

School of Education

Integrating education:
case studies of good practice in response
to cultural diversity

A research report by Dr Claire McGlynn

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**‘All schools are engaged on a journey of
integration and social inclusion.’**

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank and acknowledge the following for their support:

- International Fund for Ireland
- Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education
- all participating schools and individuals for giving of their time so freely
- Ruth Greenlees for collecting and transcribing the data
- *Integrating* Education team
- Dr Alison Montgomery, University of Ulster, for her help with instrument design
- Dr Ulrike Niens, Queen's University, Belfast, for her comments on the final report

Foreword

It is with great pleasure that I introduce this research on ‘Integrating education: case studies of good practice in response to cultural diversity.’ In partnership with the International Fund for Ireland and the Integrating Education Project, the School of Education at Queen’s University, Belfast has carried out this research study. We hope that it will be a useful resource for sharing good practice of integrating culturally diverse pupils in and between controlled, maintained and integrated schools in Northern Ireland.

The most recent report from the Education and Training Inspectorate highlighted one of the recurring areas for improvement in schools as *Inclusion and Diversity*¹. The *Shared Future*² Government policy agenda along with the *Revised Curriculum*³ encourage schools to reflect on how they shall manage diversity and support children and young people to respect difference. In addition the *Bain Report*⁴ emphasises the economic imperative, the quality of education and the necessity to collaborate and share through education as key drivers in creating sustainable schools in the future.

The Integrating Education Project managed by the Northern Ireland Council for Integration [NICIE] and fully funded by the International Fund for Ireland [IFI] has supported schools in developing their capacity for integration and inclusion. In two years from September 2005 to October 2007 it aimed to:

1. Assist schools realise integration in practice
2. Collate, develop and disseminate examples of good practice in integration
3. Work with other educational providers to facilitate the development of relevant models of integrating education

A team of seven specialist officers worked with 61 controlled, maintained and integrated schools all over Northern Ireland over a two year period. Among the outcomes of the project was this research study.

¹ Inspection and Improvement The Chief Inspector’s Report 2004-2006

² A Shared Future Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland March 2005

³ The Revised Curriculum 2006

⁴ Schools for the Future :report of the Independent Strategic Review of Education, December 2006

We hope that this research study will:

1. Encourage principals, senior managers, governors, staff and pupils to reflect on good relations and inclusion in their school by asking themselves the question - what is my school doing to actively promote integration?
2. Provide ideas and inspiration for integrating practice by exploring detailed case studies in a range of school types across Northern Ireland.
3. Inform educationalists locally, nationally and internationally of some of the principles, policies, practices and resources that schools are using successfully to actively promote good relations and social inclusion.

This research also provides an opportunity to engage with educational partners to facilitate the development of relevant models of integrating education. Integrating education is concerned with building good relations and finding ways to allow for the full participation of children, young people and adults from various backgrounds through schools, including incoming minority groups. It is about working in ways which promote partnership and collaboration and ultimately meaningful, sustained contact between people that acknowledges diversity and promotes cultural understanding.

All schools, irrespective of type, are made up of diverse individuals sharing learning and teaching spaces. It is vital therefore that the management of the school is aware of the diversity within the school in order to meet the needs of everyone. In schools where there is an obvious mix of religion, cultures, gender and physical and learning abilities it is advisable to reflect on the diversity and plan how the school is going to ensure inclusion for all in the school. This is, like any strategy or action plan, not something that can be done overnight but needs to be carefully planned, implemented and reviewed and of course, to build on good practice. It is hoped that this research study will inspire and support schools to work towards integrating practice.

Roisin Marshall

Integrating Education Project Manager

Introduction

This is a research project of the School of Education at Queen's University into the response of schools in Northern Ireland to cultural diversity. This study aims to extend the *Integrating Education* project undertaken by the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education [NICIE] and funded by the International Fund for Ireland [IFI], by developing research to explore responses to cultural diversity in primary and post-primary schools. The rationale for the research is that many schools have a diverse pupil population, becoming more multicultural with time, and are subsequently engaged on a journey of integration/social inclusion.

This is not a comparative study between different schools, rather one that aims to illuminate good practice. From the sixty one schools involved in the project and after a careful process of consideration, the *Integrating Education* team identified eight case study schools which exemplify positive responses to cultural diversity. This is not to say that other schools do not exhibit good practice, but rather that these schools stood out in different ways to the team who had been working with them over a period of time. Given the changing educational and cultural landscape in Northern Ireland such research is an opportunity not only to explore examples of implementing methods of good practice, but also to promote discussion of responses to cultural diversity across the whole educational sector.

Methods

This qualitative study draws on data collected by a research assistant from focus group interviews with pupils and semi-structured interviews with teachers, support staff and principals of schools in Northern Ireland, where the majority of children attend schools that are denominationally separate. Data was collected in eight case study schools, of which four were primary (one maintained, one planned integrated and two transformed integrated) and four were post-primary (one controlled, one maintained, one planned integrated and one transformed integrated). These schools are part of sixty one schools involved in the project '*Integrating Schools*' led by NICIE and funded by the IFI. The schools were identified by the *Integrating Schools* support team as displaying or

developing good practice with regards to response to cultural diversity and so the research was designed to explore these practices. A number of research questions informed the design of this study, including:

1. What do schools and pupils perceive as good practice in responding to pupil diversity?
2. What are the strengths and the challenges of current initiatives?
3. How are schools developing this aspect of this practice?
4. What provisions are made for teacher development?
5. Does school policy emphasize difference or similarity between diverse pupils and what are the potential implications of this?
6. To what extent is practice with regards to cultural diversity evaluated?

Two days of interviews were conducted in each school, including interviews with the principal (45 minutes), a number of classroom teachers (30 minutes each), 1-2 support staff, including classroom assistants (20-25 minutes) and a focus group of 6 either Key Stage 2 (KS2) or Key Stage 4 (KS4) pupils (30 minutes). Separate semi-structured interview schedules were prepared for each of the above. Those interviewed were selected by school principals on the basis that they had all been involved in particular integration initiatives. Interviews took place between October 2006 and April 2007 and were taped. Themes explored included identifying responses to cultural diversity, how cultural integration is promoted, strengths and challenges of current initiatives, teacher development, addressing cultural difference and evaluation.

After full transcription, data were analysed using qualitative methods whereby units of relevant meanings were clustered and common themes determined before themes general and unique to all interviews were identified (Silverman, 1993; Mason, 1996; Carspecken, 1996). With the exception of pupils, member checks were carried out on all data, whereby interviewees confirmed the transcripts of their interviews as accurate accounts. In addition school documentation, such as prospectuses, mission statements, appropriate policies etc, was consulted for evidence of response to cultural diversity.

Ethics

Ethical approval for this study was granted by the Ethics Committee of the School of Education, Queen's University in October 2006. Initial contact was made with school principals by letter, followed up by telephone call by the research assistant. Once agreement had been reached with the school (all eight identified agreed to participate), the school principal recruited classroom teachers, support staff and groups of pupils who have been involved in integration initiatives. It was made clear both to the principal and to all participants that involvement in the research was voluntary and that they retained the right to retire from the research process at any time. Risks were minimised by assurances of anonymity for all participants. The context of the case study schools will be described with the minimum of specific detail to reduce the possibility of identification. Of particular ethical relevance is the inclusion of pupil interviews. Interviews were held with focus groups of 6 either KS2 or KS4. As such no child was interviewed alone and it was made clear that all participants had the right to retire from the research process at any time they wish. Both the research assistant and the principal investigator are police checked for working with children.

Limitations

The limitations of this study are related to the selection of the case study schools, that is, they were not selected on the basis of empirical evidence that they are more effective in terms of their response to cultural diversity, because such evidence is not available. Rather the schools were identified by the project team as, in their opinion, either displaying or developing good practice. Thus no claims regarding impact, nor exclusivity, are made. Instead it is the intention of this study to illuminate and explore interesting practice by considering the multiple perspectives of those individuals involved, that is, principals, teachers, classroom assistants and pupils and from this to draw out some characteristics of good practice. Within the word limits of this report it will not be possible to reflect the totality of the practice occurring in these case study schools. Without a doubt there are many other examples of good practice with regards to response to cultural diversity elsewhere across the education system and further work is necessary to collate and disseminate this also.

The Case Study Schools

The case study schools are presented below, the four primary schools first followed by the four post-primary schools. Limited information about each context is provided to ensure confidentiality. The following coding is used: [P] = principal; [T1] = teacher 1; [T2] = teacher 2; [SS1] = support staff 1; [SS2] = support staff 2. Particular aspects of good practice emerging are highlighted in bold script.

Case Study 1

The first school is a small, newly transformed controlled integrated primary school. It has a tradition of provision for Catholic pupils and the pupil population has now a slight majority of Catholic to Protestant pupils. The children all speak English and are white, but some come from the Republic of Ireland. The school is currently exploring how to develop integration in a school context where both Protestants and Catholics have always been mixed. This challenge is met with **enthusiasm**, particularly from the **children who are seen to play an important role in the transformation process**:

I know that the children are aware that their school has become integrated and we do try to let them know what integration is...we also are quite open, that some children would come and say "Well in my church this weekend we did this..." just very open about it. We have also worked along with other integrated schools, one in (another town). Just basically to see how they work because as I say we are only starting so we had to look at their good practices too, whether it be wall displays or when people come in they are able to see that everyone is really welcome, and it is a really welcoming atmosphere in the class too, children aren't afraid, not only are the children learning from me but I learn from the children because they are more open minded than what we adults are [T2]

There is an acknowledgment that 'our integrated status now may mean that less is brushed under the carpet' [T1]. **Openness to integration** in this school includes taking a cue from children regarding **challenging discussions** such as the wearing of football

tops. The principal recognizes the time and consideration necessary to move towards transformation:

Well our Board of Governors is very keen. They investigated the route of integration very, very thoroughly before we actually decided to go down that road. We visited other schools and had many meetings with (NICIE officer 1) beforehand, so it just wasn't done with a decision taken lightly. It was 18 months before we actually decided to go ahead. And then we have been attending meetings with (NICIE officer 2), training sessions to consider how we want to move forward because although we have come quite a long distance but we still feel we need to get down to more nitty, gritty issues [P]

Board of Governor training and ongoing staff development are seen as key:

Well our Governors are meeting, they have already had one meeting with (NICIE officer 2) and due to have another one in January about how to move forward. We are planning to visit other schools and to develop the integrated aspect more and to concentrate on displays for integration, visiting other integrated schools. And to generally increase our knowledge. Have more visitors to the school and develop the assemblies with different themes, different religions. We just dipped into that last year and kids found it so interesting we want to develop it more this year [P]

In School 1 **staff development occurs at all levels**, including for example classroom assistants, and challenges all staff to contribute to the process of transformation and to advance their own personal development:

Maybe in religion too, talking about it myself personally I don't know how I should approach it sometimes and some children believe that Monday is the start of the week and others feel it is Sunday, this can cause a bit of a ruckus in the class but you just have to discuss it [T2]

...the last day that we had I was included and it was basically talking about the integration and how they can move on and what can we do and that. That was a couple of weeks ago with (NICIE officer). It was a good day. At first I didn't think I should have been there because I didn't think I could make a difference being a classroom assistant [SS1]

The school has adopted a **range of strategies to promote cultural inclusion** and understanding, which have opened up the opportunities for learning about other traditions:

Last year we did 'the secret space' where we have one wee table where each child can put something that resembles their culture or faith. So one wee boy brought in a tin whistle, another brought in a bowler hat. Then you have your rosary beads and your bible which is very important. That would be the kind of thing that we do for exploring... There is no real implications for it because the children feel really special because they realize "you know I put in the rosary beads and that's a part of me and I am celebrating that so I can put that in my secret space and think you know I am proud of that, that is part of my culture". One girl brought in her Irish dancing trophy and a boy brought in his Cubs badge. The children are then able to talk about it and say why they brought it in and why it is important to them, so it involves everybody. [T2]

According to staff interviewed such a safe space allows for the development of both knowledge and empathy. Teaching staff also welcome opportunities that arise during the school **curriculum**, for example in English or history:

As I said before diversity in our school is really religion so that would be the only main way....although I would discuss other cultural differences because if you are reading school books they have children of other ethnic minorities and we discuss that. At the minute we are doing Anne Frank so they are able to know about the Jews and what happened there. We have also done a bit about slavery now – that is more history I suppose – but it does have implications. We would always try and emphasize the fact

that we are different but at the same time equal. I keep saying that over and over again but I think it is a really important part of the teaching of diversity. [T2]

Inclusion of all children in the playground is promoted by use of the '**Bus Stop**' idea, as explained by this exchange between the Key Stage Two children in the focus group:

- *If someone is left out the place where you can go is called the 'Bus Stop'. If someone sees them there they go over and let them join in to their game*
- *We used to have the sign up*
- *I am bullied because of my hair colour. I'm called Ginger*
- *They call him as well "Your hair is on fire! Go get the fire brigade!"*
- *Sometimes people stand at the 'Bus Stop' just because they don't want to play. But if there are wee ones and they are fighting, us big ones go and help them out*
- *I think it is better to have the 'Bus Stop' because it is helping children to play together and there are not as many fights in the playground then about who's playing with who*

Other strategies used include **circle time** '*I find that this is a good tool for getting kids talking. Even the ones who are nervous usually of speaking up*' [T1], '*whatever is said in the circle stays in the circle, so that the children are not afraid to talk their mind and it is where people are appreciated for their opinions and their beliefs*' [T2]; **assemblies**, **worry box** '*if there is something happening at the minute like a child is worried about work or whatever they can write it down in the worry box and we open the worry box and talk about it*' [T2] and the **celebration of festivals** such as Chinese New Year '*we had a visitor from the (Chinese) community in the (town). She actually spent a morning with the children explaining about Chinese customs and she did Chinese writing with them. Then she came again to do a cookery display for healthy Chinese eating*' [T1].

Links with other schools have played an important role in helping the school develop its response to diversity in relation to denomination:

Slowly over the years (we) just introduced meeting the needs of the Catholic children and introduced teaching and preparation for the sacraments and just very slowly built up relations over the years with the local parish church and the parish priest and we are very lucky to have developed a close link with one teacher in particular from (maintained primary school)...we have done lots of things through them. At that time we had the EMU project running and we were both very keen to see it work and that filtered down to the KS1 pupils as well. Started with the older ones and filtered down and she was very helpful in introducing us to the priests and getting the children to go up for preparation for the sacraments and that has followed through [P]

Teaching staff praise the value of **interschool links based around the curriculum:**

In the past we have focused more on the curriculum programmes connected directly with History or Geography and they have proved to be very worthwhile. The one we did with the cross border - Churches Peace – it was excellent it was one of our best projects because it involved music and drama and we had to put on a show for the parents which was very good... The second year we put on a concert and the kids did Irish dancing and Scottish dancing and sang/made up a musical interpretation of Cuchuallin which was very good. And again the parents really supported us and we went to another school to do it and we made a big thing of it and we had food and they really, really enjoyed it [P]

The children reported gaining a lot from interschool activities, including the **opportunities to forge friendship**. As the staff pointed out ‘*the kids have no problems. They love meeting other kids from different schools*’ [T1] and ‘*there is no big issue over “you’re this or you’re that”.*’ [SS1]. The following exchange is typical of the views of the children regarding interschool work:

- *I enjoyed it because many people can get to meet other people and different schools can get to know different religions and their personality. We should keep our school small, don’t be knocking it down and making it big because our school is better than any other school because we have more friends and we like having*

- a small school and it's integrated and we want more different religions and personalities and people to come to our school and make it more friendly*
- *I think we learnt how to make more friends and to be happier with people around us and to be thankful that other schools can come with us*
 - *I think we learnt to mix with other religions and make friends with other religions as well*
 - *And be helpful*
 - *Learnt manners*
 - *Friendship – be friends with everybody, don't be leaving anyone out it doesn't matter what religion they are, we are still people*
 - *And not to be fighting the other religions as well*

The children reported that **sustained contact was more beneficial than short trips**, echoed by the principal who recognized that *'the overnight stays really work better– a residential works better than a one off or a two off visit. For then they really get to know one another and you find through Grid Club when they can actually e-mail each other they keep in touch'* [P]. One teacher indicated the importance of regular contact with link schools and reported that *'we have sent a teddy bear in the past who gets passed around and stays with different children'* [T1].

To what extent a school should acknowledge, and hence draw attention to, cultural difference is contentious, not least in the literature around multicultural education (McGlynn, 2007). The **children appear unconcerned about the categories** that cause adults so much worry:

- *I'm a Catholic*
- *I'm a Protestant*
- *It doesn't matter. We don't really judge people from their religions. If they are any different religion we don't judge them, we just play with them.*
- *Most of my friends are Protestants actually...*

- *We don't really care like, we don't go "Oh you are a Catholic we are not playing with you"*
- *We don't judge them by their religion, we just judge them if they are nice or not...*
- *We don't ask like "Are you a Protestant?"*

One of the teachers remarks on this lack of differentiation on the part of the children:

'in class something came up about Protestants and one child said "But I don't know any Protestants" and I explained that wee Jimmy beside her in class was a Protestant, to which wee Jimmy responded "Am I?" I don't want to introduce problems where there are no problems' [T1]

In contrast other staff attempt to address **both cultural differences and similarities**:

We aim to enable each child to develop a positive self identity and then a positive view of his/her own culture as well as being tolerant and respectful towards others from a different belief. So it would be difference and similarities. We find now that we are under the "integrated" umbrella it is much easier to bring up issues that are related to religion or problems that the children might have. The children are more open now about talking about things, if one child had been to a pipe band contest they have no bother coming in and saying and we have had quite a few conversations that have just arisen out of an event, it leads on to discussion. I would find it easier now but I can't speak for the others [P]

For all it is a learning curve - *'you do learn from them too and it is great to be so diverse'* [T2]. Staff exhort their colleagues in other schools to **take steps to incorporate cultural diversity** into their teaching also:

The advice I would give other teachers would be to plan a lot and at the same time don't be frightened to have a bit of discussion...sometimes you don't appreciate that children are different and you do become more open minded – so just go for it! Any challenges

that come along you can always ask for advice, you always have NICIE and stuff to go to. But definitely go for it! [T2]

Case Study 2

This is a small Catholic maintained primary school, situated in a town that has suffered from protracted inter-group tension and violence. It has an Irish medium unit which represents about one sixth of the school and the overall pupil population is nearly all Catholic. The school has a number of English as an additional language [EAL] pupils including Portuguese, Polish, Hungarian, Indian, and Lithuanian and is rising to the challenge of integrating these pupils in a community context which strongly reflects historical tensions between Catholics and Protestants.

The children in the school are **empathetic to the needs of the incoming pupils**:

- *You should put yourself into the situation of the child that is from another country and see what you can do to make them feel the same*
- *Don't laugh at them if they make a mistake*
- *Don't bully if there is something wrong with them or anything*
- *Don't make fun of them*
- *Try to make other people like them*
- *Get to know them*
- *Ask them to come and play with you*

Such **openness to new diversity** is evident in the discourse of staff, who are keen to accept the incoming children, respect their cultural backgrounds and embrace the gifts and talents that they bring to the school community, without assimilation (*'I don't want to airbrush their culture'* [P]). However whilst contending that *'the culture diversity in general has been enriching for the school because it has enabled us to think about areas in the world and even areas in our own community that you would generally not have thought of'* [P] practical concerns persist:

If I arrive at a teacher's class and say by the way "I have a wee Portuguese pupil starting tomorrow morning" the teacher's response invariably is "Oh dear". But that is not out of negativity, that's out of fear and because of the difficulty within the classroom scenario. But I would tend to look on things in a positive light and most of our teachers respond positively to that [P]

There is a strong sense that Northern Ireland is moving on ('5 or 10 years ago it would have orange and green. Now it is orange, green, Portuguese, Lithuanian, Polish, the whole gambit of what is out there' [T2]) and that **these developments should be reflected in every aspect of school life**. In School 2 for the first time, the pupils themselves elected a Polish girl as house captain. The school aims to '*treat all children with respect and dignity and in that sense each child would have their place in this school*' [P]. In order to achieve this, attention is paid to both similarity ('*I try to treat the pupils the same, look for the similarities rather than separate them out, try to integrate them into the classroom*' [T2]) and difference ('*we have a carol service soon and the kids will be singing in English, Irish and Polish, a wee Polish girl has taught them how to sing Silent Night in Polish which is lovely*' [P]). There is an acknowledgement that **difference and similarity need to be reconciled**:

Previous experience with the Portuguese children and the Polish girl would have been to try and find out a wee bit about where they came from and get them to pass on some of their own experience, so I suppose we did actually highlight some of the differences and celebrate the difference...I have also tried to examine similarities and I think that is where I would feel more comfortable because I don't want to isolate or highlight differences as much as try to show that underneath our skin we are all exactly the same [T1].

The **children are generally less conscious of the differences** such as nationality or linguistic background that often causes adults anxiety:

- *All different, because they all have different personalities*

- *Everybody likes different things*
- *They look different*
- *They are not all the same age*
- *They go to this school*
- *They wear the same uniform*
- *(we are) Catholics*

Indeed, staff recognize the impact that segregation can have on attitudes towards other groups:

One of the problems we have in this part of the world is that people feel threatened by other people's cultures or priorities and beliefs and things and partly I believe this is due to a lack of understanding and security in their own identity, so I think it is very important for our own children here to first of all have a good strong identity and then to welcome other people so that they don't feel that they are being diminished by someone else, they are being enriched by them. Because partly that is my own experience of growing up in this part of the world – at one stage it was very polarized, it's not just as bad as it used to be, and my own experience of that was that I would have had very little contact with other people from outside my own community but as I have got older I have started to find friends among people from other areas of the community [T1]

A particular strength of this case study school is its **well established link with a controlled primary school**. The classroom assistants view interschool events as occasions for the children to counter ideas they may pick up at home such as '*they shouldn't speak to other kids or there is something different*' [SS1] and to make new friends '*they just seem to take to each other great!*' [SS1]. They report that contacts made are sustained through the swapping of mobile numbers and email addresses. From the children's perspective a **range of activities** appeal:

- *We have been dancing and playing the tin whistle*
- *We have been playing basketball with them*

- *We go on trips with them to (forest park)*
- *We go to the swimming pool*
- *We get into groups and dance. I like it.*
- *You make friends*
- *You get to use the computers*
- *You learn a lot of things*
- *It helps you in the future, if you want to do a really good job using computers*
- *You get to play tunes on the tin whistle, learn it*
- *Have fun*

The school has experimented with various activities and **learned along the way** how to improve the quality of interschool events:

This year we have changed the programme ...the (controlled school) teacher is very creative and has come up with some very good suggestions. Year before last the kids did an animation project in (town) and it was very, very successful and we were there for quite a bit of time together and a lot of the barriers were very quickly dropped and we actually produced something that the kids got a copy of at the end – a DVD with their own animation on it. Last year I think the most rewarding project that we were involved with was a sports programme – they played basketball together and they were there each week for eight weeks, one afternoon each week and the kids really looked forward to it because they actually played a sport and the teams were deliberately mixed, gender wise as well. But the kids really got a lot more out of it and were looking forward to meeting these other people that were on their team and developing friendships. [T1]

The P6 children are involved in a music and dance programme called ‘**All Set**’ where they learn to play the tin whistle, dance traditional folk dances and then put on a show together for the parents of both schools. The principal indicated a success of the programme in that one of the venues for one of the dances was a local Orange Hall, which, given the tense community context, may be seen as particularly impressive. From the pupils’ perspective gender seems to be more of an issue than denomination:

They come away laughing and giggling and they know their names easier when they go round the next time... The wee Portugese girl said “Uugh, I don’t want to dance with boys!” why? “I just don’t like boys” exactly the same answer you got from the other girls in the class and vice versa boys don’t want to dance with girls and there was no because they were (Protestant) or because they were from Poland or wherever, it was just because of the sex. [T2]

Clear ground rules are established for interschool activities including the discouragement of singing songs or wearing clothes that might be perceived as offensive. Teachers reported that such sensitivities are puzzling for the new EAL pupils:

I remember last year when I had the young Polish girl in my class and she was from a Catholic background but she wasn’t sure what the big deal was about going to play basketball with kids from another school. You could see that she was sort of bewildered – didn’t understand why our children initially shied away [T1]

A further programme in the school is the NICIE ‘**Our Traditions**’ project, which builds on the link with the controlled school. The project aims to develop awareness of ‘own’ as well as ‘other’ culture. With regards to music one of the things discovered by the teachers was that ‘*very often the tunes could have a two different sets of lyrics to the same tune and one set would be very much the orange tradition and the other would be Nationalist or even Republican tradition*’ [T1]. Teachers recognize the opportunity that intercommunity contact provides to **broaden the outlook and promote greater understanding of diverse opinions:**

It gives them the opportunity to meet and just be exposed to others and it may be just a word or a phrase that the child has said might spark something within another and ask a question “Why?” or “What do you mean by that?” or they might come back and ask you “Sir, do you understand cricket?” Well actually I enjoy it “What!” something as simple

as that can open up a new door – they might look in and decide they don't like it but the fact that they have looked in anyway, whereas the door was always closed [T2]

The teachers also are learning from the link:

I have learned an awful lot. A lot of my personal concerns, also my own prejudices, I have realized how flawed a lot of it was, so I have become more interested in the programme [T1]

Even teachers who were perhaps previously cynical towards cross-community work admit that they *'have kinda warmed to it 'cos I now believe it is much more important than I used to think'* [T1]. However funding is a frustration and teachers and principal alike report that with more funding, more sustained interschool work could be provided for all pupils *'basically down to money, the fact that there is not enough money to have all of the children each year going out... We just can't guarantee that all the children will get the chance to integrate with the children'* [T1]. Despite these restrictions the principal **exhorts others to get involved** in this kind of work:

... be brave, don't be afraid. I would imagine a lot of schools are reluctant to get involved in things because of their locality or because of views that may prevail in the area...but I am also a great believer that leadership isn't taking people where they want to go, leadership sometimes is dipping your toes into the water and seeing "maybe can we do this?"... but I would just encourage people not to be afraid, to take chances, take risks, not life threatening risks or anything, but just to be brave... I reckon you can do cross-community work anywhere if you have the will to do it [P]

Case Study 3

This is a newly transforming, controlled integrated primary school, situated in a small majority Protestant town, with a pupil population of about fifty percent Protestant, twenty percent Catholic and the remainder no religion, mainly children from mixed marriages and partnerships. There are a small number of Polish children and several of mixed ethnic

background. Twice the size of School 1 and with less Catholic pupils, it is challenged to respond to its new found diversity:

We also have to be very careful that we don't somehow 'water down' the Catholic aspect of things – so it is finding that balance that both traditions and both religions feel that they are recognized and valued without one diluting the other and I think that is probably the hardest thing... provided you are very fair you can actually manage it quite well, and as long as you keep parents informed and say “this is what we are doing” [P]

The main challenge is the **provision of religious education:**

We follow the Alive O programme as well as the core syllabus and we have found that we can work both of those side by side and just by being sensible really and if there are aspects of the Alive O programme specifically Catholic, we would remove those from the whole class situation so we wouldn't be for example teaching our Protestant children Hail Mary, but we would give them a flavour of the what the other religion do, on both sides, but that we would be sensitive to the fact that we wouldn't be giving children prayers that aren't part of their religion [P]

School assemblies provide opportunities to acknowledge diversity and there has been much discussion amongst staff on how to deal with **heterogeneity and homogeneity of culture:**

One of the main factors of assembly is to deal with things like cultural diversity, differences between children of the same culture, the fact that all Protestants do not look the same, all Catholics don't look the same, don't all feel the same way, don't like the same things, just like children from different countries – just because you are from one religion doesn't make you a certain way. So we do a lot of work on that and we also have our Catholic teachers taking assembly and introducing, we decided we would do this slowly because we are new to it, introducing things like blessing themselves with the sign of the cross in assembly. Those who wanted to do it could do it. Trying to make

sure we could explain it in a way that the younger children would understand, that you didn't have Protestant children going home blessing themselves and parents finding it threatening... Sometimes a fear of doing the wrong thing makes you do nothing at all which is nearly worse...and if we do make a mistake, we will learn from it and we will work our way through it with parents and so on [P]

Transformation required changes in the school such as the **employment of Catholic teachers, classroom assistants and substitute teachers and the involvement of minority parents in the school community**. This was all part of the transformation action plan and the support of both NICIE and the Local Education and Library Board was acknowledged by the principal in both its development and implementation. Transformation is seen as a positive step by the pupils:

- *All the teachers are very nice*
- *And last year it became integrated*
- *It means that different religions can come*

and by staff:

What has happened, the changes have been adding to the children's opportunities as opposed to taking away, or making it awkward. I think it is always a learning process for anybody any age and I think for staff, there is an awareness that it is a learning curve and I haven't seen any negative side to that – it has brought about different conversations within staff meetings and I think that is great [SS1]

Transformation is occurring at a structural level, with regards to staffing and the reconstitution of the Board of Governors to include members of the wider Catholic community and Catholic parents. The **welcome experienced by parents** is considered crucial:

... a lot of parents feel very comfortable in the school, they feel comfortable bringing the kids into school and talking to the staff which I think is fantastic. If children see that their parents and their teachers are talking I think it will help the children settle in better, to know that they can trust the staff in the school, that they see us all working together [SS2]

There is recognition that **transformation is a joint activity**, not just the domain of the school leadership:

... there has been a sense of collaborative ideas coming together and making things change, so maybe the idea of coming up with initiatives for after school clubs or things that they can see would be initiatives like the gaelic football that they can bring in. It's both, it is not just one person standing up there with all the ideas we have a commitment from the other staff members. As well as parents I think there are a lot of very progressive parents who are coming in with offers or opportunities or even just asking for things which again makes things happen. So it is a combined approach [SS1]

Teaching strategies such as **circle time** are useful in exploring cultural diversity:

The rules are quite strict, you are allowed to say this, this and this, but you are not allowed to talk when someone else is speaking, we have a 'talking stick', no put-downs, not allowed to laugh at anybody unless it is a joke, whatever is said during circle time stays in circle time. Really it can be quite like an open forum if there is anything worrying someone in the class, then we discuss it, or if something from the story we have been doing – we discuss that. There are sensitive things that come up and you wonder how you are going to answer it but sometimes you can put it back to the children [T1]

The importance of allowing children to pursue their interests by **asking questions about other cultures** was recognized by the teachers. Exposure to diversity, whether experienced in the school population, in the wider community or in the curriculum, is seen as an important aspect of this:

Well when the Polish girl came, we started to teach the rest of the class about Poland and wee bits of the Polish language so as they could communicate with her and you saw the enjoyment come on her face when she got to speak a little bit of Polish and teach a little bit of Polish to the rest of the class and she had great enjoyment when we couldn't pronounce the words, she would have a wee laugh! [T2]

We had some Bangla dancers came in from India and that was to do with a local event which was being run in town, but they invited them into school and things like that actually broaden the kids' horizons. Teachers are always linking into things [SS1]

...a class is learning about the Maori people in New Zealand and they have done Islam as well so there is plenty. And the children enjoy finding out just about other children from other parts of the world, what they do in their culture and their traditions and how they learn [SS2]

As with the previous case studies the **children do not remark on the differences** (religion, nationality, mother tongue) that are remarked by society at large:

- *(We are) all different because not everybody is the same and different people can do different things*
- *They all look different and they all talk different*
- *Different, good at different things, some people have different talents and some people aren't so good at things*
- *Some people are better at music, some of us get music lessons here*
- *Some people are small and some are tall. Some people like things that others don't*

This apparent innocence was also reflected in the teacher interviews:

When I came in September there has been no problem with the children bonding at all and they don't even seem to notice that some of the children in their own class have Catholic names, I don't think they realise. They just accept each other and I don't think they actually know the differences between themselves [T2]

Once prompted children are able to identify fellow pupils who have different skin colour, come from other countries, speak different languages and practice different religions but adult categories appear irrelevant to them. The adults try to **reconcile diversity and unity**:

I think we would always try to highlight similarities rather than difference e.g. within Islam there when we were studying it, we were looking at how do you pray, how it is similar to the way that we pray, and how it was different, but it is more I feel highlighting similarities like we have one God and they have Allah and then the prophet Mohammed would be like Jesus ...yeah, not to highlight differences. But at the same time it can be good to show uniqueness – but stress that no-one is valued any more or any less than anyone else [T1]

It is good to get it into the kids at a young age that difference doesn't matter, try to get them together because it can snowball into prejudices when they are older and cause a lot of problems in society, whereas if they don't see difference as an issue when they are young, hopefully they will grow up and not see it as a problem and lead to a lot more peace... [T2]

As with the previous case study schools, School 3 has **strong interschool links**, in this case with two maintained schools and further links, including in the Republic of Ireland, are planned. The links are valued:

I think they are great, the more the children are mixing with other children from different schools is great. They learn about different people and are not then so insular and (here) can sometimes be quite insular, certainly some of the children we have had have come

from backgrounds that maybe wouldn't get too far, or do very much. So these initiatives are great for them because they are broadening their horizons about different people they will meet, mightn't meet in every day circles... they are doing digital story telling' at the moment and wouldn't have had the chance to do that otherwise, it is just an excellent learning opportunity. They are going to pick their favourite place in (our town) and they are going to write about it and then they will be filmed on camera talking about their favourite place and then it is going to be put on the Northern Ireland Tourist Board to promote (our town), so it is both schools involved, just getting to work with all that [T1]

At the minute we are doing a joint project with the (Irish medium school) where my class P5/P6 are working with the P6/P7 class and we have been for one visit up to the (Irish medium school) and it is totally Irish speaking so the kids found it quite strange when they heard their teachers talking to their kids they all looked shocked, even though I had explained beforehand...but just with being there one day they worked well together and mixed well together [T2]

The **children's enjoyment** of interschool activities is evident:

- *Well we are doing a story telling project to get more people of our age into (our town) and we take pictures*
- *And we play football*
- *It's all about (our town) and why you want to come to it*
- *And we got partners, did our names in pipe cleaners and put them together with our partners*
- *And we are going to be recording our voices*
- *Then you'll hear it on the internet*
- *They will pick people to draw pictures and all*

Such links inevitably lead the pupils to draw comparisons between schools but these are not always cultural:

- *Well you have to eat on the floor 'cos there is no dining hall and they get the food delivered*
- *Their playground is tiny, about the quarter the size of ours*
- *I bet they'll go "Wow" when they come here "this is the biggest playground I have ever seen!"*
- *Tiny toilets too*

Whilst recognizing the educational importance of such activities the principal reported the danger of 'initiative overload':

There are lots of people wanting you to do stuff – the Council for Integrated Education, the Integrated Education Fund, the Education and Library Board, the Community Relations Council coming in, Corrymeela – we could actually end up with something every week going on and you could find that you didn't get fractions, percentages or basic grammar taught. Although all those things have a great value without a doubt, the kids must have basic education to back it up. It is finding the balance... [P]

For school 3, this balance includes taking on the new initiative of **peer mediation**, with its focus on interpersonal relations, the **training for which has included both teachers and classroom assistants**. One classroom assistant reflects on her contribution and the potential:

I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to go on the peer mediation training down at NICIE... at the moment we are at very early stages...I am very keen to be part of that. I trained as a counselor previously ...you enable children to become much more self aware and you do it at a stage in their life where they are learning new skills anyway so it becomes part of their holistic approach to life as opposed to something they have tagged on. I think their ability to relate to adults as well as children, in terms of family networks I think you are going to end up with children who are a lot more able to deal with things they have to deal with in their personal lives as well as their school lives [SS1]

Case Study 4

This is an established urban grant maintained integrated primary school with a 60: 40 Catholic: Protestant mix. It has a small number of others including English, Scottish, Welsh, EAL and mixed race children. School 4 is an extended school. The principal stresses that all cross-community work in the school begins with **working with the parents:**

I think that the first meeting with those parents really sets a tone and sets an aspiration for them in terms of integration within the experiences they will have of it, both themselves and their children within the school. I think if all parents coming to the school understand the approaches we use and the ethos we have and how we ensure that that ethos drives everything that we do, if they understand that at the outset then it makes it so much easier for their child to come in and feel comfortable within the environment...so that's the first challenge – helping parents to understand what the experience for the child will be, to feel comfortable with it and I think that once you have overcome any over-riding concerns then you can start with the child on very comfortable grounds [P]

Work with families goes beyond initial meetings and extends to residential courses, grandparent events and family curriculum days:

...when we discovered that the adults were often the main problem, we decided to take things very seriously in terms of their own preparation so we do offer, probably every two years, a family residential to work on issues that they feel are significant to them, we try to relate those to an area that is being developed in the school development plan, so it might be something that we are working on with regard to prejudice or anti-bias or whatever so that whatever the topic is it is going to be linked very much to what we are doing...we have our families in as often as possible and one of the blocks to the development of integration in terms of the family is the grandparents, so we get our grandparents in within the first month and we have them in twice or three times a year

for the first 2 years on grandparents days and these family opportunities, family Maths days, family reading days, whole school science weeks where families actually meet the challenge not just the children, so the families work and design together and come in and fly their kites or whatever they are doing, so we do that a lot. We find that it's the most successful way of getting our parents together [P]

Such events not only provide parents with **opportunities to meet each other** but also to overcome misunderstandings about the school:

In the afternoons as well I run a club for parents and children and it has worked out lovely because a lot of parents have commented that they wouldn't have crossed "the divide" ... we have gotten to the point now where grandparents have come in and volunteered with extra children whose parents are working and they have come in and taken on the kids because they find that their whole attitude is changed as well, it's really, really heartfelt, it's gorgeous and the last grandparents day I had quite a few say "I was really nervous about the system" and they thought the school uniform, because we have two different coloured jumpers, they thought originally that was how the children were labeled [T1]

Equally important in the school is **staff development**, recognizing that **adult preparation is needed before certain issues can be addressed in the classroom:**

...one of the main challenges for us was not the children, it was the teachers and the other support staff who worked with them and we didn't really discover until a couple of years had passed. So consequently we put a huge amount of our effort into ensuring that staff development along the lines of anti-bias, cultural diversity, prejudice, flags and symbols, conflict resolution, our view is that if adults don't understand the issues and if adults haven't actually learnt how to resolve their difficulties then they can't act as role models for children [P]

The principal reports that she particularly values her teachers who trained in England because of their exposure to cultural diversity. A **range of staff development courses** are offered including ‘**Living with Diversity**’ (NICIE), **peer mediation, anti-bias, symbols and emblems, inclusion, conflict resolution, team building**. Some of these are taken outside, but the **school also provides its own programmes for both staff and governors**. The classroom assistants reflect:

It’s part of the school, it’s part of what we do here and if we as staff aren’t able to do it, then how can we expect the children to do it... we can come and talk about it without feeling you will get shouted or laughed at, exactly like the children at circle time so then we are able to do it as adults then the children are able to do it [SS1]

I went to training in Belfast for the Playback and found it very interesting. I found it also challenging because I had never actually had to work with a child in a wheelchair or anything like that, I thought it was really good and when I came away I felt that I would love there to be more physically challenged children within the school [SS2]

Pupil voice is recognized within the school and reflects **pupil training** so that pupils can undertake roles and voting on the pupils’ council, which reports regularly to the governing body. The **agenda is the children’s** and the teacher present acts only as scribe. Typical pupil comments include reports ‘*pupil council was good fun and we got to be chairperson*’. There are examples of how pupil council has effected change:

Currently pupil council are working as traffic wardens on the playground and they are issuing tickets, having informed parents by leaflet that their behaviour as drivers is of interest to them, so they are actually issuing tickets at the minute... it has changed the whole behaviour on the roundabout in a couple of days! [P]

In addition ‘*children can call circle time if they feel that they need something to be addressed so the children’s voice is heard*’ [P].

The school has developed **strategies for responding to cultural diversity** and is not afraid to encourage pupil reflection on challenging issues such as skin colour:

If we have a child from a mixed race background what we often find that in a white setting, they will paint their skin pink so one of the things we do with all children in P1 is “make the paint kiss”, so we mix paints and then we match to skin. And children often find “on my goodness I’m brown” and it’s a big surprise because they sometimes think that they are white, and we talk about how special it is to be unique and “you”. So right from the start we are addressing these issues as part of the process and even though we might not have a mixed race child in there, we will have pinkish children, sallow children, ginger hair and so on. So diversity is not just about race, and we address it right from the start [P]

One of my class, an older boy had called him a monkey and he thought it was part of a game and hadn’t realized it was a derogatory comment and another child had taken it on board, so we talked about how we were different, put up two children, how we were the same and overlap on a diagram and what things make you different and what things inside that you can’t see are different ... then we approached the issue of colour with that child, now it was difficult because he doesn’t see his skin as different. Then we did a family of butterflies who are all blue and then they came across another family who were all pink and the Mum and Dad met up and liked each other [T1]

The school **curriculum** also allows for exploration of religious diversity. Aspects of different world faiths are studied from P1 to P7 and visits are made to religious centres including Muslim and Hindu institutions? Care is taken to ensure that **separation of Catholic and Protestant pupils is kept to a minimum** so that children can learn from each other:

We have avoided splitting classes where possible and we feel that that is significant because then children really can ask questions and they really do ask questions. The Catholic church have increased the demands on schools in the ten years that we have

been doing this, very significantly to the extent that we have reached the point where we have had to give some separate lessons to ensure that everything is learnt in time, that all of the things are covered, but what we do is ask our non-Catholic children to support them when it is learning time and maybe hold the book and say “Well done you got that right” so that we do actually ask them to help one another [P]

In P3, P4 and P7 classes where there are specific sacraments to work towards they have to be taught those things by a person practicing the Catholic religion and we accommodate that within the school. Children then come back and share what they have done and even though they are moved to a different area of the classroom, we always share back and link [T2]

As a result **children can express their natural curiosity:**

There is not the fear to ask questions, there is no hidden agenda behind it. Children will ask “what is a crucifix, what are rosary beads?” Just as the Catholic children will ask “why do Protestant children make their confirmation when they are much older... all the stigmas that are attached have gone [T1]

The school also **acknowledges the festivals of other world religions** such as the Mexican ‘day of the dead’ at Halloween and the Jewish festival of Hanukkah after Christmas. The children recall some aspects of these varied experiences:

- *In P6 we did some Buddha so we kinda know what it is like, but we don’t think there is anyone in school.*
- *We went on a school trip to the Indian community.*
- *We got to try the food and dance and see what they worshipped.*
- *We’re going to go to Muslim community – the mosque we are going to.*

A further aspect of diversity that the school has addressed, particularly through the **Playback project**, is disability and this has been developed through a link with a special school:

It's been something of an eye-opener for them, a lot of things they take for granted and there is not a problem with anyone integrating but because the majority of kids here are white and able-bodied, yes it's OK but once they got into a wider environment they say "Oh I saw a lot of children in wheelchairs or walking on crutches" and we talked about what we would need to change in our classroom to accommodate the children whether there is enough space for a wheelchair or if schoolbags are in the way, wet floors etc and it was them who prompted and they had the ideas and it's nice to give it over to them rather than always spoon feeding [T1]

In focus groups, children confirmed their enjoyment of the project:

- *I like going to see my friends in (special school)*
- *When I first came to this school, I had a sister in a wheelchair who went to (special school) so I enjoyed that activity a lot 'cos I got to learn more about her condition.*
- *Last year we had (special school) as penpals and we got to write to them.*
- *I like going back to (special school) 'cos some of them are really really good friends and they wouldn't tell any of your secrets.*
- *I want to go back to (special school) because there is a boy in a wheelchair and he is really good fun.*
- *I like (special school) 'cos I think that the (special school) children like us coming 'cos they like to see people who are different.*

Further **interschool links** exist, largely with other integrated schools, although the principal noted that cultural differences, even between integrated schools could be significant. Other aspects of diversity recognized include **socio-economic, cultural and family issues**:

We'd also talk about cultural diversity in terms of family backgrounds – you have your privileged background, you have the different family set-ups, one parent family, the two parents living together, you have the two daddy families, you have single parent families, we do work on that as well. We have linguistic background as well, multi-cultural families where a child speaks English and the parents speak German [T1]

Jack in the Beanstalk was a theme and I had totally forgotten that the child from Lithuania won't have a clue or Humpty Dumpty. You have to re-assess all the time, evaluate [T2]

Integration is central to school ethos and practice:

It influences absolutely everything that we do ... it influences everything we do from our choice of resources to how we speak to the kids, how we greet them in the morning, to how we speak to one another, to how we as adults deal with our conflicts and differences and to how we expect kids to deal with those, to how the kids experience the curriculum, to the way teachers teach and to the way kids are expected to relate to one another during lessons [P]

Teachers seek to find a **balance between emphasizing cultural difference and similarity** that allows for different opinion to be expressed:

... really similarities and differences, we don't shy away from differences – it's good to be different because we don't want to be clones and the children know that and not be afraid to speak up if you don't agree with something but also to show tolerance and understanding. Somewhere along the line, there will be something you don't agree on and that's the same in the adult world, so children realize that, if you discuss as far as you can, learn to rub along together, they'll appreciate each other [T2]

The children reflect this in their own thoughts on diversity amongst pupils:

- *They are all different 'cos nobody is really the same.*
- *Some are different 'cos they are from different countries and some are just different 'cos if everybody was the same person then everything would just be dull.*
- *I think different because everyone has different fingerprints*
- *We are different because we are all from different communities.*
- *We are different because we are all unique.*
- *We are different because of our religions.*

Interestingly it is through school structures such as pupil council that some children become more aware of religious difference:

- *Well usually you find out when we do Pupil Council because then you have to have a "C", which is Catholic, a Protestant and an "O"(other). There are quite a lot of people who are different.*
- *Sometimes there are people who are from the Jewish religion*

However **from the children's perspective, such divisions are fairly irrelevant:**

- *When people are having arguments we don't really think about much that they are different religions, just arguing about if someone takes something of theirs or something.*
- *Everybody is different but there is no need to treat people differently just because of that.*

Evaluation of activities related to integration, diversity and inclusion is thorough and ongoing:

Well if we are going to do anything and it is linked to the school development plan, then it is thoroughly evaluated and it is monitored by seeing what is going on in the

classrooms and teachers bring evidence and also observe, but at the end of the day it is evaluated to see how it has affected the children and their point of view may be sought to ensure they actually believe that it has been a valuable learning opportunity so it depends on what the context is [P]

One classroom assistant attributes pupil attitudes to the **open nature of the school**:

So it's just making them so much more aware of it and it's not "Oh they are different because a child has sight problems or hearing problems", it's just "Oh well that's what they have, sure I've got a sore on my knee, that makes me different from you". And again they just learn how to get on with it...it's uplifting, you do get a wide range of interest and enthusiasm. I don't think I have come across any child who has been uncomfortable. But the teachers and the staff here are so comfortable within the teaching and talking about it... so I think that's why the children are comfortable with it because there is so much "comfortableness" around us [SS1]

Case Study 5

This school is an all girls, maintained post-primary school in a large town where the principal admits that '*religious diversity is a big issue in terms of no mix*'. In the last five years it has experienced a significant influx of EAL pupils particularly from Lithuania, Poland, Latvia, Slovakia, Nigeria and South America, now numbering about five per cent of the school population. In addition the school is attended by a small number of pupils from the Irish traveling community. The **inclusive atmosphere** is described by the pupils:

- *I think this school encourages young people to meet new people and mix with everyone*
- *I think the school has a very wide-eyed way of different people coming, different religions and different foreigners coming in, I think they are very wide eyed and are willing to take any person from any country in and give them an opportunity, give them an education*

- *Yeah they are very welcoming, they wouldn't ever leave anyone out.*

The school has appointed a teacher to the post of **international student coordinator**, a post the principal strongly recommends to her peers, along with long term planning and work with the Education and Library Board for the inclusion of EAL students. As a result of the school's experience a **welcome programme** is now in place:

We have a programme to welcome them (EAL pupils) into the school. Welcome booklet and multilingual signs, in different languages that the children helped to make, to make them feel welcome. When they first arrive they have an initial meeting with an interpreter to help us find out where they are coming from and what stage they were in own country. To get all the relevant details so that we really do know the pupil as well as we possibly can. And that would include also explaining to them our rules with the welcome booklet and visual letters in case there is still misunderstanding. They get a tour of the school as well. And it doesn't always work out this way but we try to get a few words from the child's language and give to the form teacher so they can get the rest of the class clued in and make the child feel welcome [T2]

Great care is taken to ensure **parental accessibility to school information** and to develop strategies such as the **buddy system** that the school has found to be effective:

We also have a lot of visual letters for school trips, or medical appointments so the parents know, and in January for the first time we will have the real school report but on the back of it I am putting in a visual report as well for the parents so if their English isn't very good then they will be able to understand with use of symbols. When they are brought into school we set up a buddy system and I would ask teachers and form teachers to appoint somebody. Now I am going to make it more formal, it has been a little informal, but I am going to make it a lot more formal and get pupils to apply to be a Buddy and I hope to set up a home school journal where pupils can write down key words and get clued into topics so they aren't completely lost [T2]

Communication is important and the school has employed **translators** and works closely with its education welfare officer regarding the incoming pupils. It is also conscious that these students frequently arrive with little resources and works closely with the local St Vincent De Paul Society which has provided the majority of uniforms for the EAL students. Learning how best to respond to need is an **ongoing process**:

So I think good practice is also responding to their individual needs and it really is a whole learning process, we don't have the answers...we used to have a sort of mixed ability and one group with special needs. And initially we would have put children with a second language in that group to give them the smaller class setting and enable them to develop their skills and then we moved them on as soon as that happened. We are not going to be doing that anymore and there are drawbacks to it. We find you are better to put the child into class of their ability, rather than make a special concession at that stage for language. Because then the girls find it very difficult to move on. And the other thing is we could end up with too many children of the same nationality, different, in the room and that forms a little clique where they speak in their own language to each other and don't develop as quickly. It is trying to find that compromise between allowing them the comfort of a friend with the same language and encouraging them to be out and learning a new language [P]

A **TEFL qualified teacher** is employed two mornings a week to provide specialist teaching to EAL pupils and classroom assistants are deployed where possible to assist teachers. The principal would like to offer further support to these students through the extended schools project by providing services such as **language courses** not available elsewhere. The school is aware that it has a role in challenging the “they are taking our jobs” attitudes heard locally. One teacher explains how the inward migration has made her pupils reassess their country as well as their values:

A lot of our girls used to say “(our town) is a dump, there is nothing to do here!” and now they are wondering why all these people are coming here, “oh Ireland is quite nice”. So they are seeing a positive thing, for them to be aware of their own culture,

their own cultural identity and see it is positive and good and accept the good and positive things they learn from other cultures. The ideal is that we are going to have more tolerant children because Ireland does seem to have quite a lot of racism, racist attitudes, so with this generation hopefully we will do something towards changing that
[T2]

There are signs that the school is successful in highlighting **awareness of other cultures**:

- *National language day, we had all the teachers speaking different languages to try to widen everybody's view*
- *We have different people from different backgrounds reading at assembly, in a language like French or Lithuanian and you see up on the classrooms, signs in different languages*
- *I think teachers try to encourage relationships between pupils that are here and new pupils who come in from different countries by getting people to take them around and get chatting to them*

In addition pupils recently voted a Slovakian student 'Pupil of the Month' due to her significant progress in the English language one month. The school is investigating the possibility of **GCSEs in pupils' own languages**. Both the **homework club, the library and 'Success Maker' software** are seen as valuable resources for EAL pupils:

I have an easy read section that I have in the library and keep separate from library stock. I would find that a lot of foreign nationals would avail of that and I see it as my responsibility to help them choose books according to their reading ability. Reading for pleasure is where I would come into play as I am not teaching and computers for research... I also like to choose books from a geographical point of view, books from their own countries and have all this information displayed for others and themselves to pick it up and read. So if they are feeling homesick they can just pick it off the shelf. It's just trying to make the library as welcoming as possible for them... Some pupils who like to email home, they can [SS1]

And I would have the (EAL) children up on the “Success Maker” now. I find it good for them. It is only really getting off the ground. This is an American thing on the computers and they are on in Maths concepts and English and Reading and Spellings. For the foreign children there is a programme – initial reading is a bit lower than our girls because of their language, it is easier for them to pick up. “Discover English” is one of the programmes on it and it is like a dictionary form, helps them to break down the word, shows them a picture of what it is, breaks down the word and helps them. They have earphones – it says the word on the computer for them and it is good for them [SS2]

The school is discovering the confidence to learn from the incoming students and teachers describe **opportunities for mutual enrichment and understanding** that have arisen in **curriculum** activities:

Just to give you an example - the Costa Rican child is quite fluent and has a very good understanding and she is doing Learning for Life and Work at GCSE level, she just came in at fifth year and she is doing it... she was able to tell the class about the political system in Costa Rica. She was also able to talk about racism and attitudes to people coming in from other countries as some of the girls can be quite verbose about ‘people coming in, taking work’ that type of thing. And we were talking about the Catholic/Protestant issue, that all came up in the syllabus. First of all she said it’s not like this in Costa Rica and then she went on to explain to the girls even though it wasn’t about Catholic/Protestant they do not like the people from the neighboring country. And I said “Why don’t you like them?” and she said “Because they come in and take jobs”. So were able to identify similarities [T1]

I am a language teacher so there is plenty of opportunity within a language lesson when you have foreign pupils. Very simple things like “How do you say this in Polish?”... Some of the pupils have done projects on their homeland and some of the teachers have been very good with resources i.e notice board with countries. It is an ideal situation through many subjects, whether its geography or history, to explore the diversity that

these children are bringing, so I would definitely say you would be missing a huge opportunity if you didn't use this in your teaching [T2]

One teacher has also been involved in the Education and Reconciliation project of the CDU [Curriculum Development Unit] in Dublin, developing materials and training for use in citizenship programmes North and South of the border. There is an acknowledgement that opportunities to explore mutual understanding often present themselves during **citizenship** classes:

I took a group to the Ulster museum "Icons of Identity" and I'm sure you know the connotations with the poppy but by the end of the workshop, our children were saying "I can't believe that we have had that attitude towards the poppy!" they were asked to go and stand beside symbols that they would identify with, flags etc and I would use this in class also. Try to give them background to the symbols also. E.g. the Union jack, I tell them how it came about. And say you know this flag can cause so much for you from the Catholic community and yet it's been made up of..... But it is lack of knowledge as well. Two pupils after the workshop who wouldn't have stood beside the poppy then did at the end of the workshop. There are opportunities there if you just get one child to think, plant the seed [T1]

The school is currently undertaking training from NICIE around the initiative of **peer mediation** and is optimistic that once set up, peer mediation will operate throughout the school ('Instead, in future if you were fighting with someone, you know what to do, you wouldn't be so immature about it, you resolve it' Student). Other initiatives include the **Comenius programme** that allows teachers to travel and see how:

...another school works, and seeing their ideas. The schools in Germany usually have a lot more experience in dealing with pupils coming from Turkey and places like that for years. So I am picking up ideas and tips from them. We are only starting out, we are very new to this so I think it is going to be a brilliant learning experience, on a personal point of view, for my professional development I think it is excellent and I think it will be great

fun for the pupils especially when they know they are involved with other pupils from these other countries [T2]

The arrival of EAL students has caused this school to **revise its vision and mission statement** and it aims to maximize the new benefits and make the school truly inclusive:

We have noted 'the relationships within and beyond the school'. We have said that it is 'inclusive' and is 'respectful and engages with people of all beliefs' and 'encourages the development of all within their own faith'. We have also said that we will 'work in collaboration with other educational institutions and in partnership with parents and students'. So that collaborations is a change. We have also 'promote equality and inclusion' that's new as well and 'ensure all members of the school community are treated with respect and equality of access to resources'. We also 'encourage tolerance and respect for others' and 'promote the value of diversity'...we would be seeing diversity as a positive, rather than a negative [P]

Case Study 6

This is a suburban controlled integrated post-primary college in a large town. Whilst the pupil population is approximately 70:30, Protestant: Catholic, the staff is mixed Catholic and Protestant. There are a very small number of EAL students but a number of pupils come from the local army barracks. The principal describes the school ethos thus:

We want everybody to buy into our inclusive ethos, where everybody feels valued regardless of their cultural background, their academic background, their gender –we want them to feel valued and confident in their identity. The challenge is to create, maintain and develop an inclusive ethos in all our practice and throughout the building. In terms of the general ethos of the school we make the building welcoming, we promote children's work of all abilities and from all backgrounds by displaying it in classrooms and in corridors around the building. We have work everywhere, work from youngsters from all backgrounds, from all cultures of all abilities and so on. Often this work will represent an aspect of a particular cultural tradition. We would hope that that promotes

our culture of diversity, of equality, of pupil helping pupils feel positive and self confident
[P]

One teacher claims that in ‘*an integrated ethos the **cultural diversity is out in the foreground** and it is not pushed away and not ignored*’ [T2]. The arrival of a Muslim student was seen as a **learning opportunity** for the school community as well as the pupil:

The Muslim girl wears trousers always and a head scarf at certain times of the year. We have to work with the whole school community to ensure they understand why and to ensure the pupil herself feels secure and confident in displaying her identity. Our aim is to ensure pupils and staff from all backgrounds feel confident and comfortable about their backgrounds when in school. And also to challenge any stereotypes they may have in relation to others’ cultural/religious backgrounds [P]

As far as her religion, I learnt from her. In Home Economics I didn’t realise that she couldn’t use one of her hands to knead the dough and I saw her looking a bit distressed because she was having to do it with one hand so she has been teaching me what the religion allows and what is not allowed [SS2]

Students are aware of diversity and inclusion practice:

- *We go on trips*
- *And we get all the different holidays off!*
- *In your first year they take you away to (small town in NI)*
- *In year 11 you do cross community to (two cities in ROI)*
- *We have an integration week*

They also have their own ideas about how it could be developed:

- *I think we should get other teachers from different religions as well*

- *And learn about cultures like that there, like why aren't they allowed to show their skin, why are women seen as lower than men?...*
- *And if someone disabled came to our school they wouldn't be able to – there should be access*
- *The new school is being adapted for disabled access in 2009, but we will not be here*
- *And we should be able to wear make-up!*

The **curriculum is seen as integral to developing cultural integration**, including the balancing of history, texts chosen in English, music, and the geography syllabuses. Heads of department are required to promote the principles of integration in all aspects of work in their departments, by presenting multiple cultural perspectives on topics. Even subjects where it is less easy to see links are **creative in addressing diversity**:

More difficult is maybe maths - however they came up with a very interesting idea in terms of symmetry – they looked at flags and the symmetrical nature of flags etc and then that moved from the flag symmetry to discussion about flags and why flags. Math teachers can initiate interesting discussions at this point. There are always angles within subjects, opportunities to allow pupils to share ideas, to agree and to disagree in a controlled environment [P]

Religious education throughout the school is considered inclusive of believers in various faiths and non-believers alike:

I think it is very important through the RE Curriculum to celebrate differences and diversity and to provide a greater understanding of other people's faiths and how we look at our world. I think it is very important for the children to leave school with an idea of the global community, the wider community rather than their own community, so I think it is important that questions are asked to develop skills where they really listen to other people and respect other people as well... I don't think you need to be neutral, that we do celebrate people's differences and I think that is what cultural diversity is about. So I

would teach world religions and I would also look at all denominations within the Christian faith as well as looking at the Humanist view [T1]

A classroom assistant notes:

Well in PE I have noticed that they do different dances from different cultures. In English, the books that are read would be from different backgrounds and cultural areas. I think it is a whole school approach because the teachers would be involved and us classroom assistants would be involved as well [SS2]

Equal importance is accorded to the mode of delivery of the curriculum with the widespread use of **active learning strategies and teaching and assessment strategies that raise pupil self-esteem, promote collaboration and improve achievement:**

There is good practice in the curricular experiences of pupils. The focus on individual learning styles, assessment for, rather than of, learning. The focus on cultural diversity within the curriculum and the child centred way the curriculum is delivered helps integrate culturally diverse pupils. Also the pastoral care system where particular people are charged with particular responsibilities. Young people from culturally diverse backgrounds are supported by designated members of staff, i.e. counsellors and academic tutor, in addition to whole school pastoral team [P]

A number of specific strategies are in place to develop integration within the school. These include a **buddy system** where new students are assigned a senior buddy, **peer mediation** and the **Question of Difference project**. Basic peer mediation training is offered to all pupils, who are then invited to apply for more extensive training as mediators. Approximately thirty pupils at a time receive this latter training, indicating the school commitment to this conflict resolution activity. A further significant commitment is to the Questions of Difference student empowerment project:

A number of our pupils and staff are being trained in the role of pacesetter – a role where they are being encouraged to become very active in terms of promoting positive aspects of the school and making the school a better place, a more effective place. It is trying to involve pupils and staff in school improvement issues. This will impact on their own lives because they are becoming empowered to understand things that they can do to change things for the better. While it may start off at this micro level in school hopefully it will have macro effect. Participants will realise “if this can happen in school, it can happen at home, it can happen in the community” It may empower people to believe they can make things happen on a bigger level – perhaps a political level even [P]

There is recognition that investment in such projects takes both time and money, but the **projects are also seen as organic and interrelated**, with developments in one area having a positive spin-off into another, such as a more meaningful level of debate in students’ council. Staff are convinced of the benefits:

I think the strengths are that it has given the children so much confidence. They take their own initiative, they are using their own initiative, they have become more confident, more assertive. The training that the company has given them has enabled them to be far more assertive as I have said, far more confident, organisational skills have improved and the projects that the team do are led by the pupils... in the summer they ran a whole session where they took over the school and they ran groups and the teachers were part of the groups but were not involved and the pupils actually ran the training sessions involving the teachers so it is a real switch around. It went well, it went really very well T1]

I believe that a pacesetter is a young person who has been given guidelines to become empowered with knowledge; they become more positive people and give them an opportunity to have their say in what happens in the future whether this be in school or the workplace. I think joining pacesetters together these young people can endeavour to make their school a better place... they showed the kids three different activities how they

can lead a small group and make them be more positive and therefore if they are being more positive to one another then the whole school can be full of positivity [SS1]

The need for **effective leadership for integration** is recognized in the school. This includes an **integration committee**, pacesetter teachers and classroom assistants and the senior leadership team. The integration committee **audits pupil and staff experiences** by means of questionnaire, with the results reported at in-service training. Whilst the school development plan is clear in its emphasis that the school is culturally integrated the principal points out that:

Initiatives cannot be implemented unless the climate is right. The climate is created by the governors and senior leadership team. They must share and be able to articulate the vision. The right people must be in place, one person cannot do it. A team approach is required. The team needs to have very clear aims and objectives and to understand what they are trying to do and where they are trying to go...don't try to move too quickly. Leaders of initiatives must be sure not to leave the majority so far behind them they lose sight or interest [P]

There is also acknowledgement of the importance of **staff biography**. For example one teacher who grew up in Birmingham reports that his prior experience of many different religions and cultures makes his involvement in integrated education seem more logical. As in the other case studies teachers navigate a route that **acknowledges cultural diversity but also seeks out similarity**:

I think it is important to celebrate their culture but also integrate. I think it is important to recognise their culture, celebrate it, ask questions about it but it is also important for pupils to become part of a community such as school community or society, the wider community. So there is a balance there that I think you need to have [T1]

Well the challenges are actually making the children accept the other children equally because they have preconceived notions, they are 14/15 year olds so they have

approximately ten years of preconceived notions of what they are going in to. One of the most interesting experiences is when they go across the border and there are these lovely houses and they go “didn’t realise people down here had those”. Where is that coming from? And they go to (city) shopping for a day “Oh they have Principles, they have Top Man”. What did you expect? And that is one of the challenges, to get across to them that we are all the same. You can still hold your own beliefs but you don’t have to fight the other ones to make your belief stand, you can actually have a belief and still be friends with an opposite belief [T2]

Through meeting young people from different backgrounds the students are surprised to discover similarities:

- *Teenagers are just the same, we thought they would like different things*
- *They are not so different*
- *We thought like they wouldn’t smoke or do stuff like that but they do*
- *They are basically just the same just with a different religion, that’s all that is different about them*

As with the previous case studies, the existence of **interschool links** is identified as important in developing mutual understanding:

... we take a group of pupils out of year 11 and we are matched with (a) youth centre which is perceived to be of the Catholic faith and ourselves which are perceived obviously of an integrated status, or diverse faiths. For that we do cultural workshops where we explore the differences e.g. our kids would be very understanding of rugby and soccer whereas those children would be GAA and soccer. So we look at them and explore the diversity between them and show that the red hand of Ulster is not just for one side it is actually for both sides and we use the example the Ulster rugby team play with the red hand of Ulster and very proud of it, but also Tyrone GAA team play with the red hand of Ulster and extremely proud of it and they would represent both sides and we would explore the differences how if these people can be proud of one symbol, why can’t

we be proud of one symbol, and what is the problem with diversion in the society. And from that then we go down to the South and we take them down to (a) Community College in (town) and there we participate in Irish language classes, ceilis, they play hurling, they play camogie and they explore differences of what they feel as their society and the whole theme is we are all fifteen year olds ... so it is their first step in actually having their own view points challenged by someone their own age and at the end of it having the conclusion – well there really is no difference. Society has made us different
[T2]

The **challenging of perspectives** by this link is seen in the following exchange between students:

- *We learnt about the culture*
- *We learnt that people are the same but quite different*
- *When I was in Dublin and you know that big statue they have “the point” when you look at it and they were saying they thought it was a waste of time. You find out things that you didn’t think they would think, but you think as well.*
- *Your beliefs are sorta the same*
- *From the Pace-Setting you learn that you can think positive*
- *Whenever we went to Cork we were surprised that they watched the same TV as us. Most have to go to church*
- *But some of them don’t*
- *We were surprised that they watched the X Factor, we didn’t think they had it there*
- *Another thing – I recognised that anything they saw about Northern Ireland or about Belfast is always negative – they don’t see the positive things about it, always trouble. Like the Spanish ones thought you could walk down the street and be bombed*
- *People think the Shankill is this big mad thing, but we took someone up there and they were like “It’s just a street”*

A teacher praises the benefits of participation in interschool programmes:

For the children it is immeasurable! Really it is fabulous for them, they learn so much about themselves...and then last summer we took them to the WWI battlefields of the Somme and there we had the Belfast Tower the Ulster Peace Initiative, we saw the graves of the Irish volunteer force and graves of the Ulster Volunteer Force and then both suddenly realised that these two groups of people were not the paramilitaries of today, they were actual bona fide soldiers who fought for a cause and then behind the Ulster tower there was actually a little memorial that is dedicated to the Orange men that were killed in the battle of the Somme and for people from the South who didn't realise the 1st July parade was a commemoration of the battle of the Somme they just called it "a mini 12th". That was a learning experience for them and it was just unbelievable, really! [T2]

In addition the school has been involved in **further links** with schools in England, Wales, Scotland, the Basque country and America.

Case Study 7

This is a large controlled post-primary school in a medium size town. Although the majority is Protestant, approximately twelve per cent of the pupil population is Catholic. The students include a number of children from the local army barracks, including from Jamaica and Fiji, but the number of EAL pupils in the school is very low. The school has been working in a **learning partnership** of five local schools and colleges for five years. The main aim of the school development plan is working towards inclusion, with the attitude that it is enriching to **capitalise on difference rather than to replicate sameness**:

As a priority under the inclusion agenda therefore we are leading it and therefore many of the things that we do are part and parcel of the way we do things around here are naturally about addressing that issue not least at the moment in Northern Ireland on how greater the form of integration across the religious and political divide, under the whole

thrust of the shared future document ... we are at the stage now where we have to start and leave the past behind us and move towards a shared future, no two ways about that
[P]

The learning partnership is integral to developing inclusion, which has provided opportunities for pupils to study **academic and vocational classes** in other local schools and colleges with their peers from different backgrounds. The students are highly supportive of this initiative and indicate the range of opportunities this scheme offers to them:

- *I attend the Grammar for Politics.*
- *It took a while at first to actually get used to having to go to their school but now it feels like I am a member of their school at times. The teachers say to you “Are you going to the formal next year with us?” and the grammar school ones and (maintained school) ones come to us for drama*
- *In the drama class we had three from the grammar and I’ve made a really good friend because they are coming to our school. She’s from a different background to me and now we text each other “Are you going out this weekend?” and just things like that, I would never have spoken to her before only if it hadn’t have been through school and through the school play, another boy from the grammar he is really good at acting and he was given one of the parts in our school play which I thought was a really good idea because we needed another good strong lead boy and it was perfect to get someone in from a different school, and I think it backs up the learning partnership really well*
- *I go to (maintained school) to do history. At the start you got a lot of stares coming from a different school, mostly Protestant and you get a lot of people staring at you, and you may be sensitive to things. But now you just walk in there and nobody even notices that you are standing there which is good and it is good to get an experience of a different type of teaching too...I’m also involved with the school show and this is my third school show now and it’s one of the leading*

- characters – well the narrator which is in most of the scenes. In the previous 2 I was singing as well and acting. I take performing arts as well and GCSE Drama*
- *I do Engineering at (further education college) and the Grammar school. And we meet up at the tech and grammar school come up and we meet up there. We all get on grand, there is never anything wrong. Two days a week*
 - *I'm in Performing Arts as well, people coming over from the grammar, we get along great with them, there is no problem and if there were any people from (maintained school) in our class, we would get along with them as well. I take Art as well, nobody has come over from any school because our class is pretty small. It's really good though.*
 - *I go to (maintained school) for Music. It doesn't really make a difference you just go in and you have friends and I have even been asked to play at chapel*
 - *Learning about someone else's religion and the way they do it in school, because the other side of my family is Catholic but to go and see a Catholic school and what they do and how they worship, it's just totally different and I think it is a really good thing to go and see. I would advise a lot of people to go and do that just to experience like they have crosses hanging and to understand why they have them there, it was really good for me because I never really knew what it was like in their school until I had been in it*

Whilst delivering the entitlement framework is now a key driver for the initiative, the principal recognizes the **importance of commitment**, the 'hearts and minds' of the individuals behind the partnership. Another important factor is the **close proximity** of the participating organizations. Current funding that follows pupil enrolment rather than interschool collaboration is seen as a restricting factor. The principal identifies three issues critical to the success of the learning partnership:

The first thing we had to address was the issue of having a stated plan across the partnership in (our town) and we have that in the learning partnership strategic plan which runs from nursery to further and higher education which promotes progression, which hopefully diminishes the need for selection at eleven in the eyes of people- to a

level a playing field for the selective and vis a vis the non selective sectors- and I think it would be true to say that the people in this area would say that they don't mind which school we send their children to the same as we used to, because all the schools in the town are good...(Secondly) we have joint option groups at A Level for subjects like German and Engineering and History and Science and Health and Social Care where pupils from all backgrounds sit in the same class albeit with different providers to learn together that's a huge step forward. So the learning partnership has been promoting joined up, joint options that allows us to move children between sites to access the curriculum. The other (third) thing under the learning partnership and part of the strategic plan is joint staff development where the teachers who are teaching these children come together at least once, if not twice a year, for joint exploratory staff development in relation to common issues the last one being assessment for learning and how we could use it together. So we are aiming towards having a partnership learning plan that will address as part and parcel of its strategy diversity and difference as a core issue [P]

The **teachers are very supportive of the partnership**, finding themselves surprised at the ease with which students mix (*'we would find that the youngsters do integrate pretty well, something that maybe perhaps I wasn't totally expecting if I am honest, but it has actually been relatively effortless'* [T1]). Teachers encourage their fellow teachers to **rethink their values and priorities:**

Take time to understand each other as human beings and understand and appreciate each other's culture and build relationships... That would be one piece of advice, just to get to know each other and to take an interest in each other's culture...there are aspects of each other's culture which we can identify with and buy into and in a sense it becomes my culture. So I would say take risks and expose yourself and be prepared to lay down some of your sacred cows ideologically and educationally [T2]

Not only do the students benefit in terms of **variety of educational options, academic success and self-esteem** but also in terms of the **cross-community friendships**

established and maintained by **regular contact**. In fact the pupils would like to begin this mixing considerably earlier:

- *Having it when you are younger*
- *Integrated primary schools, instead of everyone meeting at high school/secondary level*
- *We start at fifth year and I don't think it is early enough because it is the younger generation who are shouting the "ah, he's a Catholic" and as you come up through the school and you learn things then it stops and I think it needs to be stopped when you are starting to develop your own character, (the sharing) needs to be started then. I think it is a bit late when you get to this age...*
- *I think they are going in the right direction and the other things are going slowly but surely and are starting and come the next 4 years I think things are going to change dramatically, but just to help things, start younger, definitely*

The school status as a **specialist school** for the performing arts is seen as an importance vehicle for promoting cross-cultural understanding. **Support staff play critical roles** in this initiative, both in initiating and developing activities:

I applied for the post of Community Arts Development Officer and I had a job description but it has sort of evolved into something completely different which I like 'cos I like the way it is going, including everybody, getting to know everybody. Through these things it's my job to bring the community in and bring the kids out to the community doing various projects with them, cross border projects, drums workshops or cross-community projects ... arts is always a good way to break down barriers anyway [SS1]

My role is within the community development plan. There are a lot of outlines of things that we are starting to do but will develop a lot more, so it is obviously in the beginning stages. But we are taking our kids out into different primary schools to do workshops, every primary school, not just a selected few, but we are going to do that. We do visual and performing arts workshops. I think it is extremely valuable especially in terms of

building community, the subjects that we have offered to the whole community in terms of performing art and moving image are both practical subjects where kids are coming in and they have to give of themselves, they have to be creative, they have to express their views openly in front of the class [SS2]

The school considers that the **arts is a powerful tool for cultural enrichment** and sharing and provides a **vehicle for building relationships** ‘*across the political and religious divide with other schools and organisations in the town and the wider area*’ [P]. The school does not refrain from approaching difficult themes through the mediums of theatre and music:

Well our show is quite culturally diverse, it’s about a foreign migrant coming into work, a musical, and about how the community doesn’t accept him but eventually accepts him in the end, so it is very, very good for the kids to explore this through a set drama. They would often speak their views on what they are saying if they don’t agree with it, like there are some families in the musical who are totally against him and don’t want him here and they don’t really like saying that because they don’t agree but they say it for the play, but it is good for them to explore it through the play [SS1]

The principal shares a reflection on the potential of multiculturalism that can be expressed through the arts:

I was speaking to someone recently who said he felt schizophrenic “I was born into a British tradition, but I feel culturally Irish” and I think that is a fact for many Ulster men and women that you have that sort of dual allegiance and dual cultural identity and it is only the politics of the place that pushes you into one camp or the other, and you want to get to the point where that intersection is the bit that moves society forward [P]

Other intercommunity initiatives include **youth provision** and an **after school programme**. Both promote the integration of people from all backgrounds. The school runs three **football leagues with mixed teams** from the maintained school, the school

and some Grammar and other schools on the outlying part of the local area (*'if they play on the same football team they will not fight in the street'* [P]), culminating in an annual youth football presentation evening. The only downside appears to be the reliance on new opportunity/lottery funding which has sustainability issues for the venture.

The school **curriculum** also offers opportunities to develop cultural understanding, particularly with the advent of EAL students:

In one particular class I have a Lithuanian boy and an African boy who are aged 11 and 12 and at the moment we are looking at "what is history?" and they had to do a little project where they interview a parent or a grandparent about life in the past and it has been really interesting to read the African boy's story of life in Zambia...and I kind of celebrated that... I think he knows that now and we talk a lot about African affairs...I just love having these kids in the class, because when your class is a kind of homogeneous, Northern Ireland, Protestant group it is very difficult to get decent, cross-cultural discussion and stuff going on, so it is great to have those two [T2]

This school also thinks carefully about the implications of teaching about cultural difference:

I don't really want to be highlighting their differences or something that they may feel uncomfortable about but it is within the core content, so it is getting the balance right without highlighting their differences because I would imagine that some of the youngsters who come here from different cultures may want nearly just to forget about their own culture just in order to be accepted or want to put it to the past [T1]

As with the primary and post-primary children in the other case study schools, **the adult categorizations of difference seem unimportant:**

- *I don't think it really matters*
- *I think there are more Protestants in this school.*

- *The majority is probably Protestant because obviously there's a Catholic school next door which means people if they're Catholic send their kids there*
- *So they are automatically divided before you come in here really, the Protestants will come here and the Catholics will go to (maintained school)*
- *But that's not to say that there are no Catholics in this school, there is a small minority*
- *Yeah we know but you don't notice it, it's not like....*
- *It's not a big deal*
- *You don't necessarily point "Oh he's a Catholic" or "he's a Protestant"*
- *Obviously there is a majority, there is a small minority of people who do do things like that, but that is just immaturity. But when you get to our age, I don't think personally that it matters*

It may be that students have learned not to pay attention to these categories, rather than that they are irrelevant to them.

Case Study 8

This is a medium size grant maintained integrated college in a large town. Recently it has attracted numbers of incoming EAL students, known in the school as international students (*'we like to call them that rather than give them a label that might mean something to somebody else'* [P]), from countries including Poland, Lithuania, Portugal, Indian, Mozambique and Latvia. EAL students now represent ten per cent of the pupil population. As with other case study schools, School 8 is challenged to find funding for EAL students who arrived in Northern Ireland after the last census. All funding from the Department of Education for EAL learners is put directly into the salary of an **international student coordinator** and is used to release her from teaching. Further funding is required:

Hopefully this coming year's funding will be based on the last year's numbers which have risen dramatically. So I foresee that we will be able to get a teacher dedicated to these children all the time. At the moment it is an English teacher who has been given

certain periods of the week to devote to the international children – something like 10 or twelve periods a week. But next year I foresee her having the whole week, 38 periods, and that would be great [SS1]

Despite the language challenges, **the arrival of these students is seen as a positive development** and future cohorts are welcomed:

When we initially had the influx of international students I would say it helped us to be more integrated, it has taken the focus away from this Catholic/Protestant...I think it has changed the focus. The majority of the children come from Portugal and may be Catholic but it still changes the focus because they are seen as different Catholics. It is certainly something that we have to work at to get the children to integrate... overall the challenges can be overcome provided you get the funding. They really make the school enriched, so what they bring to the school is better for the school and it is more than the problems/challenges (linguistic) that they cause. I would certainly welcome them, we will probably have Bulgarians and Romanians soon and we are looking forward to inviting more children in, it's great [P]

In addition to the appointment of the international student coordinator, the school belongs to Board organized **cluster groups** in the local area, which allows for the sharing of practice. Joining a new pilot scheme will bring in some extra funding for helping EAL students make the transition into school. A recent **whole term curricular focus on bullying** has been used to promote the inclusion of all pupils in the school. In addition a **'buddy' scheme** is ongoing:

We have the Buddy system set up and usually that is an English speaking person who looks after them but sometimes it can be someone from their own country who knows their own language and can tell them about the school. We have asked recently for volunteers because we do feel that they do have to be willing and then we give them a little booklet about what being a Buddy entails and then they get a wee Buddy badge that they wear on their blazer [T1]

As with other case study schools, School 8 is concerned to overcome the “they are coming over here and taking our jobs, getting our benefits” mentality that seems to persist in parts of the local area. In addition it has experienced some difficulties between groups of students, in particular between the Portuguese and the Lithuanians and between some students and Lithuanian pupils and it is a priority to resolve this. Generally though:

I think the children are learning to mix. I do duty at lunch on a couple of days a week and I can see that the kids are going around together, playing together and children are learning English so, so quickly. I see them when they first arrive at the school because I am involved in the admissions process and they can hardly speak a word. It is amazing to see them and becoming more confident and speaking English with their friends [SS1]

Strategies include the provision of **multilingual signs and a lunchtime club**:

Good practice is general stuff like having the signs up in different languages around the school for the children, but we are running out of room on the door because we have so many! [P]

We have an EAL club where they can come and play games at lunch time once a week. They enjoy that and can speak their own language to each other in that time so they can relax [T1]

Integration into the school curriculum is challenging and has involved **creative approaches** (including extending the leaving age) and also **research into new courses and qualifications**:

Teachers who have had the most difficulty would be the teachers of A level, just gauging the ability of the child and knowing how to proceed. So we find that some of our pupils who start in lower sixth take three years. We have one guy who started here and did lower sixth then went back to Poland because he thought he would rather be there and

then he came back and said no it was better here, so he started lower sixth again, so he will be 21 by the time he gets his A levels, but that is OK, that is acceptable. We have changed how we advertise ourselves, we used to be 11-18 years and very subtly I have added 11-18+ years [P]

Obviously we have to talk to them and find out a bit about them, where they are at, what stage has their English reached. Then once we do that, find out exactly where we slot them in. We take them out of class then for extra English. We have bought new books especially for this “Headway” English course – text books and work books are new this year. Then that will lead on hopefully towards them passing JET (Junior English Tests) and SET (Senior English Tests) and recognition. We also have a Polish student in year 14 and he will be prepared for the IELTS (International English Language Testing System) exam at Queens because he needs that for his university entrance. So that is the first thing – basically with the teaching and helping with their English skills. Then every one of them is given a home/school journal. In that there is a page for each subject area can write down key words that they are going to be using in the next topic. The pupils can then go back and can look up their dictionaries, find what each of those words mean, then on the next page use these words in a sentence [T1]

Thoughtful inclusion of other issues alongside EAL has lead to **opportunities to develop mutual understanding and empathy:**

I am presently working with low ability year eleven students and for their English oral (GCSE) they had to do a power point presentation. Within the group there were some foreign students who were encouraged to tell us about their country of origin while others in the group were encouraged to tell us about their disability. The group really enjoyed researching their own topic and presenting their presentation. I think the whole activity made both the staff and students involved more aware of difficulties with language and disabilities within our class and college. The students really enjoyed learning about the different countries and seeing the beautiful cities and scenery that the foreign students had left behind. There was also a time for questions and answers which

allowed the student to ask how each student how they felt about the topic of their presentation eg. disability or life in Northern Ireland [SS2]

Parental involvement is a key strategy for inclusion with the international coordinator running free English classes for the parents of EAL students. However funding from a grant from the Integrated Education Fund is due to run out. Advertisements in local papers are currently **translated into three languages - Portuguese, Lithuanian and Polish**. Related events include **themed days such as Chinese, Eastern European and Portuguese days in the schools canteen**. Children are encouraged to bring in recipes, cakes and buns and canteen staff do their own research on cuisine that is unfamiliar to them. In addition the school holds an annual **European language day**:

In my time of working in the college it has expanded from the traditional French, German and Irish culture to include the countries that some of our newer students come from like Portugal, Poland Lithuania and India. The parents and students get to sample different foods, listen to the different languages spoken and hear about those countries [SS2]

Such events provide opportunities for broadening of horizons and cultural enrichment. Additionally, the power of media as educator, which was not always recognized as a positive influence must not be forgotten:

A word of warning though - when I asked a recently new EAL student how his English was so good, he replied "I learned it all from the Simpsons!" [SS2]

Students are also positive about **curricular opportunities** that give them insight into activities traditionally perceived as Catholic or Protestant:

- *We do extra-curricular things like cross community soccer and there are people from different religions and different countries can come and take part, anyone can come along and form a soccer team*

- *I think the extra-curricular activities are one of the strong points of the school, there is plenty. And sometimes in the actual clubs e.g. the GAA use to be pretty fascist and now it is coming on and some Protestants may feel intimidated not to go and play but when they come here everybody just plays whatever sport so it makes sports more open to people*
- *In PE we have a wide range of sports like rugby or Gaelic*
- *Yeah in PE you have about 6 weeks of everything, they change and you get to try everything*

A teacher explains how he navigates the path between emphasizing **cultural similarity and difference**:

Well I don't advocate promoting the diversity because you are promoting the differences which in a way you are actually failing the integrated ethos. But if you are accepting everybody as one naturally then you are promoting it but not in an obvious way if that makes sense. Sometimes, the best type of integration is actually not highlighting the differences but just everybody is equal. And because of that sometimes students aren't actually aware of who is who... I think sometimes if you go out of your way to highlight differences in a way you maybe are putting thoughts into minds that weren't there, you are really creating barriers in your attempt to actually bring them down, rather ironic in a way! [T2]

This is a considered approach to diversity with the intention of promoting inclusivity, where teachers report that emphasizing difference will cause isolation from the school community. Another teacher provides an example of how they **rethought an activity in response to pupil sensitivity**:

We were going to have had a display of all the foreign students and we were getting them to write "I am so-and-so, I am from Lithuania, I have been here 2 years, I enjoy this school, my hobbies are..." we were getting that all done and then photos and we were going to have this all up in the front foyer and then we got the feeling among them that

maybe they felt this was picking them out and making them different. We thought we were celebrating them, but they thought – oh well there they are, they are all up on the wall kinda thing. So we didn't go ahead with it [T1]

A teacher describes a year twelve boy who complained about use of the term 'EAL student'. The term 'international' is also unacceptable to this student who reported '*No, you are making us different, we are students!*' [T1]. This seems to resonate with the sentiment of a local student '*we normally don't talk about religion, everyone just gets along and it doesn't really matter if you are Catholic, Protestant, Lithuanian, Portuguese, anything, it doesn't matter.*' **School awareness of pupil response appears then to mediate the emphasis on diversity.** Where the students however are comfortable, the school uses the **students' diverse cultural backgrounds as a rich teaching resource.** It is not just the students, however, who are learning about alternative cultures. One teacher reported how she had asked Lithuanian students to bring in music and was then surprised when they brought in pop rather than folk music. She continues:

It is also good for me, on a personal level that you are having a diverse experience and I think it probably is good in that it challenges your teaching, that you have to take a broader view and you are not just going down the same old road... they can also teach you more than you can teach them in reality [T2]

As far as the pupils are concerned, the opportunity to meet and establish **friendships** is the primary benefit of integrated education and they appreciate they have opportunities that are not afforded to others:

- *I think that is what's brilliant about it like you can see some people when they go home only hang about with say Protestants or only Catholics and then their friends might go to the all-one religion school and sometimes their friends have very sectarian point of views but they might act up to their friends and when they come here it kinda disappears which is good. Religion never really comes into it at school...*

- *Whatever culture you grew up in, like if you were brought up in a Catholic or a Protestant culture then you have learnt about other people's religion, we don't really talk about it much, but usually you get along with them and you can trust them and everything and be their friend*
- *A lot of people who have a sectarian point of view it's just because they are ignorant about the other side. Like they have never met anybody, or maybe when they did they met one person and ended up getting into a fight with him because that other person only met that other one person, so it's just like a cycle that just keeps breeding through people, things like (our integrated school) have stopped that and let people actually realize that they are reasonable people and everybody is the same really.*

Other new initiatives in School 8 include **restorative justice**. The principal and vice-principal have already received training and staff training is underway. In time **parents and pupils will also be trained** in a concerted effort to work on relationships, learn from mistakes and promote respect '*so that there is not just a sanction and no learning from it, because they can keep doing the same thing if they haven't learnt from it*' [P]

Conclusions

The case studies illustrate the range of contexts in which schools are learning to respond to cultural diversity. It is clear that all are developing and reflecting on their practice. The findings illuminate some of the characteristics of good integrating education practice from the multiple perspectives of pupils, support staff, teachers and principals, in a society that is not only moving out of protracted conflict but which is also responding to the challenges of an influx of students who have English as an additional language.

A number of common characteristics of good practice are emerging from these schools, namely **attitudes to diversity, curricular initiatives, staffing, parental involvement, pupil voice, school links and school management**. Good practice uncovered with regards to **attitudes to diversity** includes taking risks to be inclusive (dependent on status of implementation and/or minority percentage); an openness to societal change and

learning from other cultures; a variety of emphases to navigate between cultural difference and similarity; a belief that diversity is enriching, a recognition of the need to move beyond integration of Catholics and Protestants to inclusion of all; a recognition of any diversity absent in particular school context and the presence of a school development plan for integration and inclusion.

At the level of the **curriculum** there is evidence of exploiting opportunities to explore alternative cultures; integrating strategies such as circle time, assemblies, worry box, bus stop, peer mediation; resources that reflect cultural diversity; after school provision for children and parents, including free English lessons; provision for diverse learning styles; thoughtful provision of religious education and 'first' language clubs.

At the **staffing** level there is ongoing investment in staff development; an appreciation of the relevance of staff biographies; an acknowledgement that staff are learning from /experiencing other cultures and the provision of dedicated posts e.g. international student coordinator, integration coordinator.

Parental involvement is seen as important including representation on governing body; integration work with parents before work with pupils and the development of links with the local community. Also important is **pupil voice**, in particular peer mediation schemes; pupil councils and buddy systems for non-English speaking students; pupils' open attitudes to diversity and pupils' abilities to mix well, irrespective of cultural difference.

At the management level representation of diverse groups on both the governing body and senior management team are noted, as well as the **involvement of the governing body** in diversity training and initiatives.

Interschool links are highly valued, especially when they progress over time, allowing friendships to develop and joint curricular projects to take place. **Learning partnerships** allow for sustained contact through the medium of the school curriculum. Sport teams

which are culturally mixed are also important. Evidence from these case studies seems to support the 'Shared Future' policy agenda (Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, 2005) in that pupils appreciate curriculum driven interschool links which provide them with the **opportunities to learn** in their specific areas of interest and to **make new friends from other communities** in unfamiliar contexts.

As schools respond to increasing cultural diversity and continue their contribution to the promotion of both community and good relations, it is important to further identify and disseminate good practice that ensures the integration and inclusion of all in our changing society.

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Published in January 2008 by the School of Education

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