

School: Cranmore Integrated Primary and Nursery School

Assessors: Julie Macartney and Bert Scott

Dates of Assessment: 28th May 2025 (Renewal)

Context:

Cranmore Integrated Primary School was established in 1993 to meet the growing demand for Integrated Education along the Lisburn Road corridor in Belfast. Situated originally on Adelaide Park, on the boundary between West and South Belfast, the school was designed to serve families from both communities, as well as the broader Lisburn Road corridor.

As enrolments steadily increased, the need for a permanent home became clear. In July 2000, construction began on a new purpose-built seven classroom school on the Musgrave site, and by September 2001, Cranmore had moved into its new building, with space for 203 pupils in the first phase. Set in a peaceful, tree-lined site close to Malone College, the school grounds include both tarmacked and grassy play areas, providing a safe and spacious environment for children to enjoy.

Over the years, the school has continued to expand and improve its facilities. In 2003, with generous support from Mr Kevin Curley, the American Ireland Fund, and the Integrated Education Fund, a dedicated Pre-school was opened. This early years provision quickly became a valued part of the Cranmore community, known for its warm, supportive atmosphere and its commitment to inclusive learning and play. In September 2017, the Pre-school became an official Nursery Class, offering 26 part-time places each morning from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm. Most of the children who attend the Nursery go on to join Primary 1 at Cranmore, benefitting from a smooth and familiar transition.

In the 2024/25 academic year, Cranmore Nursery Unit has an admission number of 26 for part-time students.

Current Enrolment:

There are 207 pupils enrolled in the Primary School, with an Admissions' number of twenty-nine.

39% are entitled to Free School Meals (FSM)

35.2% are registered as having Special Educational Needs (SEN)

14% are at Stage 3 of the Special Needs Code of Practice

13% have English as an additional language (EAL)

44% are from the Protestant faiths, whilst 36% are from the Catholic faith.

20% are non-Christian/other/None

Assessment Process:

The school was previously awarded the Excellence in Integration Award in 2018 and reapplied in 2025. Staff made use of the EIEA audit tool to evaluate Integration in practice within the school, with support from NICIE. The two assessors visited the school on two occasions in May 2025, touring the school, meeting pupils, parents, staff, and Governors and examining a wide variety of documentary evidence including the school EIEA audit and action plan.

EQUALITY

Cranmore Integrated Primary and Nursery School continues to embed the NICIE Statement of Principles at every level of its work. Admissions to both Nursery and Primary operate on a 40: 40: 20 model to maintain a balanced enrolment of Catholic, Protestant and Other Faiths or None. The same commitment is applied to the composition of the staff and Board of Governors. Religious balance is an explicit consideration in all appointments, beginning with the Board of Governors.

A comprehensive suite of policies underpins pupils' holistic development and protection, from Safeguarding and Special Educational Needs to Equal Opportunities. Attendance is promoted through monthly newsletter recognition and end-of-term awards, while mental-health provision is being strengthened by a new policy. Daily practice reflects these frameworks: classrooms are dyslexia-friendly, learning is differentiated, and individual education or behaviour plans are in place where required. Additional interventions help remove barriers to participation, complemented by sensory-room access, a school counsellor and class nurture corners. The school provides further help through established links with external SEN support provided by the Education Authority and other providers such as the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

Staff development is well planned. All new employees attend Anti-Bias and Staff New to Integrated Education training while the whole staff engaged in a NICIE-led ethos day in August 2024. Governors completed tailored training on their role in an Integrated context. Morale is fostered through regular meetings, appraisals, curriculum sessions and social events. A shared-leadership culture allows teachers

to run curriculum development workshops supported by senior leaders who are regarded as approachable and supportive.

Appropriate Governance structures are in place. Sub-committees enable governors to apply their expertise; they receive written reports and monthly newsletters and attend school events—most recently the Belfast Bus Tour and Anti-Bias Day for parents, which all stakeholders noted as successful. Their involvement demonstrates a partnership approach.

The school promotes its Integrated identity widely. Assemblies include speakers from various backgrounds; Facebook posts, BBC News coverage of the Cranmore Community Day, the Lord Mayor's Christmas-card project and multi-platform advertising for Open Day highlight pupils' achievements and the school's ethos. Sporting initiatives like the Integrated Football Tournament support this profile.

Respect for diversity is embedded into the curriculum and daily activities and was evident in all lessons observed. Children explore identity through PATHS, class charters and inclusive celebrations of festivals such as Eid, Diwali, Chinese New Year, Hanukkah and St Patrick's Day, Humanist assemblies, Disability Sports NI sessions, International Women's Day, and One World Day. Shared-education projects with Cliftonville IPS, Oakwood IPS, Old Warren PS and Scoil na Faiseoige expand pupils' perspectives. Current affairs topics including migration, Commonwealth Day, Black History Month or the death of Pope Francis are discussed openly, fostering respectful dialogue. All media coverage aims to represent the school's cultural and gender diversity accurately.

Pastoral care and pupil voice are prioritised, ensuring pupils feel heard and understand that their issues will be addressed. They know the strategies for their learning and wellbeing and can use the sensory room to start the day calmly. Extended Schools funding supports speech therapy, Buddy Chat for P4 pupils, Sonal Sports activities, and Enlighten counselling, reinforcing the child-first approach. Designated Teacher photographs are displayed, Anti-Bullying Week is observed annually, and additional support includes drop-in counselling and emotional work with puppets in Nursery. Charitable and school events such as Yellow Day for Ukraine, Red Day, and Pyjama Day encourage empathy.

Achievement is recognised through weekly Whizz Kid awards, Sports Day medals, Accelerated Reader and Athletics certificates, house-point competitions, and pen licences presented by the Principal. Full-time Learning Support Teacher intervention and newcomer programmes, personalised homework arrangements, movement breaks, and structured transitions support every learner's success.

Through a comprehensive programme of curricular and extracurricular experiences, most of which are free of charge, the school fosters an environment

where children from diverse backgrounds succeed together. "We are all treated equally," said a P7 student.

FAITH AND VALUES

Cranmore Integrated Primary and Nursery School is fully committed to creating an inclusive environment where individuals from all religious traditions—and those of no faith—are welcomed, respected and valued. This commitment is embedded in the ethos of the school and actively promoted through its curriculum, policies and day-to-day interactions within the school community.

At the heart of this approach is a curriculum that acknowledges and celebrates religious diversity. Religious Education (RE), delivered in line with the Northern Ireland Curriculum, includes teaching about a variety of world faiths as well as the beliefs of those who identify as non-religious. This ensures that pupils gain a broader understanding of others and are equipped to live respectfully in a diverse society. Parents are encouraged to allow their children to take part in RE, with clear communication provided about its importance. Where families choose to withdraw their children, alternative provision is available, tailored to each child's background and beliefs. For example, during Christmas concert rehearsals, children not participating took part in a programme of learning prepared by a member of staff, ensuring their educational experience remained purposeful and inclusive.

The school recognises significant religious and cultural events from a range of traditions. Catholic pupils in P3, P4, and P7 are supported in preparing for the sacraments of First Confession, First Holy Communion and Confirmation, with all children—regardless of faith background—invited to celebrate these milestones together. Eid is marked with an assembly, gifts for children observing the festival, and flexibility in attendance, which is recorded as Religious Observance rather than absence. Staff and pupils who are fasting during Ramadan are supported with appropriate adjustments, such as being excused from the dining hall.

Additionally, Muslim families are invited to participate fully in school life, with efforts made to ensure they feel included and valued—such as hosting a food stall at the Christmas Fair and receiving letters encouraging attendance at all school events.

The school encourages Integration beyond simple co-existence, fostering genuine interaction and shared experiences. Religion lessons and school-wide events like One World Day provide opportunities for pupils to learn about and celebrate the beliefs and cultures of their classmates. Representatives from local Christian churches, a Buddhist parent, and a representative from the Humanist society lead assemblies. The Northern Ireland Islamic Society has delivered classroom sessions, offering balanced exposure to multiple faith perspectives. Events like the Cranmore Community Day, the school BBQ, Christmas Fair, and Open Day

celebrate the school's diversity. A staff member expressed pride in bringing traditional clothes, Arabic coffee, and food to enrich a school culture day.

The school assists PLICS RE students from Stranmillis College in understanding an Integrated school ethos and how religious education is taught. Similarly, students from San Diego observe inclusive practices and respect for diversity at Cranmore, emphasising the importance of teaching pupils to be responsible citizens.

The Trust Programme and Shared Education activities further enhance opportunities for children to explore their traditions and shared values in a respectful and meaningful way. Annual celebrations including Harvest, St Patrick's Day, Royal events and Eid are approached inclusively, with all children given opportunities to participate in age-appropriate ways.

Cranmore's commitment to religious inclusion extends to staff development and family engagement. Muslim staff members have been encouraged to join visits to local churches to foster understanding, and several staff have attended community Eid celebrations. The school's consistent efforts to ensure meaningful participation of all families—regardless of background—reflect a deep-rooted commitment to true Integration and mutual respect.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Cranmore was founded by parents in 1993 and parents remain an important part of the school community. The assessors saw photographic and written evidence of good parental involvement and talked with a range of parents who were enthusiastic about the school. Parents felt that they were valued and encouraged to play a part in the education of their children. The school also recognises the importance of grandparents and looks to welcome and involve those who are in contact with the school through drop offs and pick-ups.

An active group of parents are involved with key school events such as the annual School Barbecue and a Christmas Fair. Events such as Grandparents' Day and International Women's Day have been used to bring parents in to the school and build a link between school and home. Regular class assemblies are open to parents and are followed up with coffee and a chat. Parents serve on the Board of Governors as Parent Governors, with some former parents also involved in other governor roles. The school has a history of consulting parents, with a reading survey being a recent example.

A number of parents support learning activities in the school, such as one-to-one reading support. Parent volunteers have helped with projects led by the pupil Eco Committee. A significant number of staff are also parents at the school, and this helps to maintain a good sense of teamwork throughout the school community.

Parents noted that school staff are accessible and helpful, and that the Principal is often at the school gate and easy to approach.

The school admission criteria inform parents about the balanced and shared nature of the school, and parents are kept well informed about the values of the school through school communications, open assemblies, Integrated Education Month activities and other celebrations which reflect the Integrated nature of the school community. Parents talked with enthusiasm about a recent Anti-Bias Day for parents involving a political bus tour and a follow-up workshop facilitated by NICIE. They noted how much they enjoyed broadening their understanding of other cultures involved within the school community. A parent from an ethnic minority valued the fact that celebrations belonging to their family culture were shared with the rest of the school community.

The assessors saw considerable evidence that the school makes effective use of letters, a Facebook page, school website and regular newsletters to keep parents well informed about school activities and news. A letter is sent out at the start of each school year to encourage parents to be involved in the life of the school. The school 'Seesaw' app keeps the parents informed about classroom work and helps parents to understand and support the learning going on in each year group. Homework is posted on Seesaw to keep parents informed and involved. There is a good induction process for parents which includes Nursery and P1 booklets and open days. Teachers offer regular parent/ teacher meetings as the children progress through the school and parents noted that staff are open to contact as and when a need may arise. A parent told the assessors that "the staff are interested in how the children are doing and are keen to help solve any difficulties which they might have".

Letters home and Facebook posts are used to keep parents informed about parent workshops and the learning support programmes on offer within the school. Parents have been offered training in a 'Toe by Toe' reading support programme, and had the opportunity to attend a Learning Space session for ASD and workshops on Speech and Language and for an Accelerated Reader programme. Parent teacher meetings are organised at the end of the first term to talk about out how the children have settled into the new year, and each teacher has a designated slot each week for talking with parents.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Cranmore Integrated Primary and Nursery School was established to be an Integrated school, and the NICIE Statement of Principles are evident in school policies, in the maintaining of a school community, and in how education is

delivered. The assessors saw evidence both in documents and in classroom work that understanding diversity and respect for others are an important part of learning within the school. Cranmore encourages thoughtfulness and empathy, and celebrates acts of kindness and helping others. The school has recently introduced a May Blood Award, presented for Community Activism, with the first recipient being a pupil who has supported his local food bank over several years. The school supports a range of local and international charities through events such as non-uniform days and Harvest food hamper donations. A group of senior pupils recently planned and ran a pyjama day, which raised funds for a medical charity.

The Paths program is used across the school to provide a structured program of social and emotional education. This helps develop self-esteem, respect for others, and interpersonal problem-solving skills. A Playground Pals workshop has also been used to promote inclusion and reduce isolation in play. Circle Time is used throughout the school to promote dialogue and help resolve issues.

Cranmore has positive longstanding links with the local community. The school recently held a very productive Community Day which brought in organisations to showcase support and opportunities available to parents and families. This was a very innovative event which received significant media attention, gave valuable information to parents, developed positive links with local organisations, and promoted Integration in the media. The school regularly accommodates teaching practice placements from a range of institutions and hosts students from local second level schools for work experience.

The school observes Anti-Bullying Week to help promote positive behaviour and Cultural Diversity Week is celebrated to help encourage understanding and appreciation of other faiths and cultures. School assemblies are well used to host visiting speakers from a range of backgrounds to allow each class to take a lead and present a regular class assembly. Personal achievements and positive behaviour are celebrated in assemblies. As mentioned in an earlier section, school staff have benefitted from NICIE Anti-Bias training and training for staff new to Integrated Education.

It was very clear from talking to adults in the school that the staff have a good connection with school families and work hard to maintain a strong sense of belonging and respect for all. This was particularly evident when social unrest in the summer of 2024 affected some areas within the broad catchment of the school, and senior staff were able to help families feel welcome and valued by talking about the shared nature of the school.

Cranmore has a broad range of ability within the school enrolment, and works hard to provide effective support for those with additional needs. A Learning

Support Teacher for literacy and trained SEN classroom assistants provide extra help. In addition to support mentioned in an earlier section, interventions and guidance are accessed from the Autism Advisory and Information Service, the EA Literacy Service, Harberton Literacy Outreach, and Behaviour Support (including tailored guidance for special needs classroom assistants). The RISE programme (Health and Social Care) brings social emotional and behavioural support, speech and language therapy, and occupational therapy interventions. Transition for P7 pupils is well supported through planned work in school and external links. Malone Integrated College hosts events for Cranmore pupils and the school maintains a link with a local Church who provide an 'It's Your Move' programme for P7 pupils.

The school has a good record of developing leadership skills within the staff team. Each teacher carries some subject leadership responsibility, appropriate to their level of experience, and contributes to action plans and staff training. Staff have the freedom to make decisions within their area of responsibility, manage budgets, and liaise with external organisations. Leadership roles are also in place for Foundation / Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. The school showed evidence of self-evaluation, including consulting widely within the school when using the EIEA audit tool and in compiling the wealth of evidence presented to the assessors. There was also evidence that pupil leadership skills are developed through the school Eco Committee, Pupil Council, P7 House Captains, and pupil Integration Ambassador roles. Children spoke confidently with the assessors and enjoyed their roles within the school. The assessors saw evidence of Pupil Council activity, and activities to support local and wider charitable causes.

While the school location within a campus well set back from housing and the main road does not lend easily to community use, the school works hard to bring the community in through links with Churches and organisations. Cranmore pupils attend community events such as the Christmas Lights switch on and Carol Singing activities. The school has linked with organisations such as Artsekta and Beyond Skin, The Ulster Scots Agency and The Armagh Rhymers to provide cultural activities and celebrate diversity.

The recent Cranmore Community Day brought in a wide range of local and regional groups, and the school has hosted other events such as the Action Cancer Big Bus, reading training, and NICIE Governor Training. The school maintains links with teacher training institutions and has a regular link with educationalists from San Diego.

Opportunities for Development

- The school is encouraged to continue work on developing a mental health and emotional wellbeing policy.

- The school has undertaken to review its mission statement, and is encouraged to continue with this through discussion and consultation.
- The Anti-Bias Bus Tour and Workshop for parents and the School Community Day have been innovative and effective, and the school is encouraged to continue to offer ways to engage and develop the broad parent body.

Summary

The assessors saw good evidence that Cranmore took forward the recommendations from the previous EIEA in 2018. Cranmore Integrated Primary and Nursery School is a welcoming and enthusiastic environment. The assessors saw evidence of common purpose within the school community, and a sensitive awareness of the need to continually work on maintaining inclusion and welcome for everyone in an evolving social environment.

It was clear through visiting classrooms and in talking to staff, parents and pupils that providing a positive educational experience is at the core of the school. Good policies and planning support this, and the parents feel that the school is accessible and responsive. Positive values which support Integration are integral to the school statement of vision and the associated 'Cranmore Way'. Material for prospective parents and subsequent induction and welcome information ensure that parents are aware of the Integrated nature of the school, and regular communication continues throughout the life of the school. Engagement with NICIE training for staff, good Integrated school links, and innovative activities such as the Anti-Bias Tour and workshop for parents and the school Community Day keep Integration at the heart of the school and continually developing.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT CRANMORE INTEGRATED PRIMARY AND NURSERY SCHOOL BE AWARDED THE EXCELLENCE IN INTEGRATED EDUCATION AWARD.

Assessors: **J McCartney** **R Scott**

Date: 11/6/25



NICIE CEO

Date: 12/06/2025