

NARRATOR: Harberton School in South Belfast is a school for primary age children with moderate learning difficulties. A recent Education and Training Inspectorate report highlighted the school's structured, effective approach to teaching literacy and numeracy.

MCGLADE: Here at Harberton, our mission very much links in with the overall aim of the Northern Ireland Curriculum to help every child reach their full potential and take a place in society. So, our mission statement offers children... Every day, we want to offer children moments of delight, moments of wonder, pride in achievement, and happiness in being accepted. And by doing that every day we hope that our children will reach their full potential.

NARRATOR: The pupils' school day follows a structured timetable.

MCGLADE: From Key Stage One onwards we follow a very structured approach, and this starts, for children from Year Three up to Year Seven, and in the reading units, with a Primary Movement session. Primary Movement session is to stimulate them and relax them. So it has a dual purpose.

(SINGING)

MCDONALD: We find Primary Movement helps prepare the children for the school day. It helps them to settle down and it improves their focus and concentration. It reduces hyper-activity as well, and it's something that all children can be good at.

NARRATOR: After the Primary Movement session, the focus turns to literacy and numeracy.

MCDONALD: We begin our literacy period as a group. We come together as a whole class on the carpet where I will usually do book-work and grammar, phonics work.

MCDONALD: Georgia?

GEORGIA: The baby and the parrot.

MCDONALD: Okay, we've got the baby. Is there anybody else in this story? What other characters are there? Cory?

CORY: Mrs. Pike.

MCDONALD: Mrs. Pike, well done. Robert. And I will refer to the learning intentions that are on our WALT board in the carpet area. And then we'll discuss from that what our intentions are for the lesson ahead.

Jamie?

JAMIE: Others?

MCDONALD: Others, brilliant, Jamie. Well done. Is the first sign at the beginning, the middle or the end? Michael.

MICHAEL: Middle.

MCDONALD: In the middle. Good man. Fantastic. And look up at our WALT board. We have identified words containing "th".

As a follow-up to our phonics and grammar work on the carpet area, we often use the interactive whiteboards to reinforce any work we have done, and the children thoroughly enjoy participating in this way.

Brilliant, Georgia, well done.

NARRATOR: Each pupil goes to their first activity table. There are three main areas: a reading table, a writing table, and an independent table that includes ICT activity.

MCDONALD: While they're at their tables they will stay there for about 15 minutes and do focused work with an adult at the table. The independent table, as it suggests, will be independent with some adult intervention if it's needed. After 15 minutes or so, the children will stop what they're doing, and we'll have a mini plenary led by myself just to see what the children have done, and they like to show the good work that they've done at their table. After that time, then we will point to our next table, and the children move themselves around the room to the table they're going to. They know which table to go to as they refer to the task board in the classroom. Once each child has been to all three tables we finish the literacy period by having a plenary at the end, and we'll discuss the work we have done, and we'll refer again to the WALT board to ensure our learning intentions have been fulfilled.

BOY 1: "Robin and Sally went to Mrs. Burns. Robin looked in..."

MCGLADE: We found the literacy period was so successful and that our children were making really good progress in reading, and after two years we decided that we would introduce this for numeracy as well.

REID: Like our literacy hour, the numeracy hour begins with a whole class session, either on the carpet, or on the whiteboard if that's applicable. It's based on mental maths activity, so that's what the children will be working on. Then they go round the three tables. The first table is the table that I take, that's called the Number Focus Table. And that is where the children learn basic mathematical concepts. Then they go to their practice table which is taken by one of my learning assistants. And at that, they use the maths that they have been learning with me to put into different practices. For example, today, they were working on a simple problem-solving shopping activity. And then we have an activity table and the children at that will play maths games, or they will use the Beebot. We also have a computer timetable where one child, each day, instead of sitting at the activity table, uses the computer to work on numeracy games that reinforce what we've been learning.

BOY 2: Yes, I like maths, it's very good. And I like to help other people in maths if they're stuck on something.

BOY 3: I like numeracy because you move round different tables and you do all different things.

MCGLADE: Our structured literacy period and our structured numeracy period offer a very happy classroom environment for our pupils. One of the comments in our inspection report that our children were achieving in literacy and numeracy much better than their quotients, their intelligence quotients would indicate they were, it was possible for them to achieve. So, you know, that was-- That meant more to us in our inspection report than any other comment. What we are looking at now in our literacy period and our numeracy period, is the whole focus next year will be how to incorporate the cross-curricular skills in the structured approach that we have in our literacy period and in our numeracy period. It's lovely to go into a classroom to see our children so engaged in their learning, so happy in their learning, so prepared to take risks in the classroom. I certainly feel that we have equipped them with the skills to continue as learners, as lifelong learners.

GIRL: "Long ago, there was a king in Ireland whose name was Llyr. He had four children who were the light of his heart, each more beautiful than the other. Twin boys with hair that flamed the red-gold of a summer sunset, and twin girls with black hair shining like a secret pool at midnight."