

Committee for Employment and Learning Visit Report

Glenveagh Special School 5 March 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 Glenveagh Special School, Belfast.

Attendees

The following Committee Members attended:

Mr Robin Swann MLA, Chairperson
Mr Thomas Buchanan MLA, Deputy Chairperson
Mr David Hilditch MLA
Mr Fra McCann MLA
Ms Bronwyn McGahan MLA

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

Meeting

On arrival the Committee had an informal discussion with the Principal of the School regarding the Terms of Reference for the Committee Inquiry. The Committee was then escorted to a class room where a number of teachers presented to the Committee providing their experience of the transition process.

Staff:

Mrs Fionnuala Leneghan, Principal
Mr Andrew Whitson, Department Head
Mr Gavin McCahey, Department Head
Mrs Caroline McCarthy, Department Head
Mrs Sarah O'Rourke, Department Head
Mrs Pauline Fitzsimmons (Chair of the Board of Governors)

The Committee was given presentations on:

- The transition process in the past and how it has changed.

- The current transition process for those with moderate learning difficulties and their transition to College.
- The current transition process for those with complex medical needs and their transition to day care centres.
- The current transition process for those with challenging behavioural issues.
- The impact on parents of the transition process.

Issues raised

- Lack of teacher involvement in the transition process.
- Uncertainty of whether a place will be provided post school – little information for parents.
- Lack of investment in places.
- Lack of trained staff and additional support in Colleges and Day Care Centres.
- Lack of relevant subject options at colleges and no teacher input to developing them.
- Lack of transport.
- Lack of coordinated working across, Schools, ELBs, Health, Colleges etc
- Some interesting pilot projects – Springvale Training Centre.
- Teachers not invited to monthly transition review panels which decide where pupils go to on transition.
- Review panels should occur.
- Health reluctant to speak to schools or see the children where they are happy.
- Nobody from the colleges or day-care to come into schools and work with pupils for their last year or two to guide them into their new environment.
- Lack of options for pupils in terms of choice of curriculum or accreditation on offer.
- Why can there not be age appropriate centres.
- Children with challenging behaviours can end up in Muckamore Hospital because of the lack of support when they leave.
- Children go on courses and because of lack of support they drop out.
- Some children fall in the gaps – too severe to go to colleges but no medical need to get in to day-care centre.
- All the work of communication is lost when they leave school.

