Feels Like Home: Exploring the experiences of newcomer pupils in primary schools in Northern Ireland

Believe in children

Barnardo's
Northern Ireland

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Introduction

Northern Ireland (NI) has undergone a rapid demographic change in the past decade as a consequence of migration. Census 2011 data revealed that the number of those born outside of the United Kingdom (UK) and Republic of Ireland (ROI) living in NI increased almost threefold from 27,266 residents in 2001 to 81,314 in 2011. This accounts for 4.5% of the total resident population of Northern Ireland in 2011 compared to 1.6% in 2001. This unprecedented shift has increased the ethnic and cultural diversity of the population and seen a significant rise in the number of languages spoken here.

As a result, schools in NI have also seen a rise in admissions of children with little or no English language. The Department of Education (DE) has identified these pupils as 'newcomer' which has been defined as "*a pupil who has enrolled in a school but who does not have satisfactory language skills to participate fully in the school curriculum and does not have a language in common with the teacher. It does not refer to indigenous pupils who choose to attend an Irish medium school*" (Supporting Newcomer Pupils, 2009). Data provided by DE has shown an exponential growth in newcomer pupils at all stages of education since 2006/07 when 3,911 pupils were registered until 2014 when 10,698 newcomer pupils were attending school in Northern Ireland. In the most recent School Census figures (2013/14), newcomer pupils now account for 3.2% of the total school population with the largest growth in the primary school sector accounting for 4.3% of primary school children.

Although the black and minority ethnic (BME) population has been steadily growing, minimal research has been conducted in NI about the educational needs and policy implications for children with English as an Additional Language (EAL). This is also an area of particular interest for Barnardo's NI as we increasingly work with newcomer families and children across our service base and work in schools. In order to explore the issues faced by both school staff and newcomer pupils, Barnardo's NI has funded and conducted research into experiences of school staff and newcomer pupils in primary schools to address this gap. As this is a qualitative study, the rich data collected provided evidence of different experiences and perceptions of the impact of newcomer pupils. This study was particularly important in providing children with an opportunity to talk about their own experiences as newcomer pupils in NI.

Purpose of this research

The overall purpose of this research was to investigate both the experiences of newcomer pupils and staff in primary schools in Northern Ireland. Specifically, the main objectives were to:

- gain an understanding of the arrangements primary schools made for newcomer pupils and the support available to schools;

■ investigate the challenges faced by both newcomer pupils and teachers in primary schools;
■ explore the relationship between newcomer pupils' parents and school;
■ identify best practice in this area.

Findings from the research will be used to inform policymakers, educators and practitioners.

Methodology

The research was qualitative in nature with all interviews and focus groups conducted between December 2013 and June 2014. Four primary schools with a high number of newcomer pupils were invited to participate in the study in each of the five Education and Library Boards (ELB) which resulted in a total of 13 schools participating in the study. The research was conducted over three phases:

Phase 1: Interviews with principals

The principal or vice principal of each of the 13 selected schools was interviewed. The aim of this phase was to understand the effect of newcomer pupils from a whole schools' perspective. Principals were asked questions related to the process of admission for newcomer pupils, support available to schools, pastoral care and integration. Challenges and benefits of newcomer pupils and examples of good practice were also explored.

Phase 2: Interviews and focus groups with teachers

A total of 39 teachers drawn from across different stages of primary school participated in the study including Foundation Stage (n = 17), Key Stage 1 (n = 12) and Key Stage 2 (n = 10) teachers. In this phase, nine 1– to - 1 interviews and nine focus groups with teachers were conducted. Teachers were asked about the ways they managed and integrated newcomer pupils in the classroom, pastoral care issues and relationships with newcomer pupils' parents. They were also asked about the resources, support and training available to teachers for newcomer pupils.

Phase 3: Focus groups with newcomer pupils

It was important that children were provided with an opportunity to talk about their experiences as newcomer pupils. Ten focus groups and one 1-to-1 interview were conducted in 11 primary schools. This resulted in a total of 47 children from 14 different countries of origin participating in the research. Due to the children being newcomer pupils, we anticipated that pupils would have varying abilities to communicate in English and that our research methods should not be heavily dependent on the pupils' linguistic competency. To counteract this, all participating schools were made aware that Barnardo's NI would provide an interpreter to ensure that language was not a barrier to any pupils' participation. In addition, we adapted an arts related method 'the jigsaw approach' that has been used with young children to enable them to share their lived experiences in a relevant and meaningful way whilst capturing their voice with authenticity (Stephenson,

2011). Children were asked to write one word on a jigsaw piece on topics such as how they felt when they started school. The researcher then used the pupils' words as prompts to gain a deeper understanding about their experiences. In this way, all the children were able to participate and communicate their views and perceptions about their school experiences in a fun and relaxed way.

All the interviews and focus groups were digitally recorded with permission and transcribed. Once transcribed, the audio files were deleted. Qualitative analysis has been conducted using qualitative data analysis software NVivo.

Key findings

Whole school Level

- All schools had a range of multilingual signage and visual displays to welcome visitors and pupils.

- Most principals were generally satisfied with the admission system for newcomer pupils.

- Schools usually took a holistic approach with newcomer pupils and families. Support offered to newcomer families from schools in this study included:

    – Helping parents complete official paperwork;

    – Holding evening classes to support parents with English language learning;
    – Running parenting classes for parents;
    – Extended school hours through breakfast and afterschool clubs to facilitate shift work;
    – Providing information about purchasing uniforms at a lower cost.

- Concerns were raised by school management and teaching staff about poor attendance by some newcomer pupils. The two main areas of concern were: (i) attendance at Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and; (ii) extended periods of time off during term time.

- Teachers found bullying amongst newcomer pupils with a mutual language or between two newcomer groups particularly problematic to identify as they were unable to understand name calling and nasty comments in different languages.

- School principals generally considered the amount of funding for newcomer pupils appropriate and the majority reported that this funding is used for additional teaching staff and classroom assistants.

■ Concerns about the potential of newcomer funding to be ring-fenced centred on the reduction of flexibility for schools and the disproportionate impact ring-fencing may have on schools with small numbers of newcomer pupils.

■ School staff expressed mixed views on the Inclusion and Diversity Service. They felt the service was most useful when providing schools with tools to introduce and settle newcomers initially. However, they found it was of limited support in terms of providing advice for classroom practice particularly for more complex issues of special educational needs and age appropriate resources.

In the classroom

■ Two thirds of newcomer pupils felt scared starting primary school in NI. Pupils' main concerns centred on not knowing any other children and not being able to make friends or interact with others because of the language difference.

■ Low school readiness manifested itself in the classroom as children from other countries may not have had any previous experience of being away from their parents, school routines or understanding of appropriate behaviour in the classroom.

■ Teachers felt that younger children with little or no English were easier to manage as the Foundation Stage curriculum allows more interaction and all children are learning new things at the same time compared with older children who had little English and had no experience of school.

■ Three main challenges for teachers in the classroom were identified as:

– **Language barrier:** This was problematic in terms of being able to communicate with newcomer pupils to understand their needs, assess their progress and ensuring that they could access the NI Curriculum.

– **Differentiation:** The breadth of home languages, different levels of understanding of English and school readiness and a range of academic ability within the classroom was highlighted as a challenge for teachers in terms of preparation and classroom management and teaching at the appropriate level.

– **Special Educational Needs:** Teachers reported difficulty in being able to discern between the language barrier and a potential learning problem or special educational need for newcomer pupils.

- Teachers identified that while many newcomer pupils were able to develop conversational English and recognised basic vocabulary quite quickly after an initial silent period, there were concerns raised about the depth of newcomer pupils' English language comprehension.

- Some children felt frustrated at misunderstandings caused by the language barrier. Teachers highlighted that the lack of age appropriate materials for older newcomer pupils in Key Stage 2 often adds to pupils' frustration.

At home

- Teachers identified that support from parents and access to learning materials in English at home were key factors in how well newcomer pupils developed their English language. However, they were concerned that many newcomer pupils had limited access to materials in English outside school.

- Many of the children were bilingual and some pupils indicated that their parents wanted them to maintain their first language. Children reported this was encouraged by all conversation at home being conducted in their parents' first language in addition to watching television programmes and reading books in their first language.

- Most of the pupils considered their English to be better than their parents' English language.

- Schools typically communicate with parents of newcomer pupils through interpreters supplied by the Inclusion and Diversity Service and translated letters sent home.

- Schools found it particularly problematic to deal with parents with a complete lack of English and low levels of literacy in their own language.

- Teachers recognised that homework could often be challenging for newcomer pupils as some parents are unable to provide support due to their own lack of English.

- Nearly half of newcomer pupils reported that a parent could help with homework at least sometimes.

Good practice

- Much of the good practice evident across participating schools has been achieved on a school to school basis with little standardisation across the education sector.

- Good practice regarding newcomer pupils at a school level was identified as:

  – After school clubs for newcomer pupils

– Celebrating different cultures eg multicultural events and workshops and English language classes for parents
– Inclusive ethos
– School reports translated
– Sharing good practice with other schools
– Weekly translated newsletters/ notes
– Growing use of technology to communicate with parents

■ Good practice regarding newcomer pupils at a classroom level was identified as:

– Bilingual teaching assistants
– Buddy System
– Development of home-school journals
– NI children learning a second language
– Strategic seating plans to integrate newcomer pupils
– Visual aids and displays in classroom in multiple languages

Recommendations

Drawing on this research study, and to usefully inform newcomer policy and practice in primary schools, the following recommendations are suggested for consideration:

1. Data collected in the Annual School Census should record 'Country of Origin' and 'First Language' in addition to ethnicity to provide greater demographic detail of newcomer pupils and the range of language needs schools may face on a year to year basis.

2. In order to reflect the growth in the newcomer pupils in NI schools, the Department of Education should commission the Education and Training Inspectorate to conduct an evaluation of the current provision available to support newcomer pupils in NI schools which would inform an updated version of the Department's Guidance on Supporting Newcomer Pupils.

3. The current formal training provision related to English as an Additional Language should be reviewed for: (i) pre-service teachers; (ii) in-service teachers; and (iii) classroom assistants to ensure the workforce are equipped with knowledge and specific strategies to support newcomer pupils' development and comprehension of the English language.

4. The Inclusion and Diversity Service should be reviewed to ensure it is appropriate to support the changing needs of the newcomer population in schools. Specific focus on reconfiguring elements of the service should aim to support schools who have established newcomer populations with consideration to:

■ providing teachers with model lessons;

■ providing updated and age appropriate resources;

■ working directly with newcomer pupils;

■ developing and coordinating formal links between schools to share their experiences and good practice relating to newcomer pupils.

5. Consideration should be given to the specific development and pilot of an intensive learning programme which addresses newcomer pupils specific learning needs to aid language development and comprehension and prepares newcomer pupils with little English language for entry into the classroom.

6. Support for newcomer pupils including teaching resources and the length of current funding should be reassessed to ensure that newcomer pupils are receiving the support needed to acquire academic English proficiency.

7. Increasing schools' awareness of funding opportunities through OFMDFM, District Councils Good Relations Programme and Community Relations Council that could support ethnic minority parents having greater parental involvement in schools, access to English classes and greater integration into the wider community.

Chapter 1: Policy Overview

Introduction

Northern Ireland has undergone rapid demographic change as a result of migration in the past decade. In 2004, eight countries from central and eastern Europe, the 'A8', joined the European Union (EU). As new European citizens, nationals from Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia were free to travel and reside in any other EU member state. While some countries choose to close their labour market and access to state support to A8 nationals, the UK and Ireland permitted this group to work and access benefits under certain conditions such as registering for the Workers Registration Scheme (WRS). Russell (2012) reported that this change in 2004 triggered an unprecedented wave of migration in which Northern Ireland welcomed a disproportionate number of A8 citizens compared with the rest of the UK. The arrival of large numbers of migrant workers as well as smaller numbers of refugees and asylum seekers has resulted in more diversity in culture, religion and language than Northern Ireland has experienced before.

Ethnic minorities in Northern Ireland

According to the NI Census data, the resident population in NI grew by 7.5% between 2001 and 2011, while the resident population born outside of the United Kingdom (UK) and the

Republic of Ireland (ROI) grew by 199% in the same period. This accounts for 4.5% of the total resident population of Northern Ireland in 2011 compared to 1.6% in 2001. This is an estimated increase of 27,266 residents in 2001 to 81,314 in 2011. Evidence from NI Census data shows that ethnic minorities arriving to work and live in Northern Ireland are drawn from many different backgrounds and are not a homogenous group. Research from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Irwin, McAreavey and Murphy, 2014) has identified four main reasons people move to Northern Ireland:

1. **Economic:** to access the labour market and find economic opportunities that did not exist in the country of origin;
2. **Lifestyle:** to access other aspects of society including general quality of life, new experiences and exposure to English language;
3. **Study and Education:** either to study or to allow children to avail themselves of an education system; and
4. **Refuge:** to escape particular hardships, e.g. civil war, and so seek asylum.

The largest numbers of ethnic minority groups in NI were drawn from Poland (19,658) and Lithuania (7,341). Those born in Poland accounted for 24.2% of the population born outside of the UK and the ROI and 1.1% of the total

population of Northern Ireland. Other groups of migrants include those born in India, the United States, Germany and the Philippines.

It is worth noting that the spread of migration is not evenly distributed in Northern Ireland. Belfast, Craigavon and Dungannon Local Government Districts (LGD) have seen particularly high numbers of ethnic minority groups coming to work and live. According to analysis of the NI census data carried out by the Oxford Migration Observatory, the largest numerical increase took place in Belfast with the number of residents rising by 11,873 persons representing an increase of 182%. Craigavon showed the second highest percentage increase (505%) in Northern Ireland with an increase of 5,602 residents born outside of the UK and ROI. However, Dungannon LGD has seen the largest percentage increase of the resident population of those born outside of the UK and ROI. This shift from 484 residents in 2001 to 5,998 in 2011 has resulted in those born outside the UK or ROI accounting for ten percent of the population in this area. While there may be a combination of motivations for parents to live in Northern Ireland, there are a number of well documented issues that living in NI could present for ethnic minorities and their families:

Language barrier: The lack of English has been identified as an obstacle for families in terms of integration and gaining access to information about statutory health and social care services (McGovern, Meas, and Webb, 2011). Figure 1 highlights the percentage share of main languages spoken in NI other than English and Irish. As illustrated, Polish is the single most common language with 35.0% reporting this as their main language. A combination of small numbers of different languages was found to be second most common as shown by 'Other' (28.5%), followed by Lithuanian (12.3%).

Figure 1: Non-English languages in NI

Language	%
Polish	35.0
Other	28.5
Lithuanian	12.3
Portuguese	4.5
Slovak	4.5
Chinese	4.4
Tagalog/Filipino	3.7
Latvian	2.5
Russian	2.4
Malayalam	2.3
Hungarian	2.0
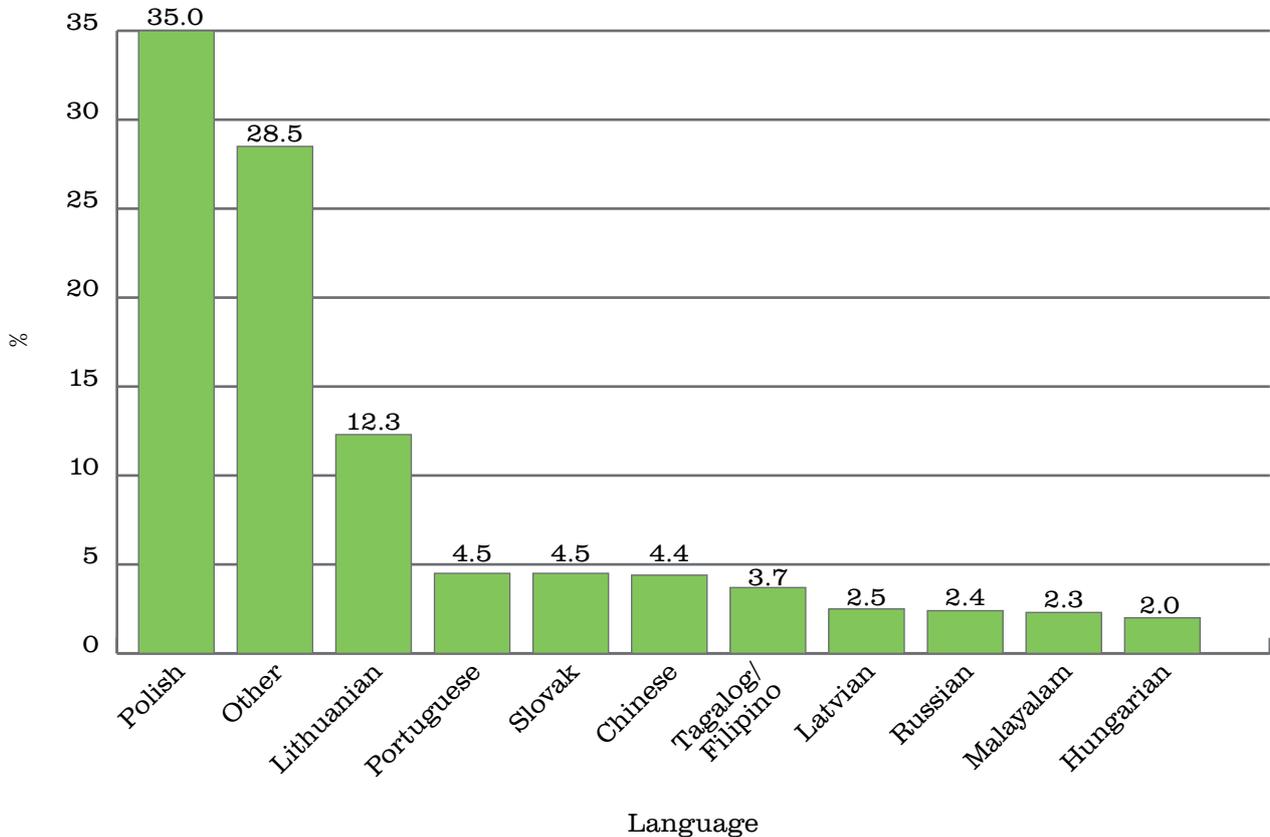
Source: NI 2011 Census

While public authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that services are accessible to those with little or no English, research has suggested that this has been problematic due to a shortage of interpreters for particular languages in the public sector and differences in translations between the written and spoken word in some languages (McWilliams and Yarnell, 2013; Johnston, 2011). This can be especially difficult for parents with little or no English to communicate their needs and to access information relevant for their children (Kernaghan, 2014; McGovern et al, 2011). The lack of English language has also been found to be a factor in some parents' reluctance to be involved in school activities. (McGovern et al, 2011).

Unfamiliar health and education systems: People born outside the UK may have different experiences and expectations of the health, social care and education system. Research by Barnardo's NI found low levels of awareness amongst ethnic minority parents related to financial assistance linked to children including 43.7% of parents being unaware of free school part time places for three to four

year olds (Kernaghan, 2014). Lack of awareness may result in families not receiving support they are entitled to or not gaining access to services they require.

Racism: The Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey found that 79% of participants stated that racism against black and ethnic minority (BME) groups existed in NI with 41% believing there was more racial prejudice compared to five years ago (McDermott, 2014). Racism in NI has widely been associated with the legacy of the sectarian conflict in which educational, religious, social and residential segregation remain a defining feature (Knox, 2011; Connolly, 2009). For people new to NI these types of 'social markers' can be difficult to understand and navigate (McAreavey, 2014). Furthermore, studies have suggested an institutional racism exists which is a particular barrier for non-English speakers in terms of accessing information and services (Connolly, 2002; McWilliams and Yarnell, 2013).

While recognising these barriers may exist for the ethnic minority community, many migrant workers have established roots and started a family here. By way of illustration, in 2013 ten percent of births in NI were to mothers born outside the UK[1] which is the highest figure on record. Changing demographics naturally impact on schools as there is more cultural diversity, different languages and in some areas more pupils to enroll than

schools can cope with. The following section will explore the background and policy context for ethnic minorities with specific relation to education.

Newcomer pupils in Northern Ireland

All children in NI have the right[2] to basic education regardless of their ethnic, religious or socio-economic background. The Department of Education (DE) replaced the term 'English as an Additional Language' (EAL) in 2009 to 'newcomer' to describe pupils whose first language is not English.

DE defines a 'newcomer' as, *"a pupil who has enrolled in a school but who does not have satisfactory language skills to participate fully in the school curriculum and does not have a language in common with the teacher. It does not refer to indigenous pupils who choose to attend an Irish medium school"* (Supporting Newcomer Pupils, 2009).

Data provided by DE has shown an exponential growth in newcomer pupils at all stages of education from 2006/07 when 3,911 pupils were registered until 2014 when 10,698 newcomer pupils were attending school in Northern Ireland. While newcomer pupils in post-primary schools have more than doubled from 1,148 in 2006/07 to 2,501 in 2013/14, the largest growth areas for newcomer pupils has been in primary schools. As shown in Figure 2, newcomer pupils in primary schools have nearly trebled from 2,630 in 2006/07 to 7,424 in 2013/14.

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1   NISRA (2014) Births in Northern Ireland 2013 Statistical Bulletin http://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/Births_2013.
pdf
2   United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) Article 28

Figure 2: Increase in newcomer pupils in NI primary schools
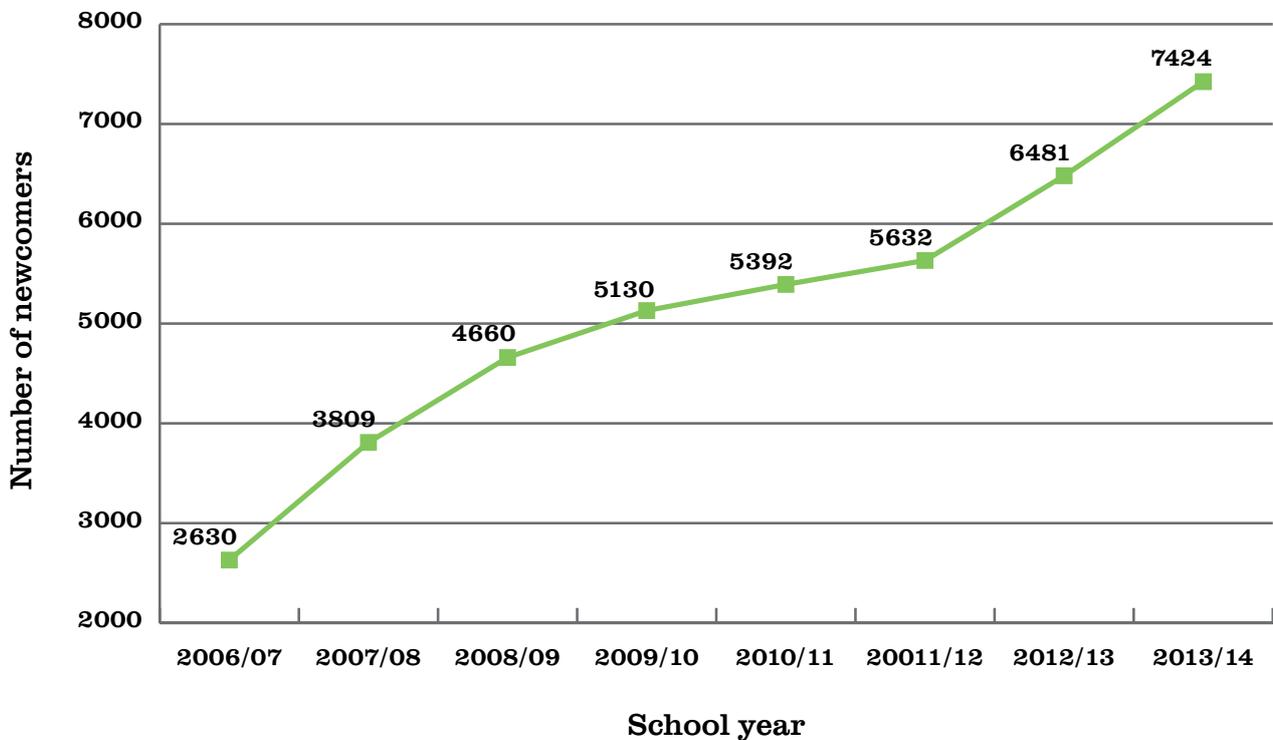
Source: DE School Census 2013/14

Although in fewer numbers, an increase of newcomer pupils in nursery schools and special schools is also evident. In 2006/07, DE recorded 112 newcomers enrolled in nursery schools and 21 newcomer pupils in special schools compared to 330 newcomer pupils attending nursery schools and 101 pupils in special schools in 2013/14.

In terms of the spread of newcomer pupils, over forty percent of the total number of newcomer pupils attended schools in the Southern Education and Library Board (ELB) (n = 4542), while twenty percent of newcomer pupils joined schools in the Belfast ELB (n = 2139). A further 1867 newcomers attended schools in the North Eastern ELB while over one thousand attended schools with the South Eastern ELB (n = 1182) and Western ELB respectively (n =967) as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Number of newcomer pupils by ELB (2013/14)

	SELB	BELB	NEELB	SEELB	WELB	TOTAL
Primary School	3129	1520	1247	833	695	**7424**
Post-Primary School	1152	460	443	234	212	**2501**
Pre-School	128	53	79	#	#	**341**
Nursery	103	83	72	39	33	**330**
Special	30	23	26	#	*	**101**
Total	4542	2139	1867	1182	967	**10697**

*   denotes fewer than 5 pupils
#   denotes figure >=5 suppressed due to potential identification of individual pupils

Source: DE School Census 2013/14

In the most recent School Census figures newcomer pupils now account for 3.2% of the total school population (DE, 2013/14). The majority of newcomer pupils attend primary school (69.4%) in comparison to post primary schools (23.4%). Fewer numbers of newcomer pupils attended pre-school (3.2%), nursery (3.1%) or a special school (0.9%).

A number of policies have been produced to provide support to newcomer pupils:

Supporting newcomer pupils

As part of the 'Every School a Good School' initiative, *Supporting Newcomer Pupils*[3] was developed to enable newcomer pupils to feel welcome within and participate fully in the curriculum and life of the school. This document outlined the steps taken by DE to support the inclusion of newcomer pupils into the school system. This included funding of a regional support service, the Inclusion and Diversity Service (IDS), with the intention of improving support to newcomer pupils by providing a consistent level of support and specialist advice to schools. The IDS key services include:

- Multi – lingual website for parents and teachers[4]
- Interpreting and translation services;
- Toolkits for Diversity for pre-school, primary, post primary and SEN pupils;
- Continuous Professional Development for teachers.

3   Supporting Newcomer Pupils http://www.deni.gov.uk/newcomer_policy_english.pdf
4   IDS Website http://www.education-support.org.uk/teachers/ids/

Funding: DE has recognised that some groups such as children with special educational needs, pupils from disadvantaged areas and newcomer pupils need additional resources and support to access the Northern Ireland Curriculum and participate in school life. The Common Funding Formula (CFF) is used to target funding to schools depending on the number of newcomer pupils enrolled. In particular each school is entitled to £1,012.66 per year for each newcomer child (2012/13)[5]. The criteria used for initial funding for newcomer pupils include:

a. the child was born in a country other than the UK and the child **needs to learn the language of instruction** (including basic communication and comprehension) whether that is English or Irish, and does not have a language in common with the teacher. The child does not normally speak English or Irish at home.

and/or

b. the child was born in the UK but does not have the satisfactory language skills to participate fully in the school curriculum, and the wider environment, and does not have a language in common with the teacher. The child does not normally speak English or Irish at home. It does not apply to English speaking indigenous pupils who

choose to attend an Irish medium school. That circumstance is dealt with under the Irish medium education policy.

This funding is allocated automatically by DE once the school census is completed, and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is used as a reference. The CEFR describes what a learner 'can do' in reading, listening, speaking and writing across six broad levels as shown in Table 2. Assessment against the CEFR[6] for schools should be carried out to provide evidence that the child still meets at least one of the criteria to be classified as a Newcomer.

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5   *An Independent Review of the Common Funding Scheme (2013)*
6   *Common European Framework of References for Languages http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/source/framework_ en.pdf*

Table 2: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

Basic User	A1	Breakthrough	- Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. - Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. - Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.
	A2	Waystage	- Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). - Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. - Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
Independent User	B1	Threshold	- Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. - Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. - Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. - Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
	B2	Vantage	- Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. - Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. - Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

Table 2: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) continued

Proficient User	C1	Effective Operational Proficiency	■ Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning. ■ Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. ■ Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. ■ Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
	C2	Mastery	■ Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. ■ Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. ■ Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.

DE guidelines for schools[7] states that when a pupil has reached all the benchmarks on the 'Independent User: B1 level', they are no longer designated a 'Newcomer' pupil and the 'end date' must be included on School Information Management System (SIMS). A number of issues have been raised as problematic in this system. It has been well documented that newcomer funding being allocated once a year after the School Census has limitations if further newcomer pupils arrive after this time (NISMP[8], 2014; Rooney and Fitzpatrick, 2011; Geraghty, McStravick and Mitchell, 2010). Research would also suggest that assessment using CEFR assumes literacy in a pupil's first language and has little relevance for assessment of children with little or no

formal academic attainment such as asylum seekers and refugees (NISMP, 2014).

Currently, additional funding for newcomer pupils is not ring fenced or monitored by DE although there is a stated expectation that schools use funding to build and maintain the expertise of their teaching staff and provide specific support to pupils identified as newcomers. The Independent Review of the Common Funding Scheme (2013) has recommended that the use of earmarked funding by schools should be effectively monitored with appropriate interventions should expectations not be met. The Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities suggested that a

7   *Every School A Good School – Newcomer – Guidelines for Schools (2010) http://www.deni.gov.uk/guidelines_-_faq.pdf*
8   *Northern Ireland Strategic Migrant Partnership*

minimum level of funding be introduced to all schools that have newcomer pupils to ensure that "meaningful support" can be provided to newcomer pupils. Furthermore, it has also been suggested that specific funding for newcomer pupils is ring fenced to ensure it is being used for newcomer pupils (Rooney and Fitzpatrick, 2011).

Count, Read, Succeed

This overarching policy is to ensure that every child fulfils her or his full potential at each stage of their development. This strategy identified five key areas by DE and underpins the commitment to newcomer pupils set out in the 'Supporting Newcomer Pupils' policy:

    a. raising standards for all;
    b. closing the performance gap, increasing access and equity;
    c. developing the education workforce;
    d. improving the learning environment; and
    e. transforming education management.

Extended Schools

The Extended Schools (ES) programme aims to improve levels of educational achievement and the longer term life chances of disadvantaged children and young people by providing the necessary additional support which can enable those children to reach their full potential. Through this programme, schools serving areas of the highest social deprivation can provide for a wide range of services or activities outside of the normal school day to help meet the needs of pupils, their families and local communities.

Together: Building a United Community

The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister published *Together: Building a United Community Strategy* in May 2013, based on the commitment of the NI Executive to improving community relations and continuing the journey towards a more united and shared society. It aims to ensure the educational inclusion and integration of children from an ethnic minority background and the inclusion of ethnic minority communities in community spaces, and promotes cultural identity and access to the arts for ethnic minority communities.

The Northern Ireland Education System

Any move to a different country would result in differences between education systems. Depending on their own educational experiences, parents may also have different expectations for their child's education in terms of attendance, levels of progression and homework. Studies have found that unfamiliarity with the education system may result in newcomer parents missing deadlines for paperwork, particularly regarding free part time pre-school places, and confusion around uniforms, transport assistance and free school meal entitlements (Kernaghan, 2014; Geraghty et al, 2010). For newcomer pupils and their parents born in other countries, the NI education system may be particularly difficult to understand and navigate in the following ways. Newcomer parents may have low awareness about NI school structures and different categories of school:
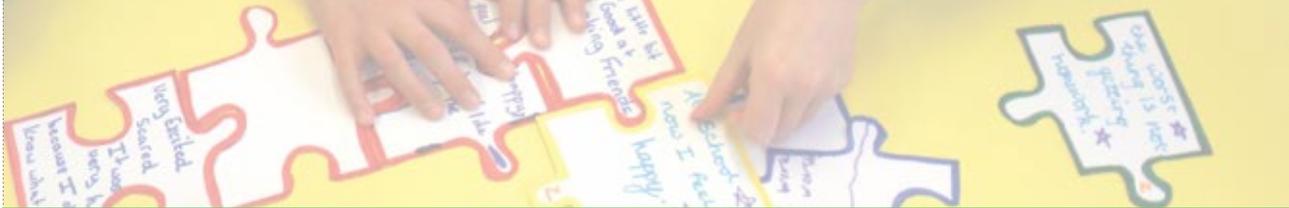
- **Controlled** (nursery, primary, special, secondary and grammar schools) are under the management of the schools' Board of Governors and the Employing Authorities are the five Education and Library Boards;
- **Maintained** (nursery, primary, special and secondary) are under the management of the Board of Governors and the Employing Authority is the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS);
- **Other Maintained** (primary, special and secondary);
- **Voluntary** (grammar), Integrated (primary and secondary) and Institutions of Further and Higher Education[9].

Northern Ireland's school system also has a number of defining features which may be difficult for newcomer families to navigate such as: (i) schools segregated by religion; (ii) the earliest school starting age in Europe; and (iii) an unregulated transfer system from primary to post primary education which will be explored in turn below.

Conflict legacy issues: While all schools adhere to the Northern Ireland Curriculum, the NI school system has been segregated on religious lines of Catholic and Protestant which influences the schools' governance and ethos. This may also manifest itself in differences in religious education and religious celebrations throughout the school year. For parents new to NI, this type of historical arrangement may be difficult to understand (Irwin et al, 2014).

School starting age: While there may be many differences between the education systems in NI and parents' country of birth, one point of significance is the school starting age. Northern Ireland has the lowest statutory school starting age in Europe at 4 years old. This was established by the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order in 1989 in order to ensure that each child received a full 12 years of schooling. In contrast, the majority of other countries have a compulsory school starting age of 6 years old while Eastern European countries tend to have a school starting age of 7 years old. Table 3 shows the comparison in school starting between NI and the countries where the majority of ethnic minority groups in NI are drawn from.

Table 3: Comparison for compulsory school starting age

Country	Compulsory school starting age
Northern Ireland	4
Portugal	6
India	6
Slovakia	6
China	6
Russia	6
Hungary	6
Philippines	6
Latvia	7
Poland	7
Lithuania	7

9   Types of Schools http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/85-schools/10-types_of_school-nischools_pg.htm

As a result of this early school starting age, parents may enrol their children late and young newcomer pupils in NI may not have any experience of a school environment in order to be 'school ready'. Although there is no agreement about the definition of the term 'school ready' (PACEY, 2013; Allen, 2011; Bertram and Pascal, 2002), it often refers to the development of the following traits:

- social and emotional skills to engage positively with other children and adults;
- language development and communication skills;
- ability to understand numbers and quantities;
- independence and self sufficiency;
- curiosity about the world and a desire to learn;
- confident and happy to be in school for a number of hours without seeing parent or carer.

Interestingly, when teachers were asked about what they considered the most important skills children should have to help them start school, 65% of teachers reported that it is important that children are confident and happy to be in school for a number of hours without seeing their parent or carer. Only 4% of teachers felt that it was most important for a definition of the term "school ready" to include a child having a basic understanding of reading, writing and arithmetic (PACEY, 2013). In the case of newcomer pupils with the added language barrier, teachers may struggle with being able to integrate and welcome newcomer children with little or no English into a classroom environment when the children have no experience of school (Skinner, 2010).

Transfer system to post primary school: Newcomer parents may also be unsure of the system of transfer for children from primary to post primary at 11 years old. Currently parents have the choice to enter their children into a series of unregulated tests known as the 'AQE' and 'GL' assessments. Both tests need to be applied for separately with registration open from May to September only. Parents also need to ensure that they apply to the post-primary school of their choice. Table 4 outlines the differences between these two types of assessment.

Table 4: Comparison between AQE and GL assessments

Registration	AQE	GL
Price	£44.00 (unless FSM entitlement)	Free for all
Location of Test	Post Primary School	Post Primary School
Format of Test	3 one hour papers completed over three Saturdays in November	1 English and 1 Maths paper held on one day
Scoring	AQE scores use a standardised age score with 100 as the mean score	GL scores use a standardised age score ranging from 69 to 141 with 100 as the mean score
Test Required*	Mainly Controlled Grammar School	Mainly Maintained Grammar School

*NB: Some schools may also accept either

It is clear that this process could be particularly difficult for parents with little experience of the NI system plus a lack of English language to understand it (NISMP, 2014). While primary schools can provide parents with the appropriate transfer paper work, schools have been directed by DE not to lend any support to assist participation in the transfer tests: *"The school should not facilitate unregulated entrance test arrangements in any way by supplying support materials, carrying out any preparation for unregulated tests during core teaching hours, offering afternoon coaching in exam technique, or by providing familiarisation with a test environment"*.[10] Confusion around this process may account for the fact that only 8.5% (n = 231) of the newcomer pupil population in post-primary schools attended a grammar school (Annual School Census, 2013/14).

Newcomer pupils in the classroom

Newcomer pupils have been seen by teachers as a positive addition to the classroom overall (Murtagh and Francis, 2012; Skinner, 2010; Ryan, D'Angelo, Sales and Rodrigues, 2010). When NI teachers were asked about what opportunities newcomer pupils provided the top three answers were learning about another culture (95%), learning tolerance (85%) and learning about social relationships (73%) (Purdy and Ferguson, 2012). However, teachers have expressed a number of anxieties related to teaching newcomer pupils including language development, identifying special educational needs and lack of training to support newcomer pupils. These issues will be explored below:

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10   Department of Education, The Transfer Process to Post Primary Schools, Advice for Parents of Children in Primary Six
       http://www.deni.gov.uk/advice_for_parents_of_children_in_primary_6_pdf_215kb.pdf

Language development

Much work internationally has been conducted into how children learn a second language in the classroom. Most children with little or no English go through a *"silent period"* identified by Krashen (1982). During this silent period pupils are building up language competence through actively listening and processing the language they hear. During this time a pupil can understand much more than they are able to express themselves. This period may last up to 6 months depending on the child's personality, ability and the support provided. The pioneering work of Cummins (1979) identified the distinction between two types of language proficiently.

- Firstly, basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) allows everyday conversation and social interactions. Cummins estimated that this acquisition of the English language could take up to two years to acquire fluency.

- Secondly, cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) enables children to problem solve and understand the context of a situation without any interpersonal experience.

While questions have arisen about how much these two different types of language learning relate to each other, it is estimated that it may take at least five years in education for bilingual pupils to become fully competent in a second language and develop the cognitive academic language proficiency required to achieve academically (Cummins, 1981; Collier and Thomas, 1989). Demie's (2010) study of pupils new to English schools found that it may take 6 to 8 years on average for EAL pupils to acquire academic English proficiency. The language development of newcomer pupils is important in the classroom in a number of ways:

1. **Differentiation:** Teachers consider and plan to accommodate all pupils in the class by the differentiation of tasks and support. However, the length of time taken to develop academic language proficiency is dependent on an individual's age of arrival, previous educational background, level of literacy in their first language and opportunities to interact with native English speakers (Collier and Thomas, 1989; Demie, 2010).

2. **Progression:** While pupils may appear to be fluent in their social interactions in English, this may not mean that they have achieved the same levels in academic language proficiency.

3. **Assessment:** It may be difficult to assess newcomer pupil ability when their low levels of English academic proficiency may result in misinterpreting a question or being unable to explain how they worked out an answer (NISMP, 2014).

4. **Behaviour:** Teachers may experience some specific behavioural problems with newcomer children predominantly on pupils' frustration and boredom as well as attention-seeking behaviour and emotional outbursts (Purdy and Ferguson, 2012).

Special Educational Needs

Research studies show that teachers may find it challenging to diagnose special educational needs among newcomer children (Sales, Ryan, Lopez Rodriguez and D'Angelo, 2008). This could be difficult as dyslexia or emotional or behavioural difficulties could be mistaken as going through a 'silent period'. Skinner (2010) found that teachers could understand or misunderstand their pupils' silence in various ways such as the pupils not wanting to communicate, not being bothered to communicate, or being unable to communicate because of language or learning difficulties. The language barrier may delay diagnosis as it is more difficult to carry out an accurate assessment of the child's abilities in a language he or she can understand (Ryan et al, 2010). It may be the case that the process for getting appropriate SEN support for a pupil with little or no English language may be long (Ryan et al, 2010). However, it is also apparent that some communities may have particular stigmas around SENs and may be reluctant to have their child 'labelled' as having special educational needs (Ryan et al, 2010).

Lack of training

English as an Additional Language is not a subject specialism in initial teacher education in the UK. Studies suggest teachers feel that pre-service teacher training and continuous professional development regarding children with English as an Additional Language have not kept pace with the changing demographics in Northern Ireland (Purdy and Ferguson, 2012; Murtagh and Francis, 2012; Skinner, 2010; Bracken, Hagan, O'Toole, Quinn, and Ryan, 2009). Teachers report a general sense of learning to deal with newcomer pupils 'on the job' against a background of limited time and knowledge (Wardman, 2012; Skinner, 2010). This may limit any real understanding of how language develops and the best ways to support the English language acquisition of newcomer pupils. Research suggests that the area of both pre-service and in-service teacher training on English as an Additional Language requires review in order to increase teacher confidence and meet the needs of newcomer pupils (Purdy and Ferguson, 2012; Bracken et al, 2009; DENI, 2006).

Communication with newcomer pupils' parents

Communication difficulties have been identified as a barrier to developing closer parent–teacher connections (Skinner, 2010; Purdy and Ferguson, 2012). Research studies on ethnic minority groups in the UK have found that the lack of English may be a source of frustration for parents when communicating with school as they are unable to talk directly to teachers and at

times may feel that their concerns were not listened to (D'Angelo, Paniagua and Ozdemir, 2011; Sales et al, 2008). This may also be problematic for teachers in terms of explaining about a child's progress and emphasising the importance of helping children with their school work at home (Irwin et al, 2014; NISMP, 2014; D'Angelo et al, 2011; McGovern et al, 2011; Biggart, O'Hare and Connolly, 2009). In particular, a study investigating the integration of newcomer pupils from an asylum seeker and refugee background reported that school staff found it difficult to communicate with parents who had little experience of formal schooling and low levels of literary and numeracy in their own languages (NISMP 2014).

Newcomer pupils' perspective

As is often the case with children and young people, their experiences are habitually overlooked by researchers and policy makers. As a result, the body of opinion which is regrettably missing is that of the voice of the newcomer children themselves (Purdy and Ferguson, 2012). One area that has been highlighted in the research conducted with newcomer children and young people to date is the importance of friendships (Geraghty et al, 2010; Biggart et al, 2009). Research has shown that friendship is significant for children of all ages and backgrounds (Children's Society, 2014). However, for newcomer pupils, the language barrier may make children feel inhibited which limits their ability to establish friendships (McGovern et al, 2011; Ryan et al, 2010). Younger children may find it easier to make friends with others

as their focus is on play partners who share similar activity preferences while older children's friendships take on a more psychological dimension (Killen, Mulvey, and Hitti, 2013). Children with low numbers of friends may experience social isolation which may impact on their sense of belonging, enjoyment of school and participation in after school activities (Biggart et al, 2009; Geraghty et al, 2010). The language barrier may also cause children with the same language to socialise together rather than make friends with local children (Biggart et al, 2009; Ryan et al, 2010). Evidence would also suggest that an increase in the number of friends from different ethnic backgrounds was related to higher levels of psychological wellbeing and resilience of newcomer pupils (Bagci, Rutland, Kumashiro, Smith and Blumberg, 2014).

Bullying is also an issue that has been raised by newcomer pupils. Biggart et al (2009) using a ten item Olweus Bullying Questionnaire, found that there were no statistically significant differences between indigenous white children and children from a BME background in their overall experiences of bullying. However, on further analysis some BME children did experience a higher rate of particular types of bullying. BME children from a European background were more likely to feel excluded (45%) compared to local children (38%) or those from an Asian background (20%). European BME children were also more likely to experience name calling of a racist nature (31%) compared to those with an Asian background (26%) or local

children (20%). Evidence suggests that 'cross-ethnic' friendships are beneficial as they may offer a protective buffer for the newcomer against prejudice and bullying (Bagci et al, 2014). This suggests that greater integration of children from different ethnic minority backgrounds could reduce bullying of a racist nature.

In addition to establishing social ties, newcomer children may need time to adjust to the NI educational system as it may differ from their previous school experiences in terms of workload, discipline and relationship with teachers (Geraghty et al, 2010). Particularly in the case of children of asylum seekers and refugees, pupils may have experienced trauma, loss and displacement before starting school and therefore have additional needs to settle into school (McGovern et al, 2011).

The next chapter will outline the methodology of the research project with Chapter 3 presenting the findings.

Chapter 2: Methodology

This research was qualitative in nature and designed to explore the experiences of newcomer pupils in primary schools at three levels: (i) school; (ii) classroom and; (iii) pupil. To capture this data, research was conducted with three groups:

1. Principals Interviews
2. Teacher Interviews/Focus Groups
3. Children Focus Groups

Aims and objectives

The purpose of this research was to investigate both the experiences of newcomer pupils and school staff in primary schools in Northern Ireland. Specifically, the main objectives were to:

■ gain an understanding of the arrangements primary schools made for newcomer pupils and the support available to schools;
■ investigate the challenges faced by both newcomer pupils and teachers in primary schools;
■ explore the relationship between newcomer pupils' parents and school;
■ identify best practice in this area.

Respondents

Participants for this study were identified through primary schools with high numbers of newcomer pupils according to data supplied by the Department of Education for the academic year 2013/14. Initially, the research project was only concerned with four primary schools in the Belfast ELB area. However, after completion of the interviews and focus groups in those schools, it was clear that there was merit in conducting the research on a Northern Ireland wide basis and the project was extended. Four primary schools with high numbers of newcomer pupils in each of the other Education and Library Boards areas were approached to participate in the project. This resulted in a total of 20 schools being contacted to take part with 13 agreeing to participate. Schools were drawn from every ELB apart from the Western ELB. Figure 3 shows the geographical distribution of the schools by ELB that agreed to take part.

Figure 3: Primary schools included in the sample by ELB
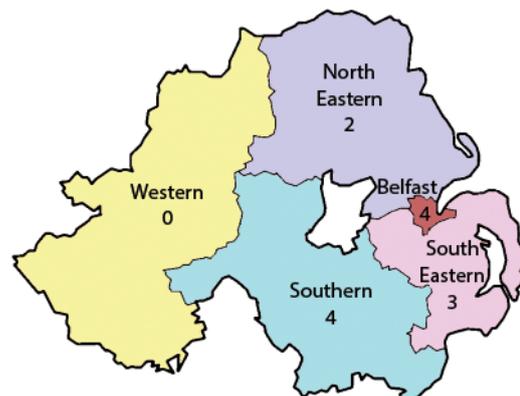
The percentage of newcomer pupils in participating primary schools ranged from 10 to over 50 percent. It is important to highlight that in addition to different amounts of newcomer pupils, schools also had different demographics. For example, one school could have pupils with over 20 home languages compared to a school that

had pupils drawn from one or two main ethnic backgrounds. Schools also had different numbers of newcomer pupils drawn from migrant, asylum seekers and refugees backgrounds.

Overall, this resulted in a total of 13 principal interviews, interviews and focus groups with 39 teachers and 10 focus groups with 47 newcomer pupils.

Measures

The research was conducted in the following three phases:

Phase 1: Principals' interviews

The principal or vice principal of each of the selected schools was interviewed. The aim of this phase was to understand the effect of newcomer pupils from a whole schools' perspective. Principals were asked questions related to the process of admission of newcomer pupils, support available to schools, pastoral care and integration. Challenges and benefits of newcomer pupils and examples of good practice

were also explored. Emerging themes from the interviews with principals were used to develop topic guides for the teachers' and the children's interviews and focus group.

Phase 2: Teachers' interviews/focus groups

In order to gain a broad perspective of newcomer pupils' experiences throughout primary school, interviews and focus groups with teachers from Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 were conducted. Teachers from P1, P4 and P7 were specially requested to participate where possible as these ages represent important milestones for pupils in terms of starting or leaving school and assessment. Nine individual staff interviews were conducted and a further nine focus groups carried out between January 2014 and June 2014. A total of 39 teaching staff participated in the study. Table 5 shows the teachers by Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

Table 5: Teachers' participating in study by Key Stage group

	Foundation Stage	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2
Number of teachers	17	12	10

Base N = 39

Teachers were approached by school management about taking part and were given an information sheet created by Barnardo's NI outlining the aims and objectives of the research to ensure informed consent. Teachers were asked about the ways they managed and integrated newcomer pupils in the classroom, pastoral care issues and relationships with newcomer pupils' parents. Teachers were also asked about the resources, support and training available to teachers for newcomer pupils.

Phase 3: Newcomer pupils focus groups

Children's focus groups were an important aspect of the study in order to gain further insight into newcomer pupils' experiences and perceptions of attending primary school in Northern Ireland. It has been noted by others that newcomer pupils experiences are rarely considered (Purdy and Ferguson, 2012). The sample of newcomer pupils was selected by school staff with consent leaflets provided for parents. The focus groups with newcomer pupils were conducted in eleven out of the thirteen schools participating in the study. This resulted in a total of 47 children participating with 24 girls and 23 boys. Newcomer pupils were drawn from 14 different countries of birth with the majority identifying themselves as Polish (n = 22). Other countries of birth included: East Timor (n = 6), Lithuania (n =3), Portugal (n =2), Philippines (n = 2), Slovakia (n = 2), Somalia (n = 2), Romania (n = 2). One pupil was also drawn from other countries such as Latvia, Iran, Syria,

Switzerland, Italy and Indonesia. Each school identified newcomer children in Primary 6 and Primary 7 who could participate in a focus group. While not all children in the focus group could be defined as newcomer pupils within the Department of Education's three year stipulation, all had experience of being a newcomer pupil when they started school in Northern Ireland.

A total of 24 Primary 6 and 23 Primary 7 pupils participated in focus groups which were conducted at their school. The number of children in each focus group ranged from 2 to 6 pupils. In one case, a one-to-one interview was conducted with a newcomer pupil to facilitate participation. Due to the children being newcomer pupils, we anticipated that pupils would have varying abilities to communicate in English and that our research methods should not be heavily dependent on the pupils' linguistic competency. To counteract this, all participating schools were made aware that Barnardo's NI would provide an interpreter to ensure that language was not a barrier to any pupils' participation. One school requested the use of an interpreter for a children's focus group. In addition, we adapted an arts related method 'the jigsaw approach' that has been used with young children to enable them to share their lived experiences in a relevant and meaningful way whilst capturing their voice with authenticity (Stephenson, 2011). The 'jigsaw approach' was used by asking children to record one word on a jigsaw piece on topics such as how they felt when they started
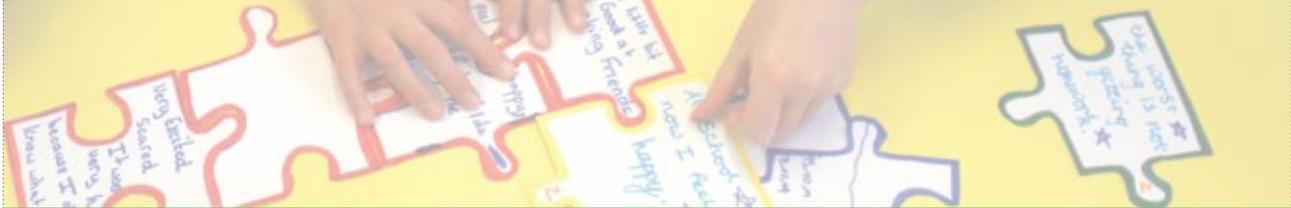
school and their favourite things about school. The researcher then used the children's words as prompts to explore their experiences further. This method was useful as it facilitated those less confident children or those with limited English to be able to participate and communicate their views and perceptions about their school experiences in a fun and relaxed way. At the end of the session, the children enjoyed putting the jigsaw pieces together as shown in the photographs.

Ethical considerations

The design of this study has been reviewed and approved by Barnardo's UK-wide Research Ethics Committee. This project has been overseen by a Research Advisory Group consisting of representatives from the Department of Education, teachers, parents of newcomer pupils and representatives from both NICEM and Barnardo's NI. All interviews and focus groups were digitally recorded with prior consent. Consent for pupils' participation was sought from both parents and children to take part in the focus group. Parental consent forms were available in the range of languages required as advised by each school. As English was not the first language of the children, all schools were provided with the option of an interpreter which was used in one focus group in order to facilitate the children's participation in the study. All interviews and focus groups were transcribed and thematically coded using qualitative data analysis software NVivo to assist with the identification and organisation of themes.
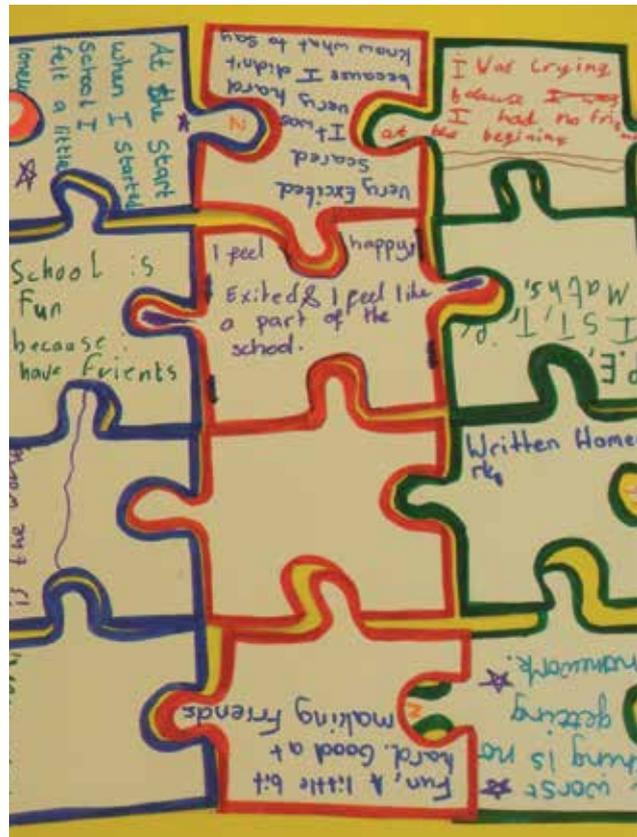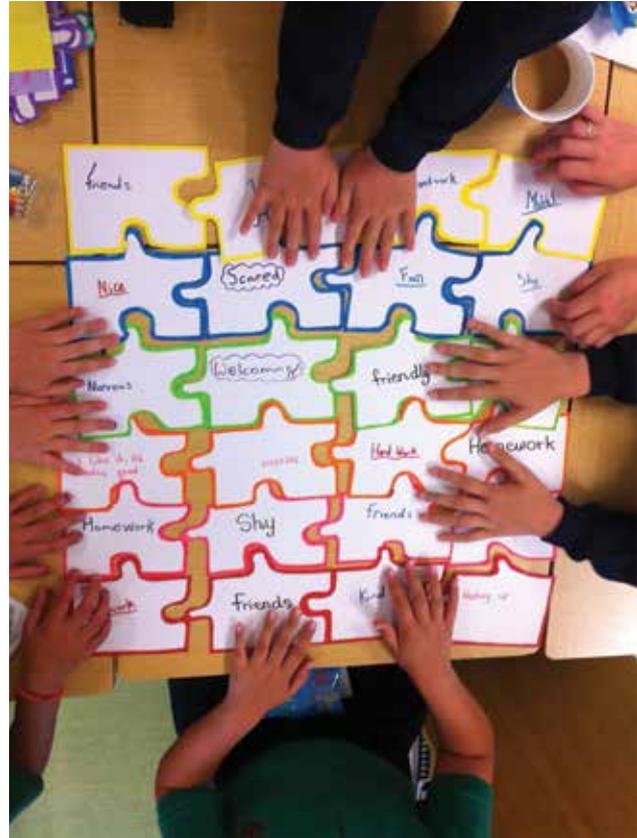
Chapter 3: Results

As outlined in Chapter 1, migration has not been evenly spread across Northern Ireland resulting in some areas having large percentages of newcomer pupils while others have very little. Newcomer families are not a homogenous group as they may have differences in ethnic backgrounds, language and culture. Newcomer families may have different personal circumstances including those who are well settled in NI, migrant workers, asylum seekers and refugees. These diverse and complex factors impact on schools that strive to work with pupils with different levels of need. It is the experiences of how primary schools manage newcomer pupils and the pupils' experiences themselves that are the key focus for this study. The findings of the research are presented in four sections.

- **Section 1** relates to the whole school level including pupils admission, how schools supports newcomer pupils and how schools are supported through funding and the Inclusion and Diversity Service for newcomer pupils.

- **Section 2** explores the perspective of the teaching staff and the pupils at the classroom level.

- **Section 3** considers the relationships schools have with newcomer pupils' parents.

- **Section 4** outlines the good practice identified in the study and reports areas that newcomer pupils said would help them in school.

Section 1: Newcomer pupils in school

Schools are dealing with a diverse range of nationalities, languages and cultures. Some participating schools reported that they had over 20 different nationalities, while some schools had 5 or 6 main nationalities and other schools had two main groups. Observation of any of the participating schools showed a range of multilingual signage and displays to welcome visitors and pupils. Principals explained this was part of how at a school level newcomer pupils were made welcome at the outset. On the whole, school management and teaching staff reported that newcomer pupils were beneficial to the school in terms of diversity, and cultural issues and recognised that the school had a role in promoting integration and inclusion both within the school and to the wider community:

"It's a whole school policy to have inclusion and to respect their different cultures, to really celebrate that. And I think that's probably the best way to integrate them into the community as well as the school"

Principal, BELB

School staff often cited the multicultural days or international days that their schools held as a positive way to integrate others from different communities:

"We have kids from Poland playing tin-whistle, and winning competitions in our local Feish. We have children in our local choirs who have won competitions and local competitions; 35-40 percent of the choir would be newcomer kids where English isn't their first language. Singing and competing with kids who have been born and bred here and out-performing them. I can also say that there's a hunger among these communities to do well and some of our own communities could learn lessons from them in terms of determination, drive, ambition and wanting to achieve – so those are qualities that they bring us that rub off on our own kids."

Principal, SELB

This section looks at the newcomer pupils from a whole school level including how they are initially admitted to school, the pastoral system and support available to schools regarding newcomer pupils.

Preparation for admission

As a starting point, all principals were asked about their experiences of inducting newcomer pupils in their school. Firstly, principals were asked about their admissions process for newcomer pupils in order to gain information at a school level. While they acknowledged that there could be additional paperwork to enrol newcomer pupils from the school's perspective, most principals were largely satisfied with the admission system for newcomer pupils. Typically, newcomer parents directly contacted the school about enrolling their child/children and then had an initial formal meeting with the principal. Principals' used this meeting to capture background on the child including the level of English understanding and any other educational or medical needs which should be shared with the appropriate staff members. This meeting was also used to provide information about the school to parents, and to confirm a starting date for the child. Parents also tended to have a tour of the school. In most cases, the child received their own Welcome Book which typically had staff pictures and provided a pictorial overview of the school prior to their first day.

Although enrolment of newcomer pupils was straightforward in most cases, principals did identify some problems that could arise. For those schools at full capacity, approval from DE was required before any pupil could enrol. This problem can be further exacerbated as a child needs to be resident in NI before the application process can begin. This may result in a longer time out of school for newcomer pupils. A small number of principals also drew attention to the negative perception of the indigenous population regarding newcomer pupils being accepted into schools before local children. This served to underline the schools' role of promoting integration and good relations in the wider community.

Pastoral care

Closely connected to an inclusive ethos of a school is the pastoral care system. A school's pastoral care arrangements relates to the health and welfare, behaviour and attendance as well as the academic performance of the child and has been defined by DE as being able to "protect the pupils from harm, safeguard their health and welfare and support their learning and development".[11] Schools in the study tended to have a holistic view of pastoral care which incorporated newcomer pupils and their families. A number of common issues were identified by principals and school staff which newcomer families as a whole often needed support for. Support offered to newcomer families from schools in this study included:

- Helping parents complete official paperwork;
- Holding evening classes to support parents with English language learning;
- Running parenting classes for parents;
- Extended school hours through breakfast and afterschool clubs to facilitate shift work;
- Providing information about purchasing uniforms at a lower cost.

A mixed response was gathered from school staff when they were asked if they felt that newcomer pupils had any particular pastoral care issues. Most did not think that newcomer pupils experienced any specific problems which required pastoral care support in school. However, staff members identified some common areas of concern:

■ School attendance

The issue of poor attendance by some newcomer pupils was highlighted by a number of school management and teaching staff. The two main areas of concern were: (i) attendance at Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and; (ii) extended periods of absence during term time. Firstly, there was a sense from school staff that parents of newcomer pupils were unaccustomed to the early school starting age of four years old in NI. As a consequence, a number of teachers questioned the value some newcomer parents place on education for younger children as absenteeism was identified as a problem particularly for pupils in Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.

"In Poland and Lithuania, the children start school when they are seven. That sometimes causes a bit of a conflict because the parents don't see the importance, or don't appreciate the importance of education for those younger children the way we do here. Attendance we would find can be quite low...."

Principal, SEELB

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11   Department of Education Pastoral Care and Child Protection Guide for School Governors http://www.deni.gov.uk/print/index/schools-and-infrastructure-2/schools-management/79-school_governors_pg/schools_79_governor-roles-and-responsibilities_pg/schools_79_chapter-13-pastoral-care_pg.htm#pastoral-care-system_alink

School staff also recognised that newcomer pupil attendance could suffer due to extended periods off during term time spent travelling or visiting relatives in other countries. Teachers described this as impacting on the individual child's learning as well as adding disruption to the class.

"I can understand why people go off maybe a week or ten days early at the end that's, you know, we have children who come in after the term has started. For example, I had somebody who came three weeks in to the term and I mean it shone out like a beacon that he had missed the whole beginning".

P2 teacher, SEELB

"The other pastoral issue regards attendance at school and that's affected in the first part by cheap flights home in the first part of the year. And you can imagine why that happens, you know, it's very expensive to go home at Christmas. You may go home two weeks before Christmas but you may not come back until the middle or the end of January, ok. So that affects their learning, obviously."

Principal, NEELB

It was also highlighted by several school staff that some newcomer pupils missed school for extended periods due to what they thought of as minor illnesses or to attend to family issues such as looking after younger children or helping their parents with translating English.

■ Bullying

A small number of principals recalled some instances of bullying related to skin colour or country of birth, although it was stressed that this was not a common occurrence. Staff highlighted that the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) aspect of the curriculum provided a useful space to discuss issues related to skin colour and ethnicity. Interestingly, three principals identified that bullying of newcomer pupils was often carried out by other newcomer pupils. Teachers found bullying amongst newcomer pupils with a mutual language or between two newcomer groups particularly problematic to identify as they were unable to understand name calling and nasty comments in different languages. As a result, staff reported parents of newcomer pupils have informed the school about bullying incidents once a child reported it at home.

"We did have one instance fairly recently where they were actually name calling the Indian children, using very derogatory racial language in Polish. It was only when one of the children went home, the Polish children went home and said to their parents, 'what do these words mean?' that we realised what was going on."

Principal, SEELB

As focus groups were conducted with children in the same year group, children were not explicitly asked about their own experiences of bullying. However, three children did report experiences of being bullied with bullying being a factor in one child moving school.

■ Child protection issues

A small number of school staff also identified cultural differences related to child protection issues. These centred on children being left at home unsupervised while parents took up employment and about the use of physical discipline:

"There would be one or two issues in terms of discipline. I suppose how particular families would discipline their children and maybe that wouldn't be tolerated in UK society."

Principal, SELB

"From time to time we would have found older siblings were missing school to mind younger siblings while parents went to work. We would have found that some children, who we would deem to be too young, to be having a key to the house to let themselves in"

Principal, NEELB

Support for schools

Schools identified two main sources of support at a whole school level regarding newcomer pupils: (i) funding and; (ii) Inclusion and Diversity Service (IDS) as discussed in turn below.

Funding

Closely related to newcomer pupils starting school is the issue of funding. As discussed in Chapter 1, newcomer pupils currently attract additional funding of £1012.66 initially payable for the child's first three years in education. Newcomer pupils' progression is tracked using the Common European Reference Framework (CERF) and further funds released until a child reaches the 'B1: Threshold' level. Overall, principals were satisfied with the process of receiving newcomer pupil funding. The amount allocated per pupil by the Department of Education was considered appropriate by all Principals to meet the needs of their school:

"I cannot complain one single bit about that. It allows us to have a high staff ratio, basically it pays for a huge number of our general assistants who we then allocate time to work with our newcomer children. It is allowing me to extend our teaching staff to cater for the needs of newcomer children to make additional appointments. So all of that is very positive."

Principal, NEELB

Principals reported that the majority of money allocated to newcomer pupils was spent on additional teaching staff and classroom assistants. Additional teaching staff was seen to benefit all children in the school by facilitating smaller classroom sizes, while classroom assistants ensure a high staff ratio in the classroom. Other uses of the funding included the purchase of equipment and resources for newcomer pupils with one school running after-school activities. Principals were also asked their view on 'ring-fencing' newcomer pupil money within their school's budget. The general consensus was that schools should be accountable for how they used newcomer pupil funding although many participants were unsure if ring-fencing newcomer funds was the most appropriate way to ensure this:

"I enjoy the flexibility that I have at the minute and the freedom to spend the money as I see fit rather than ring-fencing the money. I would like the Department to conduct, for example, audits if they want or whatever way they want to do it, on how I am using the money."

Principal, NEELB

"...everything is kept meticulously up to date, the CEFR forms. And the auditor comes in every year, checks that those are all up to speed and the funding is granted on that, you know. And that's fair enough. I don't have an issue with that because that's accountability."

Principal, SEELB

"Some of the money then would end up benefitting all of our children, and there's other money we would end up spending on after-schools, the biggest school investment; it would be additional and that really benefits Newcomer pupils, because there's interaction and social interaction with their peers."

Vice Principal, SELB

While acknowledging accountability as important, principals have foreseen a number of issues with ring-fencing including the lack of flexibility, and an increase in bureaucracy. There was also concern about the disproportionate impact ring-fencing may have on schools that have smaller numbers of newcomer pupils.

"....it could have a huge impact on a small school because that say £4,000 or £5,000 in a small budget could end up saving a teacher's job. Which has an impact on newcomer children. Because you are not able to amalgamate classes and make large class sizes. And the larger the classes are, the more difficult it is to address the newcomer issues."

Principal, NEELB

While principals were generally satisfied with the current level of funding, they suggested a number of improvements could be made with additional funding including:

- Increase in after-school activities for newcomer pupils to help with homework and English language acquisition;
- English language support for newcomer pupils' parents by providing English classes in school, and assistance accessing health and social care and parenting / family support;
- Counselling for pupils with traumatic backgrounds, with particular focus on asylum seeker and refugee children;
- Training for teachers to provide them with strategies to teach children who have English as an Additional Language.

One principal also suggested that there should be a staggered withdrawal of newcomer funding to allow schools to make transitional arrangements. To an extent, schools currently accessed funding from other sources to supplement their additional work with newcomer pupils. This money was used in a range of ways such as running parenting programmes, pupil programmes, holding multicultural events and providing English classes for pupils after school.

Inclusion and Diversity Service

As outlined in Chapter 1, the Inclusion and Diversity Service (IDS) was set up in 2007 to support schools in relation to newcomer pupils. Findings indicated a mixed response from school staff regarding the IDS. Teachers were widely aware of the Primary Toolkit for Diversity and some reported using and adapting the materials provided. Participants were particularly positive about the support IDS can provide when schools first experience an influx of school newcomer pupils. This included guidance on creating the Welcome Book for newcomer pupils' parents, multilingual signage and labels and translation and interpreting services for parents.

"The welcome book, they helped us put it together. I think they are quite good at doing the kind of settling period, they have signs around the school."

P1 teacher, BELB

"Translated letters, obviously. When notes are going home now, as I say, we are fortunate in the aspect that we don't have ... I don't think we have any parents really who would not understand. But now, if you take it to the parent teacher interview scenario, we would have one or two parents who we would still feel the need to bring in a translator to help with that. And that works very successfully".

Principal, SEELB

"When they arrive however we have a newcomer welcome book which has been prepared with staff pictures and pictures of the environment. We have worked very closely over the last number of years with our Inclusion and Diversity service to make this happen."

Principal, NEELB

This academic year (2013/14) has seen the IDS support schools in transferring the CEFR paperwork from a paper based to a computerised system. Participants reported that this was useful and would reduce the time spent completing paperwork. Evidence suggested principals have a greater awareness about the support offered by the IDS compared to teachers. Many teachers were unaware of any resources or training provided by the IDS. Those teachers that had attended training reported that the purpose was to support staff in the completion of administrative tasks such as the CERF rather than training related to teaching newcomer pupils or cultural diversity.

Findings suggest there is scope for the IDS to extend the type of training offered to schools. In particularly, teachers felt that the IDS should be able to offer more extensive training courses for staff with examples of a model lesson for classes with newcomer pupils and strategies to deal with the broad range of abilities and languages present in the classroom. Some teachers also suggested that the IDS should engage with newcomer pupils themselves to provide support.

"They are limited in what they can do, because it has to be capacity building, which means not teaching. What our teachers would love is someone coming in to model the ideal lesson. But I think we've come to realise now that it's not going to happen, you just need to give up with that and do it."

P1 teacher, BELB

"I would like someone who could come and train my newcomer teacher in strategies for dealing with children who are selective mute because they have no language at this point. You know, what would be the best way to teach those children to build their confidence?"

Principal, NEELB

"We have had the services of the Inclusion and Diversity Service, IDS. They are there, but their value as a service is extremely limited. There is a consultation type process. Whilst they are there and there's individuals that work with them, they don't work with children. They tell us what to do and give us strategies, like the European Framework, from which to baseline the children. And they help you with the record keeping. But beyond that what they offer is very, very limited."

Principal, SEELB

"I would welcome training. I am an upper Key Stage 2 teacher and for a lot of these children I am trying to impart Key Stage 1 strategies, at a level that is age appropriate."

P7 teacher, BELB

An important remit of the IDS is to provide interpreting and translation services for schools. As mentioned above, schools found the IDS useful as a way to interpret for parent-teacher meetings:

"Excellent. Any parent interviews we have had, they come across as very professional and it is very much, please speak to the parent, don't speak to me. So in other words don't use me as the go between. It is a professional service. They are always on time and I believe they interpret effectively what we are trying to communicate."

Principal, SEELB

It should be noted that schools have also developed more regular ways of communicating with newcomer pupil parents since the inception of the IDS in 2007. This includes translated text messages and weekly newsletters, online translation tools on schools' website and the ability to use bilingual members of staff to communicate with parents. As a consequence, a number of schools reported that they tended not to need the translation and interpreting services to the same extent as they once did.

"There is a translation service available, but these are things we don't really have to avail of because obviously we have the staff members there to do it, but I do know that there is support there to do it."

Vice- Principal, SELB

"...but less and less we'd be asked for translators. It's interesting now, it's probably reflective of the fact that the parents' English themselves must have improved."

Principal, SELB

Overall, participants reported that the IDS supplied a good service for schools in the early stages of providing for newcomer pupils. However, as schools have developed and established their newcomer provision, the IDS has been limited in assisting more complex needs. In many ways, participants felt that while they still had needs around

their newcomer pupil provision they had outgrown the support the IDS can currently offer.

Section 2: Newcomer pupils in the classroom

This section outlines how children felt when joining primary school as a newcomer and explores the issues around school readiness and the silent period. It also explores the challenges and benefits newcomer pupils bring to the classroom.

Early days in the classroom

A newcomer pupil's arrival to a NI primary school was often a transitional period in the child's life in which they may be adjusting to a new country, home and school. Newcomer pupils who arrived during the school year often joined a class with little prior notice and teachers only had information about the child's educational background from what parents were able to communicate to the principal. When the children were asked what they felt when they started primary school, the most common response was fear. Nearly two thirds of children reported that they felt sad, shy, worried and nervous and often cried when they began school. Primarily, concerns of newcomer pupils starting school centred on not knowing any other children and not being able to make friends or interact with others because of the language difference.

"I feel like when I am coming in a new country, you don't know anybody from here; the first time when are you coming here, you can't speak with anybody, like you don't have partners, you don't have friends."

Iranian male, 10 years old

"I was scared because, it's not that I cannot answer everyone, but I was only like three days in Northern Ireland and I started to go to school."

Polish female, 11 years old

Just over twenty percent of newcomer pupils had mixed feelings about starting school. Under ten percent of pupils reported that they were excited and happy to start school in Northern Ireland as they saw it as an opportunity to make new friends and have fun.

"I was also excited as well. I was like walking down with my dad I was so excited about meeting new people."

Lithuanian male, 10 years old

"I felt happy to make friends. Like, it's always nice to have one beside you, but at first when you were about to make your friends, it was, it was hard to kind of walk up to somebody you didn't know and just kind of talk with him"

Polish female, 11 years old

Pupils were also asked about how they felt about school now. From those children that reported feeling negative towards school, all but two reported that their attitude to school had changed to a more positive outlook.

"The first time when I came here I was like kind of scared, but now I'm like I was born here. I feel like I was born here".

Romanian male, 10 years old

A number of factors influenced newcomers' enjoyment of school. Pupils enjoyed a range of subjects including art, P.E, history and science. Mathematics was reported as a favourite subject by over one third of pupils while nearly thirty percent reporting English as their favourite subject. Nearly forty percent of pupils reported on the relationships they had with friends and teachers as one of their favourite things about school. A number of children commented on how welcoming and friendly other pupils were when they first started school:

"I wasn't bored because everybody was trying to make friends with people. I didn't know what they were saying".

Polish female, 11 years old

"We go out at break time or lunch time they see that you that there's no one to play with so they usually come over to you and ask you if do you want to play".

Slovakian female, 10 years old

Most class teachers reported that some form of 'buddy system' operated in their classroom were one pupil was asked to show the newcomer pupil around the school and make sure that they were not alone in the playground. Teachers also used other ways to introduce newcomer pupils to the class in the first weeks including preparing the class for a new arrival and using sharing activities such as 'circle time' and the 'hot seat'.

"And like a buddy system where you would maybe nominate a responsible child in the class to sort of look after them for the first week or so and show them the routine, you know".

P4 teacher, SEELB

Social activities after school also provided newcomer pupils with the opportunity to integrate with others. Newcomer pupils participated in a range of activities with their peers both inside and outside of the school environment. Almost half of the children were involved in a team sport of some kind while one third participated in an after school activity such as art, cookery or ICT. Fewer numbers of children were took part in music or drama clubs or youth clubs.

Teachers reported that they tended to mix newcomer pupils with other students as this aided integration and also helped language development. While teachers acknowledged that it was sometimes helpful to have children with common languages together in terms of being able to communicate, on the whole teachers reported that their seating arrangements were strategically arranged to integrate newcomers with other pupils. Teachers felt this was important in two main ways. Firstly, it aided integration within the classroom as children were working together with different children. Secondly, teachers found that integration reduced the possibility of a sub-language developing in class while also strengthening the English language acquisition of the newcomer pupil.

"I wouldn't tend to put two newcomers together, although it's difficult for them, what you would find then is that they use their language and they don't integrate with the other children, so we do try as much as possible to keep them, you know, a responsible and sensible and caring child from here, therefore they're more likely to use English"

P4 teacher, BELB

"I think if there's a bigger number of them, there's more of a tendency for them to talk to each other in their own language."

P1 teacher, BELB

"I think certainly sitting them with all different children. And then what I like to do is every so often within my class -within any class that I had- is move their seats around. So they move around once a term, once half-term, they are sitting with all different people. So just insuring that they are mixing with the other children in the class. And then they can maybe have classroom buddies, so people who can maybe look after them or if they are going to bathroom and they are not sure, you'd send the classroom buddy with them"

P7 teacher, BELB

While the majority of teachers stressed the benefits of being bilingual and the importance of newcomer pupils retaining their first language in terms of their cultural identity, there was mixed views about whether children should be allowed to communicate in their first language in class. The main concern about children only working and socialising with others who shared a mutual language was that their English language acquisition would be harmed.

School readiness

As discussed in Chapter 1, Northern Ireland has the lowest compulsory school starting age in Europe at age 4 years old. Some schools identified a low uptake for some newcomer pupils in attending nursery or pre-school education. In addition to the early school starting age, there could be a number of reasons for low pre-school uptake including the children were not living in NI at the time, parents were unaware of provision, did not complete the paperwork required by the deadline or parents believed there was a cost attached.

"...obviously in the North here we have one of the earliest starting times. They start later which means that they maybe don't see the value in having that pre-school year before they go, for a child who's effectively only 3 years of age."

Principal, NEELB

"for example the parents didn't realise, and don't always, realise, their deadline for application and a lot of our local nursery and the pre-school groups we have on site here, these are oversubscribed every year. If you don't get your application form in on time, you miss out completely."

Principal, NEELB

Principals from schools where ethnic minority groups were better established reported that patterns have changed in that large numbers of newcomer children are attending nursery and pre-school and enter P1 with at least some language and knowledge of school routine. However, of the pupils participating in the study only twenty percent had any pre-school or nursery experience with the majority who lived here at the appropriate age going straight into P1.

Teachers identified this lack of pre-school education as a reason why newcomer pupils often had low levels of school readiness in addition to a language barrier. Low school readiness manifested itself as children from other countries may not have any previous experience of being away from their parents, school routines or understand appropriate behaviour in the classroom.

"In P1 in general, their greatest needs would probably be understanding the routine and being able to follow instructions. They find that difficult because they don't understand what I'm saying. Some of the children are quite bright and are able to look at what other children are doing, if they do speak English, and then they just follow."

P1 teacher, BELB

"I feel like I'm running a crèche alongside the P1. That's where they are. They have no preschool experience at all. I even put their jumpers or coats on, shoes, everything."

P1 teacher, BELB

A number of teachers also highlighted that they have older pupils in Key Stage 2 who have had no previous school experience. This often related to children of asylum seekers and refugees. In addition, older pupils could have experienced schools in other cultures which differ from NI in terms of discipline, teaching styles and attitudes towards teaching staff in which they need to adjust to. This lack of school readiness of older pupils coupled with a language barrier added a further challenge to teachers' classroom management.

Silent period

Children expressed a range of emotions when asked about how they felt during the silent period. On the whole, pupils described feeling confused and scared at this time. Some also felt embarrassed that they could not understand English and were acutely aware of being different within the classroom:

"It feels like you're quite confused, and you're in a place that you don't actually know and don't understand. You feel lost."

Polish female, 11 years old

"I felt like I was the odd one in the class."

Lithuanian male, 11 years old

"I was a wee bit frightened. I did know English because my mum learnt me some but I was scared in case I said the wrong thing and then everyone would start laughing at me."

Polish female, 10 years old

"I was pretending 'cause it was kind of embarrassing because I didn't really know. So I said 'yes' to everything they said."

Italian female, 11 years old

Teachers reported that initially they expected children with little or no English to have a silent period in which a newcomer pupil is acquiring English language through absorbing interactions in the classroom and learning on their own. During this time, teachers build up vocabulary by focussing on survival language and high frequency words. This was reinforced in a number of ways including gesturing by the teacher, inclusive games with the peer group, labels and visual signs around the classroom and picture cards:
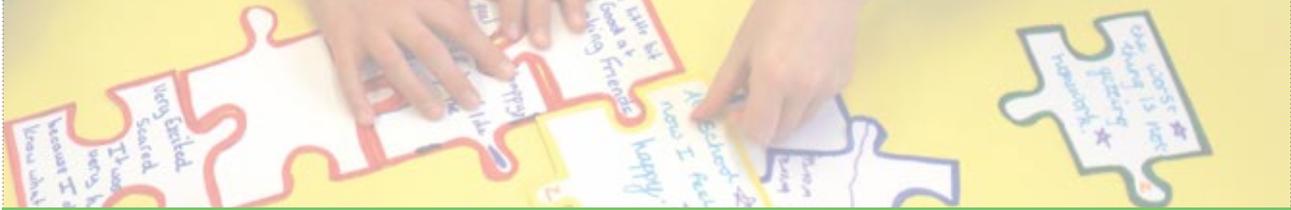
"I think their basic needs: toilets and feeling sick. If you think about their own language, the very first words they learn are toilet, line up, put [on] your coat. So it's basic classroom routine, just the survival language we would call it really. Water, milk, snack, language."

P1 teacher, BELB

"...they are maybe silent for the first wee while, maybe just to try and comprehend what are all these words, if they haven't heard English before. And then they will over time speak small, they might say "toilet please" and then it might progress to "can I go to the toilet?", and then you can see the big smile on their face. They know what they want to say but you just need to give them that time to do it."

P4 teacher, BELB

"And then when they come in in September then, everything is very much through pictures. Again everything that I would have, if I say, 'Line up or sit down', as well as me speaking it, there is a picture to show everybody lining up or sitting down, so that if they don't understand what I am saying there is a picture there. Or on their desk if they need any help or they need to go to the toilet, little pictures to show, 'I need to go to the toilet', they can show so that they don't feel, I don't know how to say anything. So hopefully they can communicate through the pictures that we would have."

P1 teacher, SELB

As is clear from the extracts above, the silent period can impede children's feelings of belonging and make communication between pupils and teachers difficult at the beginning of their relationship. The following section outlines the main challenges teachers reported in relation to newcomer pupils.

Challenges in the classroom

One of the key areas teachers were asked about in the interviews and focus groups was how they managed a classroom with a number of children who were learning English as a second language. The following section looks at the challenges teachers face in three broad categories of: (i) language barrier, (ii) differentiation; and (iii) special education needs.

Language barrier

Unsurprisingly, both teachers and children identified the language barrier as a key issue for newcomer pupils in the classroom. This central theme ran through all participants' interviews and focus groups.

Silent period: As discussed in the previous section, teachers anticipated a 'silent period' for newcomer pupils as a normal part of language acquisition. While teachers reported extensive use of visual aids to communicate with newcomer pupils, this was not always successful resulting in some participants using bilingual staff members or children with the same native language to communicate with the child through interpretation.

"I have three children who just came to the school and who also came to the country for the first time this year so they had no English at all. But with the other children in the class being able to translate and help them and guide them, that was definitely a big help and they didn't feel as isolated, you know especially if they heard their home language and were able to say that this is what I mean"

P4 teacher, SELB

Many teachers reported that this often meant a change of teaching style as this required more preparation and less opportunity to be spontaneous. Some participants perceived differences in age groups during this initial settling in period. Overall, the consensus from teachers was that the silent period was easier to manage with younger children as the Foundation Stage curriculum was more interactive and visual and all pupils were starting together and learning letters and numbers for the first time.

"The children all come in to me are new, not newcomer as you mean it, but they are new. They're new to school. Their parents are new to school and you start from scratch. So therefore I have a lot of things in place for those children which now I use for my EAL."

P1 teacher, BELB

"I think it is probably a wee bit easier to manage in Primary One because everything is activity based and you know there will always be an activity where either myself or the classroom assistant will be working at, separate activities, and if not, the other activities might be a reinforcement or a game or something that the children would find easier than actually having to complete a task or have to finish a piece of work by the end of it. So it is easier to manage."

P1 teacher, NEELB

English language comprehension:
While many newcomer pupils were able to develop conversational English and recognise basic vocabulary quite quickly after an initial silent period, teachers raised concerns about the depth of newcomer pupils' English language comprehension. While this was evident across all subjects within the curriculum, it was most apparent in terms of literacy particularly for older pupils. Newcomer pupils could struggle with spelling, using punctuation and grammar appropriately, sentence construction and the meaning of words.

"Well his understanding...he can speak the language, but his understanding of it wouldn't be the same and it was frightening to discover that I was assuming he understood what we were talking about, but it was obvious that he didn't. Something simple like, "Bring me over the box". He can say box and he can say all these words, but he didn't know maybe what it was. And that's just off the top of my head example, so it meant that he could speak it and he had heard it and he knew how to say it properly, but he wouldn't understand."

P4 teacher, NEELB

"Now they still have issues with grammar, you know, even the best, the most well communicating children would still have major issues with the English language. The technical sides of it, you know, the lack of how order skills in English, the grammar."

Principal, SEELB

"... a lot of them come to you and recognise all the words, but when you delve deeper it's the understanding and the comprehension of everything."

P7 teacher, NEELB

"Four of the children are really struggling. They have been in school since P1 but obviously as the work has increased, they can converse to a certain extent, but when it comes down to actual written work and a lot of abilities with tenses and stuff, some of the language development of the reading books and even the likes of the numeracy, if it is straightforward pages that is fine, but the problem solving causes an awful lot of difficulties in the application because they have to try and translate what the question is asking and then apply the maths skills to it."

P4 teacher, SELB

"We have children that their English is superb and they are working very well. However whenever you get into the detail, their comprehension always lags behind those of the English speaking children. At the lower end of the school we have also noticed children that are born here whose English is poor because they speak their native language in the house."

Principal, SEELB

Teachers identified the lack of English comprehension beyond a superficial level as having a number of consequences for newcomer pupils' academic development and achievement as discussed opposite:

Accessing the NI Curriculum: Teachers were concerned that this impacted on how much of the curriculum newcomer pupils could access. The example of numeracy was often given by teachers of how poor English comprehension prevented some newcomer pupils from being able to understand mathematical problems despite having the ability to work at a high level. Staff indicated that this is more problematic as pupils enter Key Stage 2 as more literacy is required to understand questions and instructions.

Assessment: Understanding the language used in assessments can be difficult for newcomer pupils in terms of comprehending the meaning of the questions and what they should do. This is a challenge for teachers in assessing a pupil's ability and particularly with regard to the transfer tests.

Participation: Teachers also commented that the lack of understanding of English sometimes meant that newcomer pupils were unable to express their ideas clearly and this was evident again for older pupils:

"I actually think Key Stage 2 needs more support than Key Stage 1 and the need's more highlighted. The language support as the education becomes more challenging. With the children I think it becomes more and more apparent especially from Primary 4 up they need additional support".

Teacher, SELB

"When you delve deeper and you start asking them, as you do further up the school, to discuss thoughts and books or to discuss stories or make predictions about what you think would happen, they just are not able to first of all understand totally what you are asking them, and then secondly they are not able to convey or to share"

P7 teacher, NEELB

Frustration: Evidence suggests that older children joining a primary school in Northern Ireland for the first time may become more frustrated with the language barrier particularly when they have the ability to complete the level of tasks set for the class. Teachers highlighted that the lack of age appropriate materials for older newcomer pupils in Key Stage 2 often adds to pupils' frustration.

"A lot of the children are frustrated. A lot of them have come from the top of their class in their own country to very much at the bottom. Especially the older ones, they realise that they have to go through a process of building, which is very basic for a lot of them, but at the same time it has to be done to help build up their vocabulary."

Vice-Principal, SELB

"It's difficult whenever you go up the school when they arrive. I think when they arrive and they've no English at all it's very frustrating for them you know. They could be well able to work and do it back in their own country but obviously because they're doing a different language it's difficult and [they] are very frustrated by it and we get frustrated too obviously."

P1 teacher, SELB

"The problem as you go up the school is that you have children coming in and even simple words where they have no English whatsoever and you're trying to give them reinforced colours or numbers, you know they're basically doing P1 worksheets. They know themselves that this is babyish work compared to what I should be doing, and you try as much as possible to incorporate them into your lessons but sometimes it's just not possible."

P6 teacher, SELB

This was corroborated by children themselves as they reported that terminology used in class was unfamiliar to them and they needed more time to think as they were translating words into a different language. Some children also felt frustrated at misunderstandings caused by the language barrier:

"I felt a little angry because when you had to do a little piece of work, I didn't understand and then because I didn't do it, I got in trouble but it wasn't really my fault 'cause I didn't understand anything."

Polish female, 11 years old

"Often like, sometimes a teacher said I like cannot, like, hear good because I like didn't understand and I didn't come to her when she was calling me and she says to my mum that she thinks I cannot like hear so much."

Polish female, 11 years old

Frustration at being unable to communicate may manifest itself in a number of ways. School staff reported that this could include bad behaviour in class, anger and disruption in the playground:

"and even in the playground when they're settling in to school they do go through different stages and they get to a frustration stage and you have to be aware of that where they might lash out or get angry, and it's not the child's fault. It's because they can't communicate with you what their needs are so you do have to make allowances for that child in the classroom."

P2 teacher, SEELB

Breadth of differentiation: While the language barrier was problematic at some time for most newcomer pupils, it was clear from teachers' accounts that newcomers were not a homogenous group to teach. Teachers described differentiation as a normal part of their jobs but indicated that the breadth of differentiation required for some classes was a challenge. Newcomer pupils within the classroom could have various home languages, different levels of understanding of English and school readiness and a range of academic ability. This is also within the context of a classroom with up to 30 other pupils with their own individual range of abilities and needs. Key Stage 2 teachers found this breadth of differentiation particularly problematic as older newcomer pupils often had low levels of school readiness and English compared to their classmates and teachers did not have the age appropriate resources required to support these children:

"Now this is a Primary 7 classroom but my Primary 7 class is not working to a Primary 7 level in entirety. Now I know within normal Primary 7 class you would have children who would range from Level 3 to Level 5. This is basically trying to integrate a nursery classroom into my classroom. And to get these children the best, not for the full year, but they need concrete apparatus that I don't have, they need to get all their gross motor movement before they can move to the fine motor movement of a pencil. So as I said before you would have one group who is maybe working

on calculating mean, mode and range of numbers and producing scatter graphs and you would have the other group doing dance movements to get the letter a or c, with ribbons and stuff and writing on each others backs and standing as statues."

P7 teacher, BELB

"If a child comes in, in the middle of the year, and they haven't a clue, maybe they've never been to school before because they start later in some of those countries. So they are really coming to P4 and they might really only be at the level of a Primary One. And if you've all that to catch up on, the basics, the basics."

P4 teacher, NEELB

"Well I do find it tricky with newcomers, it's not differentiation for ability it is you know it's completely, it's completely different in that it has to be more visual. It's a challenging thing for a class teacher especially if you've 30 in your class. And finding the right level. You need something extremely visual but something extremely visual tends to look like Key Stage 1."

Teacher, BELB

Management of differentiation:
Teachers recognised that this was at times a stretch to accommodate the needs of every child. They also reported the amount of differentiation required resulted in additional time to adapt teaching plans, resources and homework. Furthermore, this issue revealed the reliance teachers have on classroom assistants. A common strategy used to manage differentiation in the classroom was for classroom assistants to withdraw or work with small groups of newcomer pupils within the class. This provided the opportunity for newcomer pupils to receive additional language support to build up their English while other pupils received teaching by the teacher.

"In P5, P6 and P7 the classroom assistant would withdraw and back up the teacher's topics and things in class and she also takes children who would be very new newcomers so she gets them their basic language and then the teacher would take them when they have a little bit more language and they are able to put things together and that sort of thing. It works very well for us, it really has worked quite well this year."

Vice-Principal, BELB

"We have a number of classroom assistants with different languages so we use those at the point of contact with those communities and those parents. So we are very fortunate to have Portuguese speakers, we are very fortunate to have Lithuanian speakers, Polish speakers on our staff, so we don't need to depend so much on the translation service, we have that in-house and it's fantastic."

Principal, SELB

"Well I would currently put them together when I'm teaching them, you know, or my classroom assistant would take them out and do specific work with them because there's no way they're of the same ability as the children that I have, and I have quite a range of ability in my class, so you have to put them together for academic stuff, but if it's PE, if it's art, if it's music, if it's assembly, you're mixed in with everyone else."

P4 teacher, BELB

As shown in the extracts above, a number of schools in the study employed multi-lingual classroom assistants who were reported to be a valuable support for newcomer pupils in aiding their understanding through translation into their first language if required.

Special Educational Needs

Identification of SEN: Closely related to differentiation was the issue of identifying newcomer pupils with special educational needs (SEN). Primarily, teachers reported difficulty in being able to discern between the language barrier and a potential learning problem for newcomer pupils. One indicator teachers used to identify special educational needs was the speed of progress a child makes in language acquisition. For example, a child slow to pick up English language may have underlying factors such as a learning difficulty. Some teachers in schools with large numbers of newcomer pupils reported that it is easier to identify a special educational need as they can compare relative progression with children from a similar background.

Assessment of SEN: While acknowledging that time is needed for newcomer pupils to become acquainted with English language, it is problematic when a child does not have enough English language to be assessed for a special educational need. This uncertainty about the root of the problem may result in a newcomer pupil waiting long periods before they receive SEN support. Teachers also reported that the pace of intervention from other experts such as speech and language therapist and educational psychologist can be slow which further delays newcomer pupils accessing the help they need.

Communicating SEN to parents: Teaching staff found that it could be challenging to work with parents of newcomers who potentially present with a special educational need. There were two main reasons for this. Firstly, some parents had poor English language themselves and could not understand the process of SEN assessment. This resulted in missed appointments and meetings as parents could not understand the information that was provided to them. Secondly, some parents from different cultures refused to acknowledge that their child could have a learning difficulty. As a consequence some parents did not want their child to receive extra support or be seen as being different from other children:

"And we find it very difficult to convince the parents they have a learning difficulty. There's a P7 child and all along we've been trying to tell parents the difficulties that this child's having. "No, no, no don't want support. No, no, no. She mustn't come out of her class. She must stay in the class, she learns in the class". "No, but she would actually be better out doing English", (teacher's name) does English support and they "no". And do you know when they realised it? It was when they came to transfer this year. And they came through those unregulated tests, as they are, sort of the grammar schools have, and they put her through the test and she scored so low. And they came in and it was so sad. But I said "I've told you, I've told you from P3 she was struggling. And we've helped her in so many ways but you wouldn't allow her out, you wouldn't allow her to take actual classes". So it can be difficult."

Principal, SEELB

"The special needs as well some cultures are not as accepting of people. There are also parents whose children we identified as in need of extra support, a lot of parents won't sign that off. They don't want to feel like their child is being labelled as having a certain need because it's frowned upon in their culture."

P6 teacher, SELB

As drawn from the evidence, teachers may find newcomer pupils challenging in the classroom through the language barrier, the breadth of differentiation within their class and regarding identifying special educational needs. The following section will explore the relationship between newcomer parents and the school.

Section 3: Newcomer parents and the school

Communication with Parents

As schools are often the first port of call for newcomer families, many schools have gained an in-depth understanding of how to support newcomer families needs when they first arrive. School staff reported supporting parents' complete official paperwork, explaining to parents how to access NI health and social care systems and directing parents to cheaper uniforms. In terms of communicating to parents regularly, evidence indicated that schools use a variety of ways to ensure they are able to communicate with newcomer pupils' parents effectively. The most common ways schools communicate with parents of newcomer pupils are through interpreters supplied by the Inclusion and Diversity Service and translated letters sent home. Other methods that school staff used to communicate with parents include:

- Using bilingual staff to translate;
- Communicating through a person nominated by the parent (such as friend, child or other family member);
- Use of technology to translate including texting, email and school website;
- Translated school reports;
- Translated weekly school newsletter;
- Children used as translators for parents.

While in most instances schools were able to successfully communicate with newcomer pupils parents in some way, it was also apparent that schools found it particularly problematic to deal with parents with a complete lack of English and low levels of literacy in their own language. As discussed above, this can be difficult if a child requires support for a special educational need or if there is an emergency with no time to contact an interpreter. To try and counter this and build good relationships with parents of newcomer pupils, nearly half of the participating schools reported that they held English classes for newcomer parents to support them in improving their English language ability. A smaller number of schools also ran parenting courses which newcomer parents attended.

Newcomer pupils at home

Most of the pupils considered that their English language was better than that of their parents. Half of the children assessed that at least one of their parents could speak English well. The majority of the remaining participants reported that their parents had some grasp of English while a smaller number reported that their parents did not speak any English. This had implications on the language spoken at home and how much support children could have from parents on homework. Many of the children were bilingual and some pupils felt that their parents wanted their children to maintain their first language. This was emphasised to children in a number of ways at home by all conversation being conducted in the home language in addition to watching television programmes and reading books in their home language. In some cases, pupils reported that they attended a language school on a Saturday to be able to read and write in their first language.

"....I know what they mean but I, you know, the words just don't come out. So if I don't know the words in my country then I just say it in English but then they don't understand sometime."

Slovakian female, 10 years old

"My dad says, he doesn't like when I speak English at home 'cause I'm starting to forget few words in my language so if we're talking, I usually say like, if I don't know how to say "sand", I usually say it in my language. Sometimes if I don't know how to say it in my language, I say it in English"

Portuguese female, 10 years old

School staff recognised that a balance existed between newcomer pupils maintaining their home language and their acquisition of English as a second language:

"At the same time we don't want them to lose their different language, you know. You were saying earlier about speaking to their parents and grandparents at home and so on, and some of our parents actually take the children back sometimes to their native countries, so that they don't lose, maybe during the summer, to keep that. Because that's losing quite [a lot] of their heritage, traditions and even connections with their relatives."

Principal, SEELB

Homework

An important role for all parents in their children's education is supporting homework. Teachers recognised that homework could often be challenging for newcomer pupils as some parents are unable to provide support due to their own lack of English. Teachers found that this could result in homework not being completed correctly or not being done at all. To counteract this, some schools set up an after school homework club to provide pupils with additional support.

And now the difficulty is because the parents do not speak English at home, there is very little support we find. We do send home school books, I think further down the school find that much more advantageous. A lot of the parents, the stuff that we are sending home and going over in class, they do find quite difficult.

P7 teacher, BELB

Some schools have also begun working with the parents of newcomer pupils to develop their own English language acquisition or adapted homework to make it easier for parents to understand:

" We are trying to work with parents to equip them with the necessary skills to support their children when they are completing homework activities, to encourage them to develop confidence when speaking English and to try encourage them, whilst not not speaking their native tongue at

home, especially during homework activities to speak in English. Because as a result children are at an automatic disadvantage when having to complete end of year assessments, which is in English."

Principal, SELB

"And then our homeworks, we have changed all our homeworks. Before the homeworks used to be like a book of lots of text and the parents had to open up and they had to try and translate and look at all the text and that was very daunting. We found that the parents couldn't understand or read what we were asking them to do."

P1 teacher, SELB

"There's no point of setting up homework which's not been done, which is often the case. We go through it at the interviews with the translators, but it's not kept up. There's definitely, I can't communicate with some of my parents at all this year. In previous years, you maybe had one good parent who's translated for few. But this was a year where there isn't anybody you can ask to do that"

P1 teacher, BELB

Over half of the children reported that homework was the worst thing about school. Some reported that they found particular subjects difficult while others described homework as 'boring'. There was a mixed response from participants when asked if a parent could help them with their homework. Nearly half reported that a parent could help with homework at least sometimes. Results indicated that parents were more able to help their children with numeracy homework than literacy based homework. Although some children reported that no one could help them with homework, other sources of support were available such as older siblings or another family member, friends of the family and the internet.

"In some subjects it is hard because if I don't know what to do, say in English, no-one could explain it to me because none of my parents are English and they wouldn't know that and they wouldn't understand what it says there and that is quite hard."

Polish female, 10 years old

Teachers identified that support from parents at home was a key factor in how well newcomer pupils developed in their English.

"Now that one pupil I was mentioning who started in September with no English, and I think they were sitting doing circle time, talking about Christmas and what did we do over the Christmas holidays, and he was able

to contribute to the conversation with a big smile on his face so it just shows how much he has come on. But again he has got good home support, his mummy is really looking him to speak English and will try her best to speak English to him at home as well. But you can see the confidence is just oozing out of him now. And from when he came here in September to now is fantastic."

Overall, schools recognised the challenges newcomer pupils could face in learning a different language from their parents and many schools sought to develop good relationships with parents in order to encourage parental involvement and educational support for pupils at home.

Section 4: Good practice

Results indicated that there are a number of good practices in the schools that participated in the research study. Findings suggest that newcomer pupils can experience difficulties when starting primary school in Northern Ireland. From the pupil's perspective, it can be frightening to be in an unfamiliar environment where they speak a different language and have no friends. Schools have developed strategies to welcome newcomer pupils, integrate them into the school and to communicate with their parents. Results showed that strategies are discernible at both a whole school level and a class level as shown on Table 6.

Table 6: Summary of good practice at school and classroom level

School Level	After school clubs for newcomer pupils
	Celebrating different cultures eg multicultural events and workshops
	English language classes for parents
	Inclusive ethos
	School reports translated
	Sharing good practice with other schools
	Weekly translated newsletters/notes
	Growing use of technology to communicate with parents
Classroom Level	Bilingual teaching assistants
	Buddy System
	Development of home-school journals
	NI children learning a second language
	Strategic seating plans to integrate newcomer pupils
	Visual aids and displays in classroom in multiple languages

As shown in Table 6, much innovative and dynamic practice is being led by primary schools in order to meet the needs of newcomer pupils. Evidence suggests that while good practice is ongoing this has been achieved on a school to school basis with little standardisation across the education sector. As such, some participating schools may have already implemented or partly implemented some aspects of the suggested improvements.

■ Resources

Overall, the most popular suggestion made by teachers related to the resources for newcomer pupils. There seemed to be a general lack of awareness by teachers of existing resources or a perception that resources were difficult or time- consuming to access. Teachers reported that it would be useful to have a framework of resources on set topics that they could search. As discussed in Section 1, teachers also emphasised that resources should be age appropriate with particular emphasis on engaging older children with little or no English.

Similarly, school staff reported that training on strategies to teach newcomer pupils would be an improvement as it would reassure staff they were managing their classrooms correctly and provide them with new ideas. As outlined in Section 1, school staff reported that a number of improvements could be made to support they received from the IDS. The most common suggestion was that the IDS becomes more practical in nature in terms of providing one to one support for newcomer children and being able to model an ideal class for teachers. Other suggestions included updating the Primary ToolKit resources and greater flexibility for interpreting services.

■ Intensive teaching

As discussed in Section 2, most teachers use classroom assistants and other staff in order to withdraw newcomer pupils. When asked about areas of improving the newcomer pupils' experience, teachers identified that newcomer pupils may benefit from more intensive attention. It was suggested that this could be done through either language acquisition before they entered a classroom setting or through an increase in small group work.

■ Relationships with newcomer pupils parents

Schools also identified that there was greater scope to build positive relationships with newcomer pupils' parents. Suggestions about how relationships could be improved included running parenting programmes in school, English language classes for parents and greater use of technology to communicate. Teachers felt that greater integration of newcomer families would be of benefit to the wider community as a whole.

■ Ideas for improvement by newcomer pupils

It was important to gain the pupils' ideas for making it easier for other newcomer pupils to start a new school in NI. Central to newcomer pupils' ideas about what would make it easier for other newcomer pupils was friendship. As discussed in Section 2, one of their favourite things about school was having friends and friendship was a key element that made children feel part of the school. The most common answer by newcomer pupils for ideas that would help others was to make friends. This was followed by having a friend you could talk to either in terms of translating the teacher or practicing English with.

> *"In my first school I had a friend and she speaks Filipino, so I always talked to her and she helped me. We could work together"*
>
> *Filipino female, 11 years old*

> *"...also if you have friends, if you want to know and they speak your language, you just like ask."*
>
> *Polish female, 11 years old*

Newcomer pupils also thought it would useful to have greater access to resources such as dictionaries, books and the computer to translate for themselves. Other ideas including allowing parents to stay in class for longer and having a homework club only for newcomer pupils.

As discussed, the majority of children experienced a time of adjustment when they started primary school in NI. While many felt scared and confused, the majority reported that they enjoyed school now. Key to feeling included was friendships with peers and a good relationship with their teacher. To end the children's focus groups, pupils were asked about what advice they would give a newcomer who was just about to start school. Advice addressed the fear

that the majority of newcomer pupils felt when starting school as discussed in Section 2. Children sought to reassure others that while starting a new school may be difficult, that it would become easier as they learnt more English:

"I would say at the beginning it is going to be quite hard and you are going to struggle but then later on it gets easier because you make friends and you learn a wee bit of English every day".

Polish female, 10 years old

"Don't worry because there's always someone to support you and help you to get better at English. Just don't be intimidated if you don't speak English that well"

Filipino female, 11 years old

" not to be scared because whatever you do, you're gonna be alright. And keep on going and don't give up!"

Polish female, 11 years old

They wanted to convey to others that they should not be afraid to ask for help as support was available. Children themselves often offered to translate for any new pupils so they would be able to communicate with others. While a small number of pupils emphasised that newcomer pupils should be respectful, polite and avoid bullying others, the importance of making friends was

highlighted as children's advice for others was to talk to others and make friends.

"Don't be shy and just talk to them because they won't harm you!"

East Timorese male, 11 years old

"to make friends or like to try to play with people"

Polish male, 10 years old

As shown throughout the research report, children friendship was highly valued by newcomer children and a key issue in their ability to settle into a new school. While most children were intimidated of starting school at first, it is heartening that supports put in place at both school and classroom level have resulted in the majority of newcomer pupils feeling part of their school.

Chapter 4: Discussion and Recommendations

This research investigated the experiences of newcomer pupils and school staff in primary schools across NI. The rapid increase of ethnic minority families in the last decade has resulted in newcomer pupils making up 4.3% of the primary school population in NI. As a consequence more schools are coping with children who may have little or no English language. In order to deal effectively with rising numbers of newcomer pupils and support schools, it is appropriate that policy and resources for newcomer pupils are now reviewed to ensure the needs of the pupils and schools are effectively being met. Based on the findings of this research study, consideration should be given to the following areas:

Language barrier: The research shows that the language barrier is a multifaceted issue central to the relationship between school staff and newcomer pupils. Children reported that not being able to speak or understand English could be a frightening experience particularly with being in a new environment. From the children's perspective, they viewed the language barrier primarily as an obstacle to making friends with some concerned about not being able to complete the tasks set for them. While most teachers expected newcomer pupils to have a 'silent period' for a time, there was concern about identifying special educational needs without being able to assess a child in a language they understood. Some pupils also highlighted that

they found the language barrier frustrating as it prevented them from expressing themselves and led to misunderstandings between teachers and pupils.

English language comprehension: Evidence from teachers highlighted concerns about the depth of newcomer pupils English language comprehension in terms of being able to understand and respond to more complex texts and instructions. The lack of English language literacy is concerning as it has the potential to affect all subjects due to its cross-curricular nature and impede a child's educational achievement. Many teachers commented that newcomer pupils were unable to fulfil their potential in other subjects such as mathematics and did not do well in written assessments. Teachers reported that this lack of comprehension was particularly apparent in older newcomer pupils in Key Stage 2 which would suggest that some newcomer pupils may enter post-primary school with low levels of literacy. As this has the prospect of limiting newcomer pupils' attainment throughout the rest of their education, it is important that steps are taken to increase newcomer pupils' comprehension of English language in primary schools.

Inclusion and Diversity Service: The general consensus among school staff was that the IDS was a useful support for schools in the early stages of enrolling newcomer pupils. Staff

particularly highlighted guidance on welcoming newcomer pupils, multilingual signage and translation and interpreting services for parents as positive aspects of the IDS. However, there were also significant gaps in expectations expressed for aspects of support that were not provided by the IDS. Teachers suggested that the scope of the IDS could usefully be extended to offer staff examples of a model lesson for classes with newcomer pupils and strategies to deal with the broad range of abilities and languages present in the classroom. Some teachers further suggested that the IDS should engage with newcomer pupils themselves to provide support. It is also important to highlight that schools have different needs dependent on the numbers and ranges of nationality/languages and their own experiences of teaching newcomer pupils. Drawing from this research, evidence would suggest that the services and support currently offered by the IDS should be reviewed to ensure the range of needs identified by staff are being met.

Staff training: The majority of teachers identified a gap in their own knowledge about the best ways in which to teach children learning English as an Additional Language. Often teachers developed strategies 'on the job' and would welcome the opportunity to learn from other professionals and gain new insight and ideas. It is also clear from the research that classroom assistants play a significant role in working with newcomer pupils either through providing individual attention in class or working with small groups

withdrawn from the class. These staff members should also be in the position to avail of specific training on working with newcomer pupils.

Parental awareness and engagement in education: The importance of engaging newcomer parents in their child's education was a recurring theme in the research. Most of the schools in this study were active in encouraging parental engagement in a range of ways including translated weekly newsletters/notes, using technology to communicate with parents, holding English language classes for parents and multicultural days. Evidence would suggest that there was little standardisation of how schools engaged with parents as schools tended to identify the best ways to involve newcomer parents and use the resources available to them. School staff also identified that newcomer families were not always aware of the services or the process needed to avail of services such as free part time pre-school places for 3 – 4 year olds. Areas requiring further work with newcomer pupil parents generally were identified as raising awareness of the importance of: (i) education for young children, particularly in terms of pre-school and Foundation stage; (ii) regular school attendance; (iii) homework and (iv) practicing English with their children outside of school.

Recommendations

Drawing from this research study, a number of key areas have been identified as requiring further attention. The following

recommendations form the basis of factors to consider in order to improve the experiences of newcomer pupils in primary school:

1. Data collected in the Annual School Census should record 'Country of Origin' and 'First Language' in addition to ethnicity to provide greater demographic detail of newcomer pupils and the range of language needs schools may face on a year to year basis.

2. In order to reflect the growth in the newcomer pupils in NI schools, the Department of Education should commission the Education and Training Inspectorate to conduct an evaluation of the current provision available to support newcomer pupils in NI schools which would inform an updated version of the Department's Guidance on Supporting Newcomer Pupils.

3. The current formal training provision related to English as an Additional Language should be reviewed for: (i) pre-service teachers; (ii) in-service teachers; and (iii) classroom assistants to ensure the workforce are equipped with knowledge and specific strategies to support newcomer pupils' development and comprehension of the English language.

4. The Inclusion and Diversity Service should be reviewed to ensure it is appropriate to support the changing needs of the newcomer population in schools. Specific focus on reconfiguring elements of the service should aim to support schools who have established newcomer populations with consideration to:

   ■ providing teachers with model lessons;

   ■ providing updated and age appropriate resources;

   ■ working directly with newcomer pupils;

   ■ developing and coordinating formal links between schools to share their experiences and good practice relating to newcomer pupils.

5. Consideration should be given to the specific development and pilot of an intensive learning programme which addresses newcomer pupils specific learning needs to aid language development and comprehension and prepares newcomer pupils with little English language for entry into the classroom.

6. Support for newcomer pupils including teaching resources and the length of current funding should be reassessed to ensure that newcomer pupils are receiving the support needed to acquire academic English proficiency.

7. Increasing schools' awareness of funding opportunities through OFMDFM, District Councils Good Relations Programme and Community Relations Council that could support ethnic minority parents having greater parental involvement in schools, access to English classes and greater integration into the wider community.

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Believe in children

Barnardo's
Northern Ireland