



## **Sandelford School**

### **A focus on effective communication and transparency**

Sandelford is a co-educational special school catering for children with severe or complex needs aged 3-19. The school was purpose built in 2003 for 116 pupils but has expanded to cater for 216, which has put pressure on the accommodation and facilities for learning and leisure.

The external inspection in January 2017 reported the outcomes for learners as outstanding. The quality of provision and leadership and management were also found to be outstanding with the inspection team concluding that the school had a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interests of all learners.

Since 2005 the school has been on a journey of improvement which has focused on two key areas: increasing pupil's participation in the curriculum and the quality of leadership and management. The school has worked to ensure that leaders at all levels are empowered and that collegiality is very much a feature of decision-making. The school has improved its curricular provision to ensure access for all children and improved outcomes by focusing on minimising the barriers to learning which the young people face.

Central to all of these efforts has been a strong focus on effective communication and transparency. The school has a self-reflective culture and the Principal has facilitated changes in a staged and appropriate manner. While much has been achieved, the school, nevertheless, continues to work on each of these areas and keeps them under review.

The care and welfare of the young person is at the centre of all planning. The school recognises the need to focus on outcomes for the individual child. Young people are encouraged and enabled to become more independent and better prepared for life after school. The school, in seeking to achieve this, reaches out to the community and a range of agencies and providers to source the practices and initiatives that are beneficial to the development of its staff and the welfare of the pupils.

The principal and staff have reviewed the curriculum on offer to the young people and offer a curriculum with the development of core life and living skills at its centre. Curriculum planning is child centred and involves partnerships between staff, parents, pupils and the wider community.

In order to ensure the effective delivery of an individualised curriculum focusing on the development of creativity, functional literacy and numeracy, social, emotional and physical skills, considerable time and effort is put into staff development, discussion and training. The school has engaged all members of staff in considering how best to facilitate the pupil's engagement in the curriculum by establishing a Positive Learning Support Team. Behaviour issues and possible barriers to learning identified in class are considered at team meetings, strategies are discussed, adapted and implemented as required. Regular auditing and evaluation of the curriculum and on-going assessment of all aspects of school life assist the school in ensuring long-term improvement and sustainability in delivery.

The child-centred approach is also key to ensuring that each child's specific learning needs are met; this begins with a sharper focus on the diagnostic assessment of the child's needs and the subsequent formation of individual education plans which set out clear, measurable, targets for success. Underpinning all of the school's work is a self-evaluative and reflective culture which ensure that the staff, support staff and parents contribute positively to the development of the school.

This co-operative approach to curriculum planning, aligned with clear leadership and management structures, are clear strengths in the school's provision, ensuring collegiality in decision-making and greater ownership at all levels. The curriculum has been evaluated by ETI as relevant and balanced to the benefit of the children.

A significant investment in time and resources has been made in the professional development of the staff, the sharing of good practice, peer planning and observation with the aim of ensuring greater consistency in practice across the school. Leadership is committed to keeping staff motivated and enthused and there is therefore a focus on the health and welfare of staff as well as pupils. The expertise of each member of staff is acknowledged with staff playing a key role in leading staff development days.

The management value effective communication as a pivotal element in the success of the school. A high priority is given to the sharing of information throughout the school; for example, the data gathered through audits is shared with staff and the newsletter also communicates this information to the wider school community. Staff briefings and other opportunities such as whole-school celebration events are reflective of an open and transparent system of management.

The school's continued and significant progress and improvement is driven by effective and committed leadership, which is open to new ideas and embedded in current research. There has been a great investment in time for staff training and for planning. The school's governors are well informed and are, increasingly, very actively involved in the life of the school. A skilled and knowledgeable management team has evolved.

**For further information, please contact:**

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