

Cedar primary gets prestigious award

CEDAR Integrated Primary School in Crossgar is celebrating after winning a prestigious award for the second time.

The school has been presented with the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education's Excellence in Integrated Education Award, which it previously won in 2017.

The school was visited by NICIE assessors earlier this year. In their report they said staff, parents and governors were "committed to the development of integrated education".

They said that commitment was evident throughout the school "both in the physical environment through displays in classrooms and public areas but also in the relationships between all members of the school community, the pastoral care and the work and ethos observed in classrooms and around the school".

The report went on: "The pupils are clearly aware of what it means to be a member of the integrated community and were able to express it in age-appropriate ways in every key stage".

Cedar is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year. It opened in September 1995 with 26 pupils. Present enrolment is 215, plus a 26-place nursery unit.

The report noted the "beautiful school grounds" and that in addition to ample playground space the seven-acre green field site has been developed to include a willow walk, friendship garden, a pond and a sports field providing many opportunities for outdoor learning and play.

It said equality was "clearly central" to every aspect of school life.

"Conversations with teaching staff revealed their deep commitment to the ethos of Cedar - to the equality issues and to taking opportunities to challenge and explain," the report continued.

"Cedar's 'Inclusion, Integration and Cultural Policy' is clear in its description of the school's commitment to recognising and valuing all religious and cultural backgrounds and those who have no religious practice.

"The comprehensive list of planned assemblies, shared with parents, reflects the school's commitment to helping the children to understand the diversity of their world."

The report also highlighted what it described as the "impressive level of support" from parents.

"The parents who met with the assessors clearly took pride in their association with the school and cited the integrated ethos of the school



ACHIEVEMENT: The oldest and youngest pupils at Cedar Integrated Primary School, Maeve Keenan and Abigail Mallon, celebrate the school's Excellence in Integrated Education Award with Sean Pettis (left), CEO of the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, Hilary Crichton, principal, and Tiarnán McMeekin, development officer for the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education

as the reason they chose Cedar for their children in the first place, and they spoke openly about their own backgrounds as well as the variety of family situations represented at Cedar IPS.

"Parents interviewed spoke highly of the caring ethos of the school and said that at Cedar IPS no one is excluded. Parents who had moved to the area in the last few years from elsewhere in the UK said that they felt that their family

was known to the school in a way that did not happen in their previous schools.

"Parents are encouraged to get involved with the life of the school and are regularly invited to assemblies and other events.

The report said pupils were given opportunities to explore their identities and the school worked to develop a variety of links with the wider community.

It added: "Cedar Integrated

Primary and Nursery Unit is a wonderful example of a lived integrated ethos.

"There is a warm welcoming atmosphere in the school for children and adults alike. Members of the school community are encouraged to be curious about all cultures and be proud of their own.

"It is clear that all at Cedar are proud to be part of this Integrated school and are committed to its ongoing development and success.