

# Provision in the Creative and Expressive Area of Study in a Sample of Primary Schools in Northern Ireland

## SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

Education and Training Inspectorate  
Report of District Inspections

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INSPECTED: 2005

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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -  
Promoting Improvement*

Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education  
Department for Employment and Learning  
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) has undertaken a number of District Inspections to evaluate the quality of learning and teaching in the creative and expressive area of study, specifically in the contributory subjects of art and design, music and physical education (PE) in a sample of primary schools.
- 1.2 The District Inspections involved visits to 77 primary schools. Inspectors observed over 300 lessons distributed evenly within key stage (KS) 1 and KS2, evaluated relevant school documentation, talked with children as they worked in class, and examined samples of their work. In addition, the visits involved discussions with the principals, relevant curriculum co-ordinators and with class teachers. The Inspectorate also had discussions with the advisers within the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS) who have responsibility for the creative and experience area of study.
- 1.3 This summary sets out the key strengths and areas for improvement in art and design, music and PE respectively. The full report accompanies this summary and is also available on the Department of Education (DE) website at [www.deni.gov.uk](http://www.deni.gov.uk).

## **Summary of Main Findings**

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### **2. ART AND DESIGN**

2.1 The District Inspections highlight strengths in the learning and teaching in art and design. These include:

- ▶ the good behaviour of the children and their positive interaction;
- ▶ the good relationships and the friendly, purposeful atmosphere of mutual respect in classrooms;
- ▶ the strong focus on celebrating the children's work and raising their self-esteem;
- ▶ the adequate range of materials and equipment available in almost all schools;
- ▶ the good support given by the art and design co-ordinators in schools and the in-service support provided by CASS; and
- ▶ the good development of links with parents, schools, the local community and professional artists in a majority of schools.

2.2 Areas for improvement in the learning and teaching in art and design include the need:

- ▶ to provide the children with sufficient opportunities to have discussions and to share ideas which motivate them and enable them to plan and to make their own choices and decisions about their work;
- ▶ to provide more opportunities for the children to evaluate their own work and the work of others;
- ▶ to develop further the use of information and communication technology (ICT) programs to support the teaching of art and design;

- ▶ to develop assessment procedures which identify more systematically the progression in the children's learning and inform future planning;
- ▶ to extend the professional development of all staff involved in teaching the subject, to develop more effectively their competence in an appropriate range and level of art and design techniques and processes, and to ensure that they understand more fully what constitutes progression within and across the key stages; and
- ▶ to evaluate the effect of staff development on the quality of learning and teaching.

## Summary of Main Findings

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### 3. MUSIC

3.1 The strengths in the learning and teaching of music include:

- ▶ the children's good behaviour, their enthusiasm and their willingness to participate during music lessons;
- ▶ the importance afforded to music by the school, creating a positive environment for learning in which creative and practical activities are seen as paramount, and in which all children are viewed as potentially musical;
- ▶ the increasing focus, in the teachers' planning, on the intended learning outcomes for the children;
- ▶ the quality of teaching of music which is judged to be good or better in a majority of instances;
- ▶ the focus on musical processes rather than on the end result alone, the good use of oral work to promote the children's understanding, and the use of music technology to help the children to explore musical concepts;
- ▶ the quality of the children's learning in music which enables them to explore sound through practical activities, to talk about their music, to make choices and contribute to decisions, and to reflect on what they have done with the intention of improving their compositions and performances;
- ▶ the variety of musical opportunities provided for the children in addition to class lessons, including involvement in school assemblies, and performances in school choirs and other musical productions;
- ▶ the valuable contribution of many music specialists within schools who enhance significantly the children's musical development and provide valuable leadership and guidance for other staff;

- ▶ the good support for schools in their provision for music from other agencies including CASS, the Regional Training Unit (RTU) and instrumental tuition provided by the music service;
- ▶ the development of good links involving music with others including the parents, other schools and the local community; and
- ▶ the opportunities provided to further the children's musical development through participation in music festivals and competitions, performing for a variety of audiences, and attendance at performances given by professional musicians.

3.2 The areas for improvement in the learning and teaching of music include:

- ▶ the need to develop the planning for music to ensure the progressive development of the children's music skills and understanding throughout the primary years;
- ▶ the over-directed nature of the teaching in a minority of schools, which presents activities for the children that lack stimulation and challenge and do not promote creativity;
- ▶ the need to develop assessment procedures which inform more effectively subsequent provision and which record more meaningfully the children's progress and achievements;
- ▶ the need, in a minority of schools, for better resources for learning and teaching in music;
- ▶ the need to re-appraise the deployment of the music specialist, in some instances, to ensure s/he has a key role in the dissemination of good practice in music throughout the school and in the professional development of other staff;

## **Summary of Main Findings**

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- ▶ the need to extend the monitoring and evaluation processes, already developed in most schools, to learning and teaching in music; and
- ▶ the need to address issues in accommodation which have implications for child protection, and health and safety.



## 4. PHYSICAL EDUCATION

4.1 The strengths in the learning and teaching in PE include:

- ▶ the value placed on PE and other aspects of health promotion by most of the principals and teachers;
- ▶ the very good behaviour of the children, in almost all of the schools;
- ▶ the good or excellent quality of the relationships between the children and the teachers;
- ▶ the satisfactory or better whole-school planning for PE in a majority of schools;
- ▶ the motivated and responsive children;
- ▶ the use made of PE to develop well the children's understanding of safety, and establish the links amongst exercise, having a healthy diet and a healthy lifestyle;
- ▶ the quality of the support offered by CASS officers;
- ▶ the good extra-curricular provision in the majority of schools; and
- ▶ the effective links established with the 'Youth Sport' programme.

4.2 The areas for improvement in the learning and teaching in PE include the need:

- ▶ to develop planning further to ensure there are clear learning outcomes and activities which support the children's learning and raise their standards of performance;

## **Summary of Main Findings**

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- ▶ to raise teachers' expectations and provide more opportunities for the children to be creative, to practise and refine their skills and to talk about their own performance and the performance of others;
- ▶ to develop approaches to the assessment of the children's progress and to monitor and evaluate the quality of learning and teaching and the standards achieved by the children in PE;
- ▶ for teachers to agree what a child should be able to understand, know and do having completed a unit of work and the PE programme at the school; and
- ▶ to increase considerably the allocation of time to PE in all schools in line with the two hours recommended by DE in Circular 1996/30.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION: SCHOOLS**

5.1 In primary schools the three subjects, art and design, music and PE collectively make up the creative and expressive area of study. There are common themes which have emerged from the evaluation of the three subjects which have implications for development and improvement in the area of study as a whole. The following recommendations are made for action by schools.

### 5.2 PLANNING

- ▶ Effective planning should be undertaken as carefully and comprehensively for the creative and expressive area of study as it is for other areas of the curriculum.
- ▶ Planning should provide for the progressive development of the children's knowledge, skills and understanding throughout the seven years of primary education to ensure that their experiences are enriched and their standards raised in art and design, music and PE.
- ▶ Planning should support non-specialist teachers, where appropriate, and should be flexible enough to enable them to use their own practical expertise.

### 5.3 LEARNING AND TEACHING

- ▶ Teaching approaches should guide the children through a creative learning process and provide them with sufficient opportunities to discuss and to share ideas, and to plan and to make more of their own choices and decisions about their work and their performance.
- ▶ Children should have more opportunities to be creative, to practise and refine their skills, and to evaluate their own outcomes and performance and those of others.

## **Summary of Main Findings**

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### 5.4 ASSESSMENT

- ▶ Assessment processes need to identify, more systematically, the progression in the children's learning and inform future planning.

### 5.5 STAFF DEVELOPMENT

- ▶ The professional development of teachers needs to be extended to ensure their competence in the creative and expressive area of study, and importantly, that they plan more effectively for the development of the children's knowledge, skills and understanding throughout the primary years.

### 5.6 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- ▶ The monitoring and evaluation processes, which are already evident in the majority of schools for some areas of the curriculum, need to be applied consistently to the creative and expressive area of study. Specifically, this needs to focus on the quality of learning and teaching and the standards which the children attain in art and design, music and PE.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION: OTHERS**

6.1 The report also identifies a number of issues which need to be addressed if the quality of the provision in the creative and expressive area of study is to be improved. These include the need:

- ▶ to provide suitable and sufficient resources and storage for each of the three subjects;
- ▶ to improve the existing poor accommodation and outdoor facilities for PE in a significant minority of schools;
- ▶ to address the lack of changing facilities for PE for older children in schools;
- ▶ to address the lack of practical specialist support for teachers within the area of study; and
- ▶ to increase the opportunities for professional development in the creative and expressive subjects throughout initial, induction and early professional development of teachers.

## **Summary of Main Findings**

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### **7. CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 The survey has shown that whilst there are areas for improvement there is clear evidence of a sound foundation for the enhancement of provision and outcomes in the creative and expressive area of study. In particular, the discretionary effort of many teachers in terms of their provision of valuable extra-curricular experiences, not least in PE and music, but also in art and design, is indicative of a professional commitment to this important dimension of children's experience. Art and design, music and PE can play an invaluable part in stimulating the creative thinking and imagination of young learners, as well as their skills and all-round development.
- 7.2 This report presents an opportunity for all schools to self-evaluate their provision in the context of the findings with the intention of maintaining what is good and improving the quality where appropriate.
- 7.3 It has been written to prompt reflection and promote action for improvement on the part of all those who can make a difference to the quality of learning and teaching in this area of study.



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