

Committee for Employment and Learning Visit Report

Ardnashee School & College, Derry/Londonderry

12 November 2014

Background

As part of its Inquiry into Post School Special Educational Need Provision in Northern Ireland the Committee for Employment and Learning agreed, to go on a study visit to Ardnashee School & College. The visit was agreed by the Committee to hear the views of the Special School on the Post 19 Transition.

Attendees

The following Committee Members attended:

Mr Robin Swann MLA, Chairperson
Mr Tom Buchanan MLA, Deputy Chairperson
Mr Fra McCann MLA
Mr Pat Ramsey MLA

Mrs Cathie White - Clerk to the Committee for Employment and Learning
Mr Vincent Gribbin – Assistant Clerk to the Committee for Employment and Learning

Ardnashee representatives:

Dr Michael Dobbin, Principal
Anne Marie Donnelly, Transition Manager, Liberty Consortium
Sharon Cassidy, Senior School Teacher Ardnashee School and College (ASC)
Imelda Mallon, Vice-Principal
Patricia Mc Connell, Carer
Tony Mc Connell, Carer
Donna Cartin, Vice-Principal
Elenor Plumber, Parent
Julianna Harkin, Parent

Meeting

On arrival at Ardnashee the Committee received a presentation from Dr Dobbins, the School Principal on the Transition Programme and its community outreach work. The presentation slides are at annex A.

The Committee was given a tour of the facilities and met with students at the School.

Issues raised

- Ardnashee question whether the School/Department of Education should take the lead in the transition process given that they will no longer have responsibility for the student post transition. It means that they have no power to follow up or to require agencies to provide the services outlined in the individual's plan.
- The Transition Plan process works fine and too much time, effort and money is spent fine tuning it. The real problem is the lack of provision post transition. Parents etc. complain about the process only when the student does not get adequate post transition support.
- Ardnashee has begun a number of Social enterprises to provide transition training for its students. This comes under the Liberty Consortium which is a community enterprise.
- As part of the Liberty Consortium, Ardnashee has opened up its facilities to the Community believing that for the future of its students the school has to be seen and used as part of the Community rather than set apart from it.