



[Omagh IPS]
Omagh

HISTORY OF OIPS

Inspired by the launch of integrated education in Enniskillen in 1989 a group of pioneering parents launched the Omagh Integrated School Project. After a year of frenetic activity the project became a reality and the school opened in September 1990 under the leadership of Mrs Maureen Butler. Housed in three mobile classrooms the school commenced with 32 pupils across years 1 to 7 with a further 24 children in a nursery class.

Establishing a small, new primary school with no history, reputation or pedigree - on the outskirts of a town with seven large, well-established and successful schools is not a task for the faint-hearted and those first few years were indeed a struggle – a struggle to gain the trust and confidence of local parents, a struggle to finance the Nursery in the days before Tony Blair’s Pre-Education initiative and a struggle to keep the temporary classrooms looking attractive at a time when other local primaries were moving into modern, purpose-built accommodation. Governors, staff and parents however were not deterred by such adversities. Each morning’s news bulletin came as an all too poignant reminder of the need to do everything possible to break down the barriers within our divided community.

In 1993 the first principal left, setting off with unquenchable zeal to establish yet another new integrated primary school in Belfast. When the incoming principal, Mr Eric Bullick, was asked about his vision for the future his reply was forthright. “Even though OIPS is tiny in comparison to the other schools in Omagh and although it is housed in by far the poorest building, ten years from now there will be so many applicants coming up the driveway that we will be unable to cater for everyone.”

So commenced a period of intense school improvement, targeted marketing and the implementation of strategies aimed at creating a school which would meet the aspirations of parents and the needs of children. OIPS gradually gained a reputation for being child-centred, progressive and parent-friendly. To counteract the substandard accommodation, funds were targeted at creating particularly small classes of 18 - 24 pupils with a teacher and an experienced teaching assistant in every room. Pupils thrived in this environment and parents who saw the obvious merits conveyed their satisfaction by word of mouth.

[<http://omaghintegratedps.com>]

In May 1999 the school gained an exemplary Inspection Report and in January 2000 it was awarded a Government Charter Mark - the first primary school in N. Ireland to receive such an award. On 1st Sept 1999 the 200th pupil was enrolled and eight years later in Sept 2007 the 300th pupil was enrolled. The current enrolment stands at 375.

A Development Proposal for a 14 class base school was submitted to DE but officials blocked the proposal for almost two years. Eventually in one of her final decisions as a direct rule minister, Maria Eagle MP granted the expansion of the school's enrolment to 400. Mr Bullick retired in 2009 the second principal retired – exhausted but exceedingly content!

Mr Nigel Cairns took over the helm in 2009 and was followed by the present principal, Mr Anthony Bradley who was appointed in September 2014. Both have not only maintained the excellent reputation of the school but raised standards even further. Together with the entire staff, governors and parents, they have worked tirelessly to embed each new educational initiative, expand the school's provision and enhance the everyday experience of pupils.

In 2015 the school celebrates its 25th anniversary with the news that the long-awaited new building programme is due to commence in spring 2016. As OIPS relocates next door to Drumragh Integrated College everyone is acutely aware that the school has had an exciting past and given the enthusiasm of staff, governors, parents and pupils they can be confident that an equally exciting future lies ahead for integrated education in Omagh and its surrounding area.

