children are evident in classroom and circulation areas.

School assemblies are well planned and reinforce and celebrate the key principles promoted in a Rights Respecting School.

Developing global citizens

Pupils at the school are aware of the importance of respecting the rights of others and use their voice to campaign for the rights of others globally.

This awareness has been promoted and encouraged through participation in various campaigns such as UNICEF's Outright campaign, the UNICEF Day for Change, Fair Trade Fortnight, Shoe Box Appeal and long term fundraising for Uganda.

Pupils have completed surveys and questionnaires which have allowed them to voice their opinions on the Rights Respecting School programme, the results of which have fed into the school's action plans in this area.

The Rights Respecting School ethos

The Rights Respecting School initiative is clearly having a very positive impact on life at Longstone; it supports the curriculum, informs arrangements for pastoral care and is key to developing a positive model for good behaviour which the pupils at the school can influence and manage themselves.

It is an inclusive and positive programme which is helping to ensure that all the children can have a voice and can develop appropriate social and cultural attitudes suited to later life.

Time has been invested in ensuring that this initiative meets the needs of the school community. Being a Rights Respecting School is a long-term commitment and its success is ensured by the positive attitudes clearly in evidence throughout the school.

For further information, please contact:

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