

Media Initiative for Rural Children Cross-borders: Rural Respecting Difference Programme

Evaluation report

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1.0 Media Initiative for Rural Children Cross-borders: Rural Respecting Difference Programme

1.1 Background

The Media Initiative for Rural Children Cross-borders or 'Rural Respecting Difference Programme' (RRDP) involves the use of a series of messages as part of a curriculum that encourages 'changing of minds, sharing of visions and crossing of borders'. The programme is the result of a partnership between the Northern Ireland Rural Development Council (RDC), Early Years and the Border Counties Childhood Network (BCCN). It is based on the Media Initiative for Children (MIFC) Respecting Difference Programme developed by Early Years – the NI organisation for young children, and Pii, the Peace Initiatives Institute in the US. The RRDP has been awarded £420,978, via the European Union's European Regional Development Fund through the PEACE III Programme for Peace and Reconciliation.

The MIFC programme combines a series of media messages through the use of specially created persona puppets or characters. Each puppet has been developed with its own identity, background and life experience and these can be adapted or further developed to suit the learning experience. The use of the puppets offers a non-threatening, effective and child friendly way to develop emotional literacy and empower young children. The puppets enable discussion on good and not so good experiences of issues such as marginalisation and bullying in a way that young children can understand and identify with. The messages associated with each puppet are reinforced in the early years setting through the use of specially produced project resources and interactive activities that prompt children to talk about their feelings and attitudes towards the issues being explored. The initiative is supported with a television campaign based on key messages around each character and targets children in the five to eight years age group, their parents, teachers and/or afterschool staff, via primary school and afterschool environments.

The intention of the RRDP is that the project will target more rural settings and introduce a greater focus on the rural perspective, reinforcing progress towards a peaceful and stable society and promoting reconciliation by developing a 'respecting difference' approach to cultural, religious, ethnic and racial differences. The aim is that children, parents and teachers will be supported to understand and respect difference cultural and religious symbols and traditions. Children and adults will be supported to develop positive attitudes and behaviours to those who are different.

1.2 The characters

The MIFC characters and their respective associated learning aims are shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1 The MIFC characters and associated learning aims

| CHARACTER | KEY LEARNING AIMS |
|--|--|
|  <p>Tom</p> | <p>To foster inclusion and respect for children who have disabilities/ physical differences.</p> <p>To foster acceptance and respect for those from different cultural and religious backgrounds.</p> <p>To discuss feelings of exclusion and to learn to empathise.</p> |
|  <p>Jenny</p> | <p>To help young children understand what bullying behaviours are (hurtful and helpful behaviour).</p> <p>To ask for and give help when needed.</p> |
|  <p>Jim</p> | <p>To foster acceptance and respect for those from different cultural and religious backgrounds.</p> |
|  <p>Kim</p> | <p>To foster inclusion and respect for children from ethnic minorities.</p> |
|  <p>Bukola</p> | <p>To foster inclusion and respect for children from ethnic minorities.</p> <p>To help young children understand what bullying behaviours are (hurtful and helpful behaviour).</p> <p>To ask for and give help when needed.</p> |
|  <p>Kathleen</p> | <p>To foster understanding and respect between the Traveller community and the settled community.</p> |



1.3 RRDP character 'Lucy'

The RRDP, with the assistance of a number of key stakeholders representing different rural interests, supported the introduction of a seventh character, named Lucy. Lucy is introduced as a rural character when Bukola moves to the countryside:



Lucy's development involved the input of the GAA, Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland, Southern Education and Library Board, South Tyrone Empowerment Programme and South Armagh Sure Start.

Animations featuring each of the Media Initiative characters are broadcast on national television. The RRDP supported the development of an animated short feature to present Lucy and introduce a new setting with a rural perspective. This new resource features many aspects of rural living while highlighting the importance of farming life, shared education, sporting and community activities.

The animation featuring Lucy was premiered on St Patrick's Day 2014 at a number of high profile events including the Ulster Schools Rugby Cup at Ravenhill and the MacRory Cup Final in Armagh Gaelic Athletic Grounds.



1.4 Aims of the Rural Respecting Difference Programme

The RRDP set out to address issues of marginalisation, exclusion and lack of recognition, often suffered in particular by victims and survivors of the conflict, by working in remote rural areas. It has used a creative, appealing and age appropriate approach for children to explore issues of diversity and difference and to increase their awareness and understanding. The emphasis within the programme has been on the engagement and training of parents, teachers and management committees to build the confidence and skills to deal with such issues. The approach, supported by a whole-school/afterschool 'Good Relations Action Plan' for each setting, is intended to help facilitate the promotion of a shared, reconciled society.

The specific aims of the RRDP are to:

- increase awareness of diversity and difference issues among children, their teachers / leaders and parents
- help children to understand what it feels like to be excluded and encourage them to be more willing to include children who are different from themselves
- encourage young children to demonstrate respect and actively include others who are different rather than ridiculing, fighting or rejecting them
- make respecting difference a very real experience for children and something that can be shared with their families.

The objectives of the programme were that it would:

- engage five to eight year olds, their parents, teachers and school boards / management committees through the enrolment of 30 rural primary schools and 30 rural afterschools across Northern Ireland and the Border Counties who have experienced high levels of division
- develop and produce Home Learning Packs for use by parents within the home setting and provide curriculum resources to primary school and afterschool organisations
- engage with key stakeholders to agree and develop an action plan on the planning and provision of school and after school services and activities in rural communities



- strengthen the capacity of Boards of Governors of Schools and Management Committees to develop inclusive respecting difference policies which will in turn support the staff in these settings to embrace changes in their practice.

1.5 Curriculum links

The programme links to the foundation stage curriculum by addressing issues associated with equal opportunities through a range of resources and activities.

Additional opportunities are created for children to discuss their similarities and differences between themselves and others and to express feelings associated with these similarities and differences, including feelings of exclusion and inclusion. The programme promotes acceptance, respect and inclusion.

1.6 Programme support activities and resources

The programme includes a number of key actions or activities:

- 30 rural primary schools and 30 rural afterschools engaged in the project (60% North and 40% South) from geographic areas which have experienced high levels of division and conflict
- provision of training for teachers and afterschool leaders (two-day programme), parents and Board of Governors / Management Committees from the enrolled primary schools and afterschools
- provision of support visits to the schools and afterschools
- development of Good Relations Action Plans with each participating school and afterschool
- hosting of two Good Relations seminars in rural settings
- each school has received a curriculum resource box and home learning packs.

This means that primary schools and afterschools participating in the RRDP are able to access a range of support activities and resources. These include:

- the free staff training delivered by early years specialists – leading to the development of knowledge and skills for effective implementation in the classroom or afterschool setting



- free comprehensive curriculum resource packs containing large persona puppets, a DVD with the original cartoon / animated messages, a CD with songs and rhymes, age appropriate jigsaws and games and a teachers/leaders service design manual
- additional resources that the children can take home which help extend the discussion relating to key messages – for example, finger puppets
- ongoing onsite support in the form of support visits from an early years specialist to assist with the implementation of the programme
- support for the Board of Governors or Management Committee in the practical delivery of policy development for equality of opportunity and anti-bullying
- pre-designed lesson plans to complement the existing curricula in Northern Ireland (Personal Development and Mutual Understanding - PDMU) and Republic of Ireland (Social Personal and Health Education - SPHE)
- the opportunity to participate in good relations workshops and develop a tailored Good Relations Action Plan for the school or afterschool.

1.7 Programme target areas

The RRDP is targeted towards schools in the Northern and Southern border counties including the following priority areas:

| County | RRDP Priority locations |
|------------------|---|
| Armagh | Creggan, Bessbrook, Keady, Meigh |
| Cavan | Belturbet, Blacklion |
| Donegal | Muff, Bridgend, Burnfoot, Glebe, Stranolar, Castlefinn, Ballyshannon, Pettigo |
| Down | Rostrevor |
| Fermanagh | Belcoo, Garrison, Letterbreen, Newtownbutler, Rosslea |
| Leitrim | Manorhamilton |
| Louth | Carlingford, Inniskeen, Omeath |
| Monaghan | Clones, Clontibret, Glaslough, Emyvale |
| Tyrone | Aughnacloy, Caledon, Castlederg, Clady, Sion Mills |

A list of the schools and afterschools taking part in the programme are shown in the Appendix.



1.8 Indicators of impact

A number of output and outcome indicators have been agreed for the assessment of impact of the project.

1.8.1 Programme specific outputs

Programme specific output targets are shown in Table 1.

| Table 1: Theme 1.2 Acknowledging and Dealing with the Past – Theme 1.2 output targets and actual achieved | |
|---|--------|
| Output area | Target |
| Number of conflict resolution workshops | 66 |
| Number of participants attending conflict resolution workshops | 440 |
| Number of young people participating in programmes which promote understanding and building cross community relationships | 1200 |

1.8.2 Project specific outputs

Project specific output targets are shown in Table 2.

| Table 2: Project specific output targets and actual achieved | |
|--|--------|
| Output area | Target |
| Number of training days for rural Primary School teachers, rural after school teachers, parents, management committee and Board of Governors | 420 |
| Number of Curriculum Resource boxes provided to participating primary schools and afterschools | 100 |
| Number of Early Years Specialist Visits / Cluster Support training to primary schools and afterschools | 300 |
| Number of rural primary schools Good Relations Action Plans | 30 |
| Number of rural afterschool Good Relations Action Plans | 30 |
| Number of seminars on Good Relations in Early Years in a rural setting | 2 |

1.8.3 Project specific outcomes

The project specific outcomes agreed are:

- increased adult awareness, confidence and competence in dealing with diversity issues
- isolated rural schools will have the opportunity to engage in devising Good Relations Plans in conjunction with afterschools in the same area.



1.8.4 Peace and reconciliation outcomes

The peace and reconciliation outcomes agreed are:

- people demonstrate a change in attitude towards cross-community and cross-border activities
- people demonstrate a positive change in behaviour towards individuals from other communities.



2.0 Evaluation methodology

2.1 Aid for Peace Approach

The RRDP is funded via the PEACE III Programme. The Special European Programmes Body (SEUPB) as part of their administration of the PEACE III Programme have published an Aid for Peace approach to underpin effective project, and ultimately programme, evaluation.

The Aid for Peace approach is an evaluation methodology for examining peace building interventions. For this project there are project specific outcomes as described in section 1.8.3 above, and peace and reconciliation outcomes as described in 1.8.4 that must be considered.

2.2 Evaluation activities

The evaluation of the RRDP has involved the following tasks:

- examination of the evidence for achievement of **project specific outcomes** and for **peace and reconciliation outcomes** (Aid for Peace approach)
- attendance at the two-day training programme to underpin our understanding of the overall programme
- meetings with project staff
- desk analysis of project data
- visits to selected schools / afterschools and preparation of case studies
- attendance at networking and celebration events
- review of Good Relations Action Plans and their outworking
- analysis of the information gathered and preparation of this evaluation report.



3.0 The experience of participating schools and afterschools

The following case studies have been prepared to provide insight into the experience of the RRDP by the participating schools and afterschools. Each case study considers the following areas:

- background to the school or afterschool facility
- uptake of RRDP training and other support
- RRDP progress
- parental engagement
- challenges
- success factors
- Good Relations Action Plan.

In particular, the case studies highlight the qualitative evidence of impact in relation to the Aid for Peace outcome areas:

Project specific outcomes

- increased adult awareness, confidence and competence in dealing with diversity issues
- isolated rural schools will have the opportunity to engage in devising Good Relations Plans in conjunction with Afterschools in the same area

Peace and reconciliation outcomes

- people demonstrate a change in attitude towards cross-community and cross-border activities
- people demonstrate a positive change in behaviour towards individuals from other communities.

The case studies focus on the experiences of the following:

- Springboard Family Centre Afterschool Programme, Raphoe
- St Patrick's Primary School, Mayobridge
- Scoil Naomh Fiachra, Illistrin, Letterkenny
- Around the Corner Afterschool, Castledearg
- Ardstraw Jubilee Primary School, Ardstraw, Newtownstewart
- Ballybay Afterschool Club.



Case Study 1: Springboard Family Centre Afterschool Programme

Overview

Contribution to the Rural Respecting Difference Programme objectives

Implementation of the Rural Respecting Difference Programme in Springboard Family Centre Afterschools Programme has:

- ✓ enabled the exploration of issues relating to diversity and increased awareness and understanding of these issues
- ✓ engaged and trained parents, teachers and management committee to build confidence and skills to deal with these issues
- ✓ increased awareness of diversity and difference issues among children, their teachers / leaders and parents
- ✓ helped children to understand what it feels like to be excluded and encouraged them to be more willing to include children who are different from themselves
- ✓ encouraged young children to demonstrate respect and actively include others who are different rather than ridiculing, fighting or rejecting them
- ✓ made respecting difference a very real experience for children and something that can be shared with their families.

Congruence with the agreed Aid for Peace outcome areas

The work in this setting has:

- ✓ increased adult awareness, confidence and competence in dealing with diversity issues
- ✓ supported Springboard to prepare its own Good Relations Action Plan
- ✓ led to greater confidence and a greater readiness to engage in activities which explore cross-community and cross-border issues – supporting additional or more in-depth community relations impacts within the established cross-community identity of this afterschool setting
- ✓ led to people demonstrating a positive change in behaviour towards individuals from other communities – staff in the setting report greater mixing of children from different backgrounds and there is anecdotal evidence of children planning to change their behaviour with other children outside the setting as a result of activities which were stimulated by the RRDP.



Background

Springboard Family Centre is based in Raphoe in eastern County Donegal. The Centre was established in 2002 and works with families in need in Raphoe and Convoys and the surrounding rural district. The service provided is based on family need and includes family support, parent and toddler group and an afterschool programme which runs from 3.00pm to 5.30pm from Monday to Thursday each week.

Raphoe has a relatively mixed community in that there is a significant Protestant population in an area with a majority Catholic population. As an area close to the border with Northern Ireland, the same community tensions can often arise as experienced across the border.

The Afterschools Programme has been developed to allow children the opportunity to do homework and engage in a variety of age appropriate activities. The overall ethos reflects that of the Springboard Centre in that it is based on a holistic response to working with children and families. The aims of Springboard in Raphoe are to:

- respond in a supportive manner to families where children's welfare is under threat
- reduce risk to children by enhancing their family life
- prevent avoidable entry of children into the care system
- attempt to address problems being experienced by children and families
- develop existing strengths of parents / carers and children who are under stress
- enable families to develop strategies for coping with stress
- provide an accessible, realistic and user-friendly service
- connect families with supportive networks in the community
- promote parental confidence and competence
- provide direct services to children
- assist in the reintegration of children back into their families.



Rural Respecting Difference Programme: Training and other support

Two members of staff from Springboard afterschools programme took part in the two-day training programme for the Rural Respecting Difference Programme. These members of staff currently lead on the afterschools provision at Springboard.

Parents and members of the Springboard management committee attended sessions specifically designed for each of these groupings.

These were held on site at the Centre, the parents' session in November 2013, and the management committee session in March 2014.

Support visits have also been made to Springboard by RRDP staff. These took place in October and November 2013 and in March 2014. The support provided covered issues such as use of the programme resources including development of the character personas by staff, key activities to support the programme objectives, and introducing the remaining puppets including handling more challenging messages in relation to religious and ethnic differences. Practical suggestions included making changes to the prepared 'personas' to help the children identify and empathise with the characters – for example, including more information on similarities in addition to information on differences.

Rural Respecting Difference Programme: progress

The staff in Springboard had introduced four of the RRDP characters and messages – Tom, Jenny, Bukola and Kim. This had supported activities on feelings and expressing feelings, as well as discussion on helpful and hurtful behaviours and differences in skin colour. There had been project work on topics such as Chinese New Year and flags of the world. Children had been involved in interactive sessions such as learning to eat with chopsticks and illustrating helpful and hurtful behaviours.

Parental engagement

Fifteen parents took part in the RRDP session at Springboard. The response to the session was very positive indeed.

'I like the idea that this is being introduced to my child as she has some ethnic differences herself.'

'Found it very useful to help me recognise what my child is explaining when talking about the puppets so I can actually reinforce the actual message.'



Challenges

The staff spoken to were hugely impressed when they were engaged in the training programme but describe not having any clear idea of the potential value of engagement in this programme prior to taking part in it. The experience of the programme has vastly exceeded their anticipation of it.

Success factors

Key success factors in this setting have been:

- the quality of the training provided through RRDP
- the outworking of the training and application of the learning
- the quality of the support provided by the RRDP staff team
- the availability of the classroom/home resources.

Good Relations Action Plan

Key actions contained in the Good Relations Action Plan prepared by Springboard with support from the Rural Respecting Difference Programme staff team include the following:

- taking steps to provide a more welcoming environment using methods such as multi-lingual welcome posters, world map showing where children are from, display of children's self-portraits etc.
- researching different topics around each RRDP key message and incorporating practical activities based on the topics – e.g. traditions, celebratory events and festivals, cooking around the world, different types of homes, different sports played, dance and music etc.
- practical activities to address friendship issues, bullying, hurtful and helpful behaviours – e.g. co-operative games, discussion on helpful and hurtful behaviours, agreement of a 'group contract' using children's ideas on rules and behaviours, feelings / suggestions box



- communication with parents to help reinforce messages at home
- participation in a peer to peer Media Initiative for Children Good Relations event and a celebratory RRDP event.

Project specific outcomes (Aid for Peace Approach)

Increased adult awareness, confidence and competence in dealing with diversity issues

There is clear evidence of increased adult awareness, confidence and competence in dealing with diversity issues.

Staff in Springboard are very pleased indeed to be part of the RRDP programme and are implementing the programme with enthusiasm. They report having had the opportunity through RRDP to approach issues around difference in a more constructive and coherent manner and positive conversations happen between staff, between staff and children and between children, that would not have happened prior to participation in the programme. New activities reflect the RRDP learning, from a 'flags of the world' activity to a body of work with the children developed around the theme of Chinese New Year, and a 'helpful and hurtful behaviours' display.

Isolated rural schools will have the opportunity to engage in devising Good Relations Plans in conjunction with afterschools in the same area

Training for parents and management committee members has taken place and the preparation of a Good Relations Plan has been facilitated by RRDP staff.

Peace and reconciliation outcomes (Aid for Peace Approach)

People demonstrate a change in attitude towards cross-community and cross-border activities

Staff in the Springboard afterschools programme demonstrate a clear change in attitude to cross-community activities, largely based on feeling more equipped to tackle this theme. There has been less opportunity to plan or take part in cross-border activities but staff are very open to this nevertheless. They particularly welcomed the opportunity to train alongside other staff from different areas on both sides of the border when they attended the staff training days held in Lifford.



Most notably, there appears to have been a clear shift in confidence, ability and readiness to work with children on the underlying attitudes and behaviours which relate to respect for difference and respect for others. This work now forms a very significant core component of the afterschool programme.

People demonstrate a positive change in behaviour towards individuals from other communities

Staff have observed positive change in the children taking part in the RRDP. The children in the afterschool programme are more aware of how other children may be feeling and have really engaged with exercises on topics such as helpful and hurtful behaviours. There are anecdotes from children which demonstrate how the application of the learning is extending beyond the afterschool setting. One child described their intention to make sure that another child at their school, who was often left out, would be included. They intended to act to include this child.



Case Study 2: St Patrick's Primary School, Mayobridge, County Down

Overview

Contribution to the Rural Respecting Difference Programme objectives

Implementation of the Rural Respecting Difference Programme in St Patrick's Primary School, Mayobridge has:

- ✓ enabled the exploration of issues relating to diversity and increased awareness and understanding of these issues
- ✓ engaged and trained parents, teachers and school governors to build confidence and skills to deal with these issues
- ✓ increased awareness of diversity and difference issues among children, their teachers / leaders and parents
- ✓ helped children to understand what it feels like to be excluded and encouraged them to be more willing to include children who are different from themselves
- ✓ encouraged young children to demonstrate respect and actively include others who are different rather than ridiculing, fighting or rejecting them
- ✓ made respecting difference a very real experience for children and something that can be shared with their families.

Congruence with the agreed Aid for Peace outcome areas

The work in this setting has:

- ✓ increased adult awareness, confidence and competence in dealing with diversity issues
- ✓ supported St Patrick's Primary School to prepare its own Good Relations Action Plan
- ✓ led to greater confidence to explore issues of difference between communities and this has been supported by the design of the RRDP and its ready application in the classroom
- ✓ led to people demonstrating a positive change in behaviour towards individuals from other communities – staff report that children have, and are demonstrating, an increased awareness and acceptance of others who are different to themselves.



Background

St Patrick's Primary School is in Mayobridge in County Down, some six miles from Newry City, and has been in existence for approximately 80 years. There are 360 children in the school and the main catchment is Mayobridge and the surrounding rural area. The community background of the children is largely Catholic and there are some children from different ethnic backgrounds. The Rural Respecting Difference Programme is being rolled out with two Primary One classes, one with 24 children and one with 25 children – 49 children are participating in the programme. Two teachers have attended the preparatory training, one approximately two years ago and another more recently in 2014.

Rural Respecting Difference Programme: Training and other support

Two members of staff from St Patrick's PS Mayobridge have now taken part in the two-day training programme for the Rural Respecting Difference Programme. A meeting with four of the school governors took place in November 2013 to embed the programme and discuss a Good Relations Action Plan for the school. A workshop with parents has also been delivered.

Four classroom support visits have been made to the school by RRDP staff, commencing in June 2013.

Rural Respecting Difference Programme: progress

Tom was the first character to be introduced to the children in St Patrick's PS, following preliminary work in the classroom from September 2013. All of the puppets were in use at the time of the evaluation visit in June 2014.

Various activities have been facilitated using the RRDP resources, from circle time discussions on similarities and differences to 'what I see in the mirror' activities and discussions on skin colour. These activities in turn have supported discussions on feelings and behaviours. The children take turns to take the puppets home at the weekend and then relate their adventures to the rest of the class on the Monday. This encourages additional conversations and strengthens the link to discussions at home.

Participation in the RRDP has involved contact with St Patrick's Primary School in Hilltown which is just over 4 miles away from Mayobridge. This has included work with a sports coach during a session which involved both Gaelic games and rugby.



The staff reported that the children were particularly excited about the prospect of the addition of Lucy to the RRDP and 'couldn't wait to meet her'. The children who attend the school are from the surrounding rural area and are already identifying with Lucy who is also from the country.

Parental engagement

Twenty-nine parents attended a supporting workshop which took place in June 2013. The record of this session indicates that parents were enabled to discuss early experiences of difference and the importance of their children having a positive first experience of difference.

'I'm delighted at the inclusion of this programme in my child's early years.'

'I think it's a brilliant idea. I have been very worried about how my child will settle into school because of their particular needs. I think this will help others to accept these differences and help them understand.'

'It's just a pity this programme hadn't been introduced to us when we were growing up. It was the done thing [for us] not to talk or ask questions.'

Challenges

There were no particular challenges discussed. There is positive anticipation around embedding the RRDP with a new intake of children as well as continuing work with the children who will then be in Primary Two.

Staff did have some suggestions for additions to the programme such as for the provision of worksheets to reinforce messages and that further sets of resources would be helpful. They also suggested that a leaflet for parents would be useful. It was also felt that the training for staff should be extended to include other staff in the school and should be delivered earlier in the school year.

Success factors

Key success factors in this setting have been:

- the quality of the training provided through RRDP
- the application of the learning – linking the puppet personas to different topics and activities in the classroom
- the two classes taking part sharing ideas



- the quality of the support provided including involvement of RRDP staff, for example, during sessions in June aimed at parents of children attending the school for the first time the following September
- the availability of the resources – the story books were thought to be particularly useful
- ability to use all of the resources based on the needs of the class at any given time and the opportunity to link to core activities such as circle time, wider Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) requirements.

Good Relations Action Plan

The school governors identified that for them, good relations meant equality, respect, good communication and inclusiveness.

Key actions contained in the Good Relations Action Plan prepared for the school in consultation with the governors and with support from the Rural Respecting Difference Programme staff team include the following:

- creation of displays reflecting the minority ethnic cultures represented within the school community
- introduction of the RRDP puppets at school assembly for older children
- completion of a joint activity with St Patrick's Primary School in Hilltown, a school which is also implementing the RRDP programme, as mentioned above
- attendance at an RRDP best practice study visit to support networking with other schools and staff involved in the programme.

Project specific outcomes (Aid for Peace Approach)

Increased adult awareness, confidence and competence in dealing with diversity issues

There is evidence of increased staff awareness, confidence and competence in dealing with diversity issues. This is attributed to the RRDP training undertaken and to the usefulness and relevance of the resources made available to the school through the programme.



Staff also reported that parents have described enjoying using the finger puppets with their children at home and more and more parents have been getting involved in these related activities.

Isolated rural schools will have the opportunity to engage in devising Good Relations Plans in conjunction with afterschools in the same area

Training for parents and school governors has taken place and the preparation of a Good Relations Action Plan for the school has been facilitated by RRDP staff. As part of this Action Plan, St Patrick's PS in Mayobridge has made contact with St Patrick's PS in Hilltown.

Although this contact is not on a cross-community basis, the activities that the children took part in as part of the joint initiative were deliberately designed to reflect the interests of people from different community backgrounds – e.g. Gaelic games and rugby were included.

Peace and reconciliation outcomes (Aid for Peace Approach)

People demonstrate a change in attitude towards cross-community and cross-border activities

Staff feel better equipped for work on difference and diversity and are pleased to be delivering the programme with the children in their Primary One classes. They are looking forward to what will be their second year of delivering the programme and feel that the impacts will be even more significant when delivering 'year on year'.

People demonstrate a positive change in behaviour towards individuals from other communities

Staff have observed positive change in the children taking part in the RRDP, in particular that the children have an increased awareness and acceptance of others who are different from themselves and the idea that 'inside is what counts' as is 'how we treat people'. The children are very accepting of all of the RRDP puppets including their diverse characteristics and personas / backgrounds. They actively look forward to any activity involving Kim, Bukola, Jim, Kim, Kathleen and Jenny.

Role play associated with the programme has enabled demonstration and reinforcement of positive behaviours. The activities have also supported the children to talk more about feelings and emotions as well as the concept of difference and diversity.



The teaching staff feel that the programme has been beneficial in terms of the children from minority ethnic backgrounds coming into the school, helping the children in the wider school community understand diversity through activities which highlight and explain different cultural and community backgrounds.



Case Study 3: Scoil Naomh Fiachra

Overview

Contribution to the Rural Respecting Difference Programme objectives

Implementation of the Rural Respecting Difference Programme in Scoil Naomh Fiachra has:

- ✓ enabled the exploration of issues relating to diversity and increased awareness and understanding of these issues
- ✓ engaged and trained parents, teachers and school governors to build confidence and skills to deal with these issues
- ✓ increased awareness of diversity and difference issues among children, their teachers / leaders and parents and helped with the particular situation in the school where various nationalities and ethnicities are represented
- ✓ helped children to understand what it feels like to be excluded and encouraged them to be more willing to include children who are different from themselves
- ✓ provided support to children in difficult or worrying situations
- ✓ made respecting difference a very real experience for children and something that can be shared with their families.

Congruence with the agreed Aid for Peace outcome areas

The work in this setting has:

- ✓ increased adult awareness, confidence and competence in dealing with diversity issues
- ✓ supported Scoil Naomh Fiachra to prepare its own Good Relations Action Plan
- ✓ led to greater confidence to explore issues of difference between communities and this has been supported by the design of the RRDP and its ready application in the classroom
- ✓ led to children and adults demonstrating a positive change in behaviour towards individuals from other communities.



Background

Scoil Naomh Fiachra is a primary school located in the townland of Illistrin, near Letterkenny in County Donegal and has been established for approximately 100 years. Enrolment at the school has increased very significantly over the past number of years in tandem with the expansion of the Letterkenny urban area. There were 477 pupils enrolled at the time of the evaluation visit, including 40 different nationalities and with some 22% of the children from newcomer families.

While the initial focus was with an infant junior class of 22 children, the RRDP is now being implemented with three infant junior classes involving 68 children in total. One teacher has attended the preparatory training but additional resources were obtained to enable the expansion of the programme within this year group in the school.

Rural Respecting Difference Programme: Training and other support

One member of staff from Scoil Naomh Fiachra has taken part in the two day training programme for the RRDP. A meeting with the school management board took place in February 2014 to embed the programme and discuss a Good Relations Action Plan for the school. A meeting took place with parents in January 2014 with 22 parents attending.

Classroom support visits have also been undertaken by RRDP staff:

‘The follow-up support was great. It made us think.’

Rural Respecting Difference Programme: progress

The RRDP characters were introduced as part of circle time. At the time of the visit, all of the characters had been introduced in the first class and most in the other two classes.

‘When the first puppet was introduced the children were asking their teacher questions about him but by the time the second puppet was introduced, the children were asking him (Jim, the puppet) the questions directly – he was very much a part of it.’

‘Empathy was a key part of all discussions, for example, if there was any falling out between the pupils in the playground we would bring out the puppets and have the discussion using what the puppet said. The children were very much recognising and taking responsibility for their own behaviour.’

Another child is from a settled Traveller family and staff reported that they find the puppet Kathleen helps with discussions about identity as well as helping to connect with families.



The different characters are being used in creative ways to encourage children to reflect and discuss relevant points and also to provide support to children if they needed it. One example was given where a child had an appointment with the optician and took Tom along. Another child with a learning disability had injured their leg and Tom proved to be a good support in this situation as well.

Scoil Naomh Fiachra is now intending to link up with other schools and afterschools to build on the work that they have done to date.

Parental engagement

Attendance at the session for parents included about 95% of the parents of the initial cohort of children to take part in the programme. Staff at the school pointed out that the parents who did not attend had already encountered the Media Initiative characters when their children were in pre-school.

The session was held at 2pm when parents would normally have been coming to the school to pick their children up and other staff within the school provided supervision for the children so that parents could attend the event:

'There was a real team effort.'

'At the parents event it was interesting to see how well the parents mixed with each other over a cup of tea. They were introducing themselves to each other and they sat and chatted to each other. It was a good way to help build their relationships and build confidence. Prior to this they would not really have mixed with each other.'

The school holds an international/intercultural day each year and this has supported, and been supported, by the RRDP initiative.

Challenges

The only challenge identified was in terms of having sufficient resources to expand the programme beyond the current year.

Success factors

Staff have commented on the value of this not being a 'stand-alone', 'extra' programme. Rather, it fitted well and was easy to integrate into school life:

'It feels like it was for us.'

'It integrates into all areas – physical and emotional – getting the message out to children and involving parents.'



'This very much links with our message of diversity and it's a seed to opening up conversations.'

The link with home was also highlighted as a key success factor:

The staff at the school have been impressed with the way the initiative has been organised:

'There is a lot of work involved but it is well organised – the meetings, the workshops.'

Overall, key success factors in this setting have been:

- the quality of the training provided through RRDP
- the versatility of the programme – that it can be integrated across different curriculum areas
- the involvement of parents and the fostering of the link between home and school
- the quality of the support provided including involvement of RRDP staff
- the availability of the resources and their utility in a range of situations – the story books were thought to be particularly useful.

Good Relations Action Plan

The school governors identified that for them, good relations meant equality, inclusiveness, openness, teamwork, understanding and good communication.

Key actions contained in the Good Relations Action Plan prepared for the school in consultation with the governors and with support from the Rural Respecting Difference Programme staff team include the following:

- encouraging relationship building outside of own school environment – specifically completion of joint classroom activities with another primary school on a cross community basis
- completion of projects to provide learning on other religions (including the religions of all of the children attending Scoil Naomh Fiachra)



- project work on various world religions – link with social, environmental and scientific education subjects, i.e. children research various places of worship and various religious and cultural celebrations
- display a multi-lingual welcome poster at the entrance to the school
- further integration of the puppets and the RRDP programme generally into the school's 'intercultural day' and take further opportunities to discuss similarities and differences between nationalities, languages, cultures
- attendance at RRDP events to hear from and network with other practitioners and help address any difficulties with implementation, as well as introducing the new media message (involving Lucy).

Project specific outcomes (Aid for Peace Approach)

Increased adult awareness, confidence and competence in dealing with diversity issues

Even though there is a wide range of nationalities represented in the school, participation in the RRDP is reported as having been very beneficial in terms of providing tools and support to address needs and issues effectively.

Isolated rural schools will have the opportunity to engage in devising Good Relations Plans in conjunction with afterschools in the same area

Training for parents and school governors has taken place and the preparation of a Good Relations Plan for the school has been facilitated by RRDP staff.

Peace and reconciliation outcomes (Aid for Peace Approach)

People demonstrate a change in attitude towards cross-community and cross-border activities

The programme opened up opportunities to talk to others about issues that normally would not be discussed. For example, discussions took place during the staff training session that gave food for thought on attitudes to the border:

'From our perspective, the border doesn't really exist and that was part of the discussion at the training where that wasn't the same in the North.'

'We are keen to look at opportunities to link with St Johnston or Derry.'



In the classroom, other discussions have been enabled using the RRDP resources:

'We have had discussions about the puppets supporting Celtic and Rangers.'

Staff are very engaged with the programme and are clearly making use of the resources to support discussion and initiation of otherwise difficult conversations with children in the school.

People demonstrate a positive change in behaviour towards individuals from other communities

Staff feel that the RRDP has encouraged children to be more open in their discussions on issues of difference and that children were better equipped to work through situations and find their own solutions:

'The children previously weren't really making any comments about differences but now they have had discussions – everyone's colour is different.'

'One child's granny lives in Ghana and she would not have talked about this. Other children would have been talking about visiting their grandmother and she would have held back. Now she has the story to tell of where her granny lives and the other children are listening and engaging with this.'

'One parent who had attended the parents' event has said that he was able to 'correct' the comment of an older child in the family.'

A parent spoken to at the school felt that their experience of the programme had been 'brilliant'. Her child in the participating class was able to talk with her older sister about support for the sister's friend as part of a family discussion. They had taken out the books and resources from the project to add to the discussion.

Staff also felt that the programme had had an impact on parents, helping them get to know each other and helping them to become more involved with the school.

Staff at the school are considering making links with a Church of Ireland school nearby and have included an action in their Good Relations Action Plan to reflect this. There is also the intention to expand the work within the school in the coming year as well as to a homework club linked to the school.



Case Study 4: Around the Corner Afterschool, Castlederg

Overview

Contribution to the Rural Respecting Difference Programme objectives

Implementation of the Rural Respecting Difference Programme in Around the Corner has:

- ✓ enabled the exploration of issues relating to diversity and increased awareness and understanding of these issues
- ✓ engaged and trained parents, teachers and school governors to build confidence and skills to deal with these issues
- ✓ increased awareness of diversity and difference issues among children, their teachers / leaders and parents
- ✓ helped children to understand feelings and how behaviour can affect how others feel
- ✓ engaged children across the full age range within the afterschool setting
- ✓ made respecting difference a real experience for children and something that can be shared with their families.

Congruence with the agreed Aid for Peace outcome areas

The work in this setting has:

- ✓ increased adult awareness, confidence and competence in dealing with diversity issues and enabled a range of creative approaches to be taken forward
- ✓ supported Around the Corner to consider Good Relations actions emerging from their participation in the programme
- ✓ led to greater confidence to explore issues of difference between communities and this has been supported by the design of the RRDP and its ready application in the classroom
- ✓ led to children and adults demonstrating more positive attitudes and a level of positive change in behaviour towards individuals from other communities.



Background

Around the Corner is an afterschool club which has been existence for approximately five years. The club caters for children from in and around Castlederg and there are 18 members. The children attending are mainly from the Catholic community but the club is open to all.

One of the members of staff at the club had previous experience of the Media Initiative for Children Respecting Difference Programme when working in a playgroup and was keen to involve the club when information was received.

Rural Respecting Difference Programme: Training and other support

Two members of staff attended the two day training programme for the RRDP, which was held in Lifford and involved others from different settings and from both sides of the border.

Two meetings took place with parents in October 2013 and June 2014 with 9 and 6 parents attending respectively.

A meeting with the management board took place in March 2014 to embed the programme and discuss a Good Relations Action Plan for the club. Support visits have also been undertaken by RRDP staff.

Rural Respecting Difference Programme: progress

At the time of the evaluation interview, all of the characters had been introduced. Considerable work went into the introduction of each character. For Kathleen, a model caravan was constructed, complete with glitter and carpeted floor. In the case of Tom, an optician was invited to visit the club and other resources such as glasses, a white cane, crutch and wheelchair all helped to enrich the discussion on difference. For Jim, the children made and decorated drum major mace type poles and drums and talked about marches and parades. There was also discussion on support for different football teams.

The children worked on a display reflecting Chinese culture for Kim and helped the character prepare for a visit to China to celebrate Chinese New Year. They also imagined Bukola living in Dublin with associated discussion on sporting venues in Dublin and Belfast.

A feelings tree has been constructed in the afterschool club which the children are able to use each day to explore and explain how they feel.

The overall experience of the RRDP has been very creative and interactive.



Parental engagement

At the time of the evaluation visit, one parents' meeting had been held and the staff were looking forward to another in June 2014. The last parents' evening had been held at 6pm in the evening to suit parents. Other staff members looked after the children while parents took part in the RRDP discussion. Some of the feedback indicated that parents would like to see the programme extended to the local primary school.

'Parents couldn't believe that this hadn't happened before. There was very positive feedback.'

Challenges

The staff reported feeling somewhat wary of the discussion on specific issues such as religious differences but were encouraged by how the children responded during the pole / drum making sessions.

Success factors

Some of the main success factors identified included:

- the quality of the training provided through RRDP and the amount of content covered
- the involvement of parents
- the quality of the support provided and the availability of the resources.

Good Relations Action Plan

At the time of the evaluation meeting, the Good Relations Action Plan had not yet been prepared. However, Around the Corner is planning, with the help of the RRDP staff to make links with another afterschool club on a cross-community basis.

Project specific outcomes (Aid for Peace Approach)

Increased adult awareness, confidence and competence in dealing with diversity issues

The staff in the afterschool club have wholeheartedly embraced the RRDP programme and brought a high level of energy and creativity to its implementation.



Isolated rural schools will have the opportunity to engage in devising Good Relations Plans in conjunction with afterschools in the same area

The formal Good Relations Action Plan had not been completed at the time of the evaluation meeting but actions were already being discussed that would see the afterschool club making approaches to a similar group on a cross-community basis.

Peace and reconciliation outcomes (Aid for Peace Approach)

People demonstrate a change in attitude towards cross-community and cross-border activities

The programme has involved the children in activities that they may not otherwise have had an opportunity to try or experience. Each new activity is designed to explore and challenge attitudes and feelings about differences and perceptions. It is also reported that the discussions which are stimulated tend to be more 'in depth' than they may have been in the past.

Staff reported that children approached tasks such as the band pole / drum exercise with Jim in an open and thoughtful way.

A further possible indicator of wider attitudinal change lies in the observation by staff in the club that their reputation has been enhanced because of their participation in the RRDP.

People demonstrate a positive change in behaviour towards individuals from other communities

The staff feel that the programme has encouraged the children in the club to interact with each other more and had improved their understanding of how certain behaviours can make others feel. The children have been enabled to talk more openly about difference. All were looking forward to the introduction of the new character.

'We thought that the oldest boy in the group wouldn't be interested but he is totally engaged.'

The intention exists to work with another afterschool club on a cross-community basis and the staff in the club also have an idea for a cross-community interdenominational service for the town.



Case Study 5: Ardstraw Jubilee Primary School

Overview

Contribution to the Rural Respecting Difference Programme objectives

Implementation of the Rural Respecting Difference Programme in Ardstraw Jubilee Primary School has:

- ✓ enabled the exploration of issues relating to diversity and increased awareness and understanding of these issues
- ✓ engaged and trained parents and teachers to build confidence and skills to deal with these issues
- ✓ increased awareness of diversity and difference issues, and how to deal with these, among children, their teachers / leaders and parents
- ✓ helped children to understand feelings and how behaviour can affect how others feel
- ✓ engaged some children who had previous knowledge of the MIFC from their playgroup experience of the programme
- ✓ made respecting difference a real experience for the children in this Primary One class and something that was able to be shared with their families.

Congruence with the agreed Aid for Peace outcome areas

The work in this setting has:

- ✓ increased adult awareness, confidence and competence in dealing with diversity issues and enabled a range of creative approaches to be taken forward
- ✓ supported Ardstraw Jubilee Primary School to consider Good Relations actions emerging from their participation in the programme
- ✓ although there was some apprehension initially, led to greater confidence to explore issues of difference between communities with the help of the RRDP resources and support
- ✓ led to children and adults demonstrating more positive attitudes and a level of positive change in behaviour towards individuals who are different.



Background

Ardstraw Jubilee Primary School is the result of an amalgamation in 2012 of the rural Ardstraw Primary School and Drumlegagh Primary School. The school is located in Ardstraw village, near Newtownstewart in the Omagh District Council area. The school is predominantly Protestant in its enrolment and approximately 74 children attend.

Rural Respecting Difference Programme: Training and other support

One member of staff attended the two day training programme for the RRDP, which was held in Lifford and involved others from different settings and from both sides of the border.

A meeting took place with parents in November 2013 with 5 parents attending.

At the time of the evaluation interview, no Good Relations Action Plan had been prepared but this was subsequently completed in October 2014.

Classroom support visits have also been undertaken by RRDP staff.

Rural Respecting Difference Programme: progress

The RRDP programme has been delivered with the Primary One class in the school which comprises 19 children. All of the puppets had been introduced by the time of the evaluation visit. Many of the children had already been familiar with the characters having 'met' them already in the local playgroup setting. The teacher spoken to felt that the programme had had a significant impact in terms of the children's understanding of theirs' and others' feelings and that the language that they were able to use had developed.

Parental engagement

At the time of the evaluation visit, one parents' meeting had been held and there was good support for the initiative rolling out within the school. The meeting included discussion on the value of talking with children specifically about difference and parental awareness on the programme was enhanced through the session. Some parents had come across the programme before through their contact with the playgroup.



Challenges

There was some apprehension relating to discussion on religious differences but all of the puppets have been introduced successfully at this stage.

Success factors

Some of the main success factors identified included:

- the resources – the puppets have been very well received indeed by the children
- the support offered from the early years advisor
- the messages contained in the RRDP curriculum and how the resources facilitated handling of the messages
- the fact that the content complements the NI curriculum and supports the relevant aspects
- specific lesson suggestions such as ‘helpful and hurtful behaviours’.

Good Relations Action Plan

The Good Relations Action Plan identified that Good Relations in Ardstraw Jubilee Primary School means:

- everybody working well
- keeping people informed
- setting a good example
- seeing others’ points of view
- children being friendly
- respecting difference
- positive outcomes.



The actions detailed in the Action Plan included the intention to undertake joint activities with a neighbouring maintained primary school, such as trips / outings, sports, arts and crafts, music, dance, drama, storytelling, history projects and joint exhibitions. Joint activities with others, such as verse speaking, through the medium of Ulster Scots were also identified as a means to support cross-community contact and learning.

Project specific outcomes (Aid for Peace Approach)

Increased adult awareness, confidence and competence in dealing with diversity issues

The staff member spoken to confirmed that awareness, confidence and competence for dealing with diversity issues had been significantly enhanced through the experience of the RRDP.

Isolated rural schools will have the opportunity to engage in devising Good Relations Plans in conjunction with afterschools in the same area

Ardstraw Jubilee Primary School has a Good Relations Action Plan which includes intentions to take part in activities with other schools in the area.

Peace and reconciliation outcomes (Aid for Peace Approach)

People demonstrate a change in attitude towards cross-community and cross-border activities

Participating in the RRDP has been observed to have impacted on the children taking part:

‘For the children, this has made them more aware of differences. It has taught them to respect differences.’

For staff, participation in the programme is reported to have led to greater confidence in the delivery of the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding element of the curriculum generally.

It was also reported that parents attending the RRDP session could see the potential of the programme for children to expand their understanding of difference and also that how children are treated by others can have an impact on their self esteem.



People demonstrate a positive change in behaviour towards individuals from other communities

The teacher spoken to reported that children in the class were picking up on language that is hurtful and that one of the biggest successes had been in relation to the message on bullying. An example was given where a child wearing new glasses had been treated positively and respectfully as opposed to being teased or singled out because of this 'difference':

'The child in the class wearing glasses and the other children commenting that they were lovely.'



Case Study 6: Ballybay Afterschool Club

Overview

Contribution to the Rural Respecting Difference Programme objectives

Implementation of the Rural Respecting Difference Programme in Ballybay Afterschool Club has:

- ✓ enabled the exploration of issues relating to diversity and increased awareness and understanding of these issues
- ✓ engaged and trained leaders, management team members and parents to build confidence and skills to deal with these issues
- ✓ increased awareness of diversity and difference issues among children, and their leaders in the afterschool setting
- ✓ helped children to understand feelings and how their own behaviour can affect how others feel
- ✓ engaged children across the full age range within the afterschool setting
- ✓ made respecting difference a real experience for children and supported staff to address specific issues which arose from circumstances within the setting.

Congruence with the agreed Aid for Peace outcome areas

The work in this setting has:

- ✓ increased adult awareness, confidence and competence in dealing with diversity issues and enabled staff to deal more effectively with issues as they arose
- ✓ supported Ballybay Afterschool Club to consider Good Relations actions emerging from their participation in the programme
- ✓ led to children and adults demonstrating more positive attitudes and a level of positive change in behaviour towards individuals from other communities – leaders are more confident about dealing with the relevant issues and children are better equipped for reflection on and conversations about feelings and behaviours.



Background

Ballybay Afterschool Club was established as part of Ballybay Community Crèche in 2008 and serves the town of Ballybay and wider rural area in Co Monaghan. Ballybay Community Crèche is run by a voluntary management committee made up of parents and members of the local community. The crèche offers a range of services for children aged from 3 months to 14 years, including a baby room, pre-school, after school club, breakfast club, school collection and clubs during holiday periods. Thirty children attend the afterschool club, aged from 7 to 12 years. The club membership includes children from both sides of the community.

Rural Respecting Difference Programme: Training and other support

Two members of staff attended the two-day training programme for the RRDP, which was held in Armagh and involved others from different settings and from both sides of the border.

A parents meeting took place with parents in October 2013 although just one parent attended. Three parents attended a joint event with Ballybay National School.

A workshop took place with staff in February 2014 to discuss a Good Relations Action Plan for the school.

Classroom support visits have also been undertaken by RRDP staff.

Rural Respecting Difference Programme: progress

In Ballybay Afterschool Club, the RRDP characters were introduced to the children over a period of six months, one character per month. As well as the target age group within the afterschool club, staff have engaged older children in the work. Younger children in other parts of the crèche premises are also familiar with the puppets.

Activities are planned around each character. The children had Chinese food with Kim, and Bukola was used to address a fear that one child had in relation to someone with different skin colour.

The children worked together to contribute to an intercultural day which included food tasting and national dress. Children were asked to bring in something to represent their own country. One of the older children designed a wall display and called it '*We are all together*'. The display included drawings of children from different backgrounds and nationalities, as well as different flags.



At the time of the evaluation visit, plans were underway for a ‘feelings bench’ for the outdoor play area, with three colours representing different feelings – feeling hurt, feeling left out and needing help to fix this, or just wanting some time out. Staff members are of the view that they have got to know the children better through the work on feelings:

‘This has opened my eyes. We have got to know the children better through the feelings box as it lets us know what they are really thinking and helps us to deal with situations within the group.’

Parental engagement

A joint parents meeting has been held with Ballybay National School. There was support for the RRDP initiative amongst those who took part.

Challenges

The staff have found that it can be challenging to use the puppets across a wider age range. They have also made some practical suggestions, for example, that it would be helpful if the resource jigsaws were individually boxed.

Success factors

Some of the main success factors identified included:

- the quality of the training provided through RRDP
- the additional materials provided specifically for the afterschool setting
- the link to the television campaign
- the availability of the programme resources and activity ideas.

Good Relations Action Plan

Ballybay Afterschool Club identified the following features of good relations:

- everybody working well
- seeing each other’s point of view
- children being friendly



- respecting difference
- good communication
- setting a good example
- positive outcomes
- keeping people informed.

The Good Relations Action Plan for Ballybay Afterschool Club includes actions such as:

- integration of activities to increase children's understanding of learning disabilities including exploring additional resources relating to disability
- providing a welcoming environment using a range of materials, for example, multi-lingual welcome posters, world map showing where children are from, display of children's self-portraits using skin colour paints to represent different identities
- supporting the transition from pre-school to National School – invitation to two local school to engage, and encouragement for collaborative working, use of story books etc.
- attendance at peer to peer Good Relations event as part of the wider RRDP networking activity and attendance at the RRDP celebration event.

Project specific outcomes (Aid for Peace Approach)

Increased adult awareness, confidence and competence in dealing with diversity issues

The staff in the afterschool club are proactively integrating their learning from the RRDP into everyday situations with the children. They report that they are more confident about tackling diversity-related conversations that they may not have tackled so directly before, for example using the word 'black' to describe skin colour.

Isolated rural schools will have the opportunity to engage in devising Good Relations Plans in conjunction with afterschools in the same area

Ballybay Community Creche has completed a Good Relations Action Plan and this includes co-operation with schools in the local area.



Peace and reconciliation outcomes (Aid for Peace Approach)

People demonstrate a change in attitude towards cross-community and cross-border activities

Staff have reported that they have observed changed attitudes amongst the children who have taken part, for example, children seem more aware of the language that they use and have engaged very well in activities designed to explore feelings and attitudes to others from different backgrounds or who are otherwise different.

People demonstrate a positive change in behaviour towards individuals from other communities

A number of examples of changed behaviour were shared. One example involved staff taking action to respond to notes left by children in the 'feelings' box where any child can share their thoughts without having to vocalise them. The insights derived from the notes have meant that staff have been able to work more proactively to address issues.

Children have also been encouraged to reflect more on how they interact with other children and with adults. A challenging situation involving a child's fear of an adult with different skin colour has been able to be resolved using the RRDP resources and messages.



4.0 Project outputs and outcomes

4.1 Project outputs

4.1.1 *Outputs achieved*

The following project outputs have been achieved at the time of preparation of this report:

- 35 schools and 24 afterschool settings have engaged with the RRDP
- teachers / leaders / staff / parents / Board of Governors have participated in 410 training days
- 80 resource packs have been supplied including resources for use in school and at home
- New character resources have been developed and 80 sets supplied
- 2748 young people have come into contact with the RRDP in their school or after school
- 255 support visits to schools / afterschools have been delivered by early years specialists
- 55 Good Relations Action Plans have been completed to date
- A programme DVD has been completed featuring participants from the programme.

4.1.2 *Alignment with the PEACE III programme and project output targets*

Tables 3 and 4 show how the above outputs align with the programme and project-specific output targets agreed.



Table 3: Theme 1.2 Acknowledging and Dealing with the Past – Theme 1.2 output targets and actual achieved

| Output area | Target | Actual |
|--|--------|-------------|
| Number of conflict resolution workshops | 66 | 119 |
| Number of participants attending conflict resolution workshops <i>(Workshops and participant targets served by the teacher / leader training and Board / parent activities)</i> | 440 | 942 |
| Number of young people participating in programmes which promote understanding and building cross community relationships | 1200 | 2748 |

Table 4: Project specific output targets and actual achieved

| Output area | Target | Actual |
|--|--------|---|
| Number of training days for rural Primary School teachers, rural after school teachers, parents, management committee and Board of Governors | 420 | 410 |
| Number of Curriculum Resource boxes provided to participating primary schools and afterschools | 100 | 80 |
| Number of Early Years Specialist Visits / Cluster Support training to primary schools and afterschools | 300 | 255 |
| Number of rural primary schools Good Relations Action Plans | 30 | 55 |
| Number of rural afterschool Good Relations Action Plans | 30 | |
| Number of seminars on Good Relations in Early Years in a rural setting | 2 | 2 supporting events as well as planning meetings with key stakeholders |

4.2 Project outcomes

The information contained in the case studies indicates that the RRDP is contributing to a range of outcomes for the organisations, Board / Management Committee members, parents, staff and children taking part. Aligning the main outcomes to the programme and project level expectations indicates that the RRDP has:

- enabled the exploration of issues relating to diversity and difference, and increased awareness and understanding of these issues



- engaged and trained parents, teachers/leaders and management committee members to build confidence and skills to deal with these issues
- increased awareness of diversity and difference issues among children, their teachers / leaders and parents
- helped children to understand what it feels like to be different or excluded and encouraged them to be more willing to include children who are different from themselves
- encouraged young children to demonstrate respect and actively include others who are different
- made respecting difference a very real experience for children and something that can be shared with their families.

In terms of the 'Aid for Peace' outcome areas, the work has:

- increased adult awareness, confidence and competence in dealing with diversity issues including encouraging and enabling creative approaches based on the use of the Media Initiative resources
- supported the preparation of a Good Relations Action Plan for the majority of settings
- led to greater confidence and a greater readiness to engage in activities and discussions which explore cross-community and cross-border issues
- led to children and others demonstrating a positive change in behaviour towards individuals from other communities, or who are otherwise different from themselves.

4.2.1 Increased adult awareness, confidence, competence

The evaluation case study methodology has produced evidence that staff who have engaged in the programme are more confident about working in their setting to encourage and support discussion on issues relating to difference and feel that they have improved the knowledge and skills that they need to do this effectively. There are many examples of staff thinking and acting differently. New knowledge and the opportunity to use the RRDP resources has led to enhanced confidence for different approaches in the classroom or afterschool setting, and confidence to address topics that in many cases were previously held to be too challenging.



There has been discussion on differences in settings where this would previously have been avoided although the 'harder' topics can still be hard – i.e. religious / cultural differences - opportunity to work up to more challenging conversations based on the experience of more straightforward character personas:

'I found the religious one a bit more challenging because it's not something I would have discussed before.'

Despite this reported challenge, opportunities to explore what would have been considered to be difficult issues relating to difference now seem to be generally grasped more confidently and new opportunities initiated:

'I work with P2 children and I look forward to introducing these puppets and working out any issues that may occur during the school day.'

'I feel that I have more confidence in dealing with issues that come up.'

There has been encouragement for conditions which support discussion of differences. There is an example of staff in an afterschool setting consciously and deliberately mixing pupils from different schools from different community backgrounds where this was not previously considered.

Staff are able to adapt RRDP resources to reflect the specific circumstances of the children in their setting – e.g. different ethnic backgrounds, different family circumstances – age appropriate exploration of difference and acceptance of difference. The programme is leading to the building of important foundation knowledge and skills for acceptance of community differences in later life.

Management committee members and parents have given a positive reception to RRDP training and its aim of fostering respect for difference in an age appropriate way:

'I feel that this programme is child friendly and really helps children respect differences.'

'I found the evening very well presented and informative. I will do my part at home to implement the programme with my child.'

4.2.2 Change in attitudes

While there are clearly changed attitudes amongst adults involved with the RRDP, especially those charged with delivering the programme in the school / afterschool, there is also good evidence of change in attitude amongst the children who take part, e.g. a fear of different skin colour addressed, greater acceptance of differences such as wearing glasses, willingness to be more inclusive of other children.



One example cited involved a discussion on 'flags of the world' in a border counties afterschool setting led to reflection by one child that one of her parents had a different flag to her (UK) and that she spoke differently. Insights such as this have been used alongside other exercises incorporating RRDP resources to support further discussion on acceptance of difference.

4.2.3 *Change in behaviour*

Ultimately, if the learning experience is complete it is likely that the impact of a programme such as RRDP will be a change in behaviour. The evaluation has found changes in behaviour at a number of levels:

- changes in classroom / afterschool practices – staff trying new things, tackling previously 'scary' topics, readiness for joint working with other settings:

'We brought in an optician, glasses, a white stick, wheelchair, and a crutch which the children had a go at using and they realised how it was tiring to use crutches.'

- responses by the children – looking out for others, talking about feelings, thinking about others' feelings, reacting differently to difference:

'Children are picking up on language that is hurtful – recognising that it is OK to be different.'

- responses by parents – pleased to be involved, reported taking steps at home to reinforce messages, asking for more:

'Found it very useful to help me recognise what my child is explaining when talking about the puppets so I can reinforce the actual message.'

- responses by management – preparation of Good Relations Action Plans and commencement of their implementation:

'I found the evening very well presented and informative. I will do my part at home to implement the programme with my child.'

4.3 **Value for money through a focus on quality**

In our view, the impacts attributable to the RRDP are as a direct result of the quality of the training provided for staff and the focus on the learning experience for children that this has, in turn, supported.



The other important factor is the partnership approach for the delivery of the project which aligned and mobilised different areas of expertise across the RDC, Early Years and BCCN.

The level of impact is a result of the investment in the training for staff, the supporting activities with staff, parents and management committees including Good Relations action planning (embedding the overall concept and approach), and the resources that are used as an integral part of the programme.

There are lessons here for wider good relations activities where the objectives are concerned with attitudinal and behavioural change. Many good relation initiatives are not planned and delivered with a strong sense of the pedagogical basis upon which their success rests. The RRDP is different in that there is an excellent level of cognisance in relation to the need for deeper understanding of the learning processes at play if attitudinal, and ultimately behavioural change, are to be secured. This is supported by the Media Initiative Service Design.

The type of professional development and follow up support work included in the project – the overall RRDP model in fact – is of direct interest to future planned work under the new PEACE programme which includes a priority devoted to Shared Education and which will require the type of underpinning good relations practice demonstrated within RRDP if it is to be successful.



5.0 Key features driving project impact

5.1 Building on an established, evidence based model

At the heart of the RRDP is the Media Initiative for Children Respecting Difference Model which has been shown objectively to have a significant impact on the attitudes and behaviours of the children who take part. The training delivered as part of the RRDP flows from this evidence based model and the overall approach is governed by a Service Design which ensures robustness and integrity in terms of the original concept. This is the foundation upon which the RRDP is built.

5.2 The partnership approach

The project brought together a unique partnership between RDC, Early Years and BCCN. Each partner brought their resources, expertise and insight to the project and a good level of synergy has been achieved.

Another level of partnership was introduced with the formation of the team to work on the rural message and the introduction of 'Lucy'. This also worked well and an agreed message and character resulted.

5.3 The quality of the underpinning training

The evaluator attended two RRDP training days in Armagh. The training provided was found to be of a notably very high standard indeed – well planned and structured, and expertly delivered in an engaging and professional way. The training content and methods were well matched to the intended learning outcomes and this was borne out by the positive feedback provided by the participants. This training forms an excellent platform for the subsequent work by teachers in schools and leaders / staff in afterschools and other out of school settings, and for other aspects of RRDP delivery. There are strong indications that the training has built confidence and skills for subsequent programme delivery by teachers and afterschools staff. The following are typical of the comments from participants following the training:

'The best training I have ever taken part in.'

'I hope to now bring a new element into my teaching – really excited about the new resources.'



'It will help me to use the puppets and will also help me to use the puppets to understand differences.'

'I feel that I have more confidence in dealing with issues that come up.'

'I will develop this through play activities and PDMU next year.'*

'I can link it into many of the themes that we deal with in the afterschool club.'

'I work with P2 children and I look forward to introducing these puppets and working out any issues that may occur during the school day.'

'Looking forward to introducing the characters to my class. I know the children will love them.'

'Excellent resources for the teacher and children – ready to go – ready with a little of my own planning.'

'The training has given me more confidence to deliver this programme.'

'I can't wait to introduce the programme to my children.'

**PDMU – Personal Development & Mutual Understanding*

5.4 The programme resources

The wide range of high quality resources available to participating schools and afterschools was a very welcome feature of the project and they were put to very good use. It is however, important to recognise that the programme would not have been as effective as it has been had the resources been supplied without the training for teachers and leaders in how to make best use of them.

5.5 Involvement of school / afterschool management boards / committees

The involvement of school Boards of Governors or afterschool Management Committees was seen as an important influence on the success of the project. Indeed, without practical and ongoing support from the top management level, it is difficult to see how a programme such as RRDP could become established and thrive. The inclusion of the dedicated session for management team members was an important factor in the success of RRDP.



5.6 Parental involvement

The way that the RRDP encouraged parents to become involved was mentioned consistently by the staff spoken to for the evaluation.

This provided an all-important link between home and school for further discussion and reinforcement of key messages.

Virtually all of the feedback examined from parents attending RRDP sessions indicated that they were 'very likely' or 'likely' to implement the programme messages at home. Comments by parents were mixed in terms of demonstrating actual intentions following the programme but included the following:

'Love this idea to help stop prejudice among children at such an early age, the earlier you get this message across to children the better.'

'I found it very beneficial, looking forward to working with my child to realise we are all different.'

'The evening was very interesting and very easy to listen to. Makes me as a parent think about my own beliefs and own prejudices.'

'Very worthwhile programme to assist both teachers and parents to introduce topics which will be part of our children's lives. Thank you.'

'My daughter wore a patch at school so it helped make her feel ok about it.'

'I found this session very beneficial. It's good to gain an insight into what the children are learning so it can be continued in the home environment.'

'I am delighted at the inclusion of this programme in my child's early years.'

'I think it's a brilliant idea. My son has [a chronic health condition] and has started to develop a stutter and I have been very worried about how he will settle into school. I think this will help others to accept his differences and help him understand.'

'I found the evening very well presented and informative. I will do my part at home to implement the programme with my child.'

'I will be happy to introduce this programme at home, so glad that it will be at school too.'

5.7 Good Relations Action Plans

Some fifty-five Good Relations Action Plans have been prepared by the organisations taking part in the RRDP, facilitated by programme staff.



The programme has had a stepped approach which means that actions must largely follow each other in a logical sequence. Each plan includes the school/afterschool's own statement of what Good Relations means to them.

The range of actions included in the Action Plans demonstrates how the action planning process is supporting schools / afterschools to extend the impacts of the RRDP programme within their school / afterschool community and beyond.

The process supports identification of actions, and also brings a focus to the achievement of the actions.

A range of types of actions has been identified. Some of the actions are concerned with embedding the RRDP in the school or afterschool setting, and ensuring that the organisation feels part of the wider programme by taking part in RRDP networking and celebration events.

Other actions are concerned with practical steps to extend the impact of the programme further. Examples of actions contained in the plans include:

- joint activities between settings with predominantly Catholic and predominantly Protestant enrolments - encouraging cross-community contact and partnership working
- cross-border activities
- activities to explore religious differences and similarities
- activities to explore cultural differences and similarities
- practical steps to make the school environment more welcoming – e.g. welcome signs, multilingual resources
- specific activities in relation to Traveller children
- focus on helping children to understand learning disability, gender differences, different ethnic backgrounds
- use of resources to help young children understand and cope with challenging experiences – visits to hospital and other appointments, illness or disability, steps to overcome hurtful behaviour by children who are overweight
- stimulating activities such as a 'writers in school' initiative to encourage creativity and discussion on relevant and topical issues



- development of a cross-community and cross-border history project
- development of a cross-community art project
- contact between management boards on a cross-community basis
- planning for wider community events including cross-community events involving others beyond the school or afterschool setting – for example, making links with a sports club on a cross-community basis, invitation from one school to another to join the annual carol service on a cross-community basis
- sourcing further training for staff on cultural awareness
- adding additional sessions for parents
- use of the puppets with older children in school including facilitating older children to create their own personas for the puppet characters
- taking part in networking opportunities and celebratory events organised through the RRDP programme.

The intention to build cross-community linkages and partnership working as articulated in the Good Relations Action Plans demonstrates positive attitudes and behaviours towards people in other communities. At the time of the evaluation some of these activities had been begun or had been completed, while others were still to commence.



6.0 Conclusions

The Rural Respecting Difference Programme has actively involved staff, children, parents and management committee members across 35 schools and 24 afterschool settings in an innovative and robust programme which has delivered, and which continues to deliver, positive impacts in terms of its project specific and peace and reconciliation outcomes. Some 2750 children have been involved. The wider research within the Media Initiative for Children has demonstrated statistically significant impacts in terms of changed attitudes amongst children and our qualitative evaluation for the RRDP has indicated that similar effects have extended into the new work with rural schools and afterschools that the project has supported.

Project specific outcomes

The RRDP has increased adult awareness, confidence and competence in dealing with diversity issues – the staff involved with the programme report that they feel better able and more prepared to raise relevant issues and to deal with issues concerned with difference as they arise. Examples have included improved inclusion of Traveller children and greater readiness to initiate and take part in joint activities between schools and afterschools which serve children from each of the two main community backgrounds in NI and the Border Counties. Staff have welcomed the opportunity to take part in the RRDP training with others from across the Border and on a cross-community basis. Schools in some of the most peripheral rural areas have been afforded the opportunity to consider good relations issues in a very direct manner and to prepare a Good Relations Action Plan – fifty-five Good Relations Action Plans have been completed.

Peace and reconciliation outcomes

The Aid for Peace indicators have required that we consider how people taking part in the project have demonstrated a change in attitude towards cross community and cross-border activities (how they think differently) and also how they have demonstrated a positive change in behaviour towards individuals from other communities (how they act differently).

There have been many examples where staff and children are thinking differently. New knowledge obtained through the training and the use of the Media Initiative resources has supported confidence to try different approaches and to address topics concerned with 'difference' that were previously held to be too challenging. Classroom practice has changed as a result of the RRDP. Staff report examples of changed attitudes and behaviours amongst children – e.g. looking out for others, talking about feelings, thinking about others' feelings, reacting differently and more positively to difference.



Our external evaluation has concluded that the RRDP was based on a high quality learning experience with methods, content and overall approach well-matched to planned learning outcomes. A very high premium is placed on the available Media Initiative resources by all who have been involved. The opportunities for staff to derive assistance through follow up support visits was deemed to be another important factor as were the proactive efforts made to involve parents and management committees / Boards.

Overall

The RRDP has achieved impacts at several levels based on an effective partnership approach, positive engagement with participants, and investment in resources which facilitate learning, underpinned by a high quality foundation learning experience.

The programme has succeeded in its aim to target the MIFC message to outlying rural areas coupled with encouragement and support for a focus on changing behaviour through the training and follow-up assistance provided, and via the preparation of structured Good Relations Action Plans.

The partnership between RDC, Early Years and BCCN has effectively driven the successful completion of the programme.



Appendix

Schools and Afterschools taking part in the RRDP

| County | School or Afterschool |
|----------------------|--|
| Co. Armagh | Snowdrops Day Nursery & Out of School Club |
| | St Malachy's Primary School, Camlough |
| | St Joseph's Primary School, Meigh |
| Co. Cavan | Krafty Kidz Ballyconnell CCS |
| | Little Stars, Cootehill |
| | Drumlane CCL, Belturbet |
| Co. L/Derry | Culmore Primary School |
| | |
| Co. Donegal | TT Childcare Ltd, Stranorlar |
| | Rockfield National School, Ballyshannon |
| | St Aengus' National School, Bridgend |
| | Springboard Family Support, Raphoe |
| | Nursery Lane Playgroup and Afterschool |
| | Holy Cross National School, Dunfanaghy |
| | St Patrick's Boys School, Carndonagh |
| | St Patrick's Girls School, Carndonagh |
| | Scoil Cholmcille, Newtowncunningham |
| | Dromore National School |
| | St Baitin's National School, St Johnston |
| | Scoil Naomh Fiachra |
| | Scoil Mhuire, Gleneely |
| Co. Down | St. Brigid's Drumilly |
| | St. Patrick's Mayobridge |
| | St. Patrick's Hilltown |
| | Killowen Primary School |
| | Kilbroney Integrated Primary School |
| | Killeen Primary School |
| Co. Fermanagh | Burrendale Afterschool Club, Enniskillen |
| | Mullanaska Out of Schools |
| | Jones Memorial Primary School |
| | Glendurragh Childcare |
| | Treetops Nursery |
| Co. Leitrim | St Clare's National School |
| | |



| County | School or Afterschool |
|---------------------|---|
| Co. Louth | St. Daig's National School, Inniskeen |
| | First Impressions Creche |
| | Little Munchkin, Collon |
| | Pugwash Bay, Knockbridge |
| | Little and Big Rascals |
| | Waddlers and Toddlers |
| Co. Monaghan | Latnamard National School |
| | Scoil Naomh Padraig, Oram |
| | Edenmore National School, Emyvale |
| | St Patrick's, Clara |
| | Art Mooney Childcare Ltd |
| | Edeanbeag Childcare Ltd |
| | Finger & Toes, Latton |
| | River Bank Childcare Services |
| | Ballybay Central School |
| | Ballybay Community Creche |
| | St Mary's National School, Threemilehouse |
| | Drumcorrin National School, Drum |
| | St Tiarnach's Primary School |
| | Aghabog Early Years Service |
| Co. Tyrone | Aughnacloy Primary School |
| | Churchill Primary School |
| | Around the Corner, Castlederg |
| | First Steps After School Club, Castlederg |
| | Ardstraw Jubilee Primary School |
| | Artigarvan Primary School |
| | St Mary's Primary School |