

PEACEPLUS ASPIRE

**End of term summary for our preschool settings
April – June 2026**

**Enjoy reading some of the many inspiring stories
from the last term**

Shared Education Pre-School Partnership Celebrated with End-of-Year PEACEPLUS ASPIRE Event in Derry / Londonderry

In April, Galliagh Nursery School and Lisnagelvin Nursery School held a special end-of-year celebration event in Ebrington Square, Derry / Londonderry to mark the Shared Education partnership they have formed through PEACEPLUS ASPIRE. The event celebrated the friendships, connections and shared memories created by the children throughout the project as the children learned and played together.

At 11:30, the children and setting practitioners, along with the Mayor of Derry and Strabane Ruairí McHugh gathered on the iconic Peace Bridge, for a commemorative photograph captured by both photographer and drone. Reflecting on the project, Caroline McDonnell, Principal of Lisnagelvin Nursery School, said, "The children, staff and parent volunteers connected effortlessly, building friendships through shared play, learning and time spent together."

Celebrations then continued in Ebrington Square with music, dancing and a special cake kindly provided by a local bakery. The event gave children and families from both settings the opportunity to come together in a shared space, reflecting the spirit of inclusion, community and cooperation at the heart of the PEACEPLUS ASPIRE project.

Karen Cooke, the Quality Mentor for this partnership states, "the collaboration between both settings had a really positive impact, supporting children's social, emotional and learning experiences through shared opportunities that encouraged inclusion, respect and new friendships. The end-of-year event on the Peace Bridge brought this to life, giving children, families, practitioners and community members a meaningful chance to come together and celebrate their shared experiences and sense of community"



Creativity and Connection Celebrated at Shared Education Pre-school Art Exhibition: Lurgan Model Integrated Nursery Unit and Downshire Integrated Nursery School PEACEPLUS ASPIRE Art Exhibition

Lurgan Model Integrated Nursery Unit and Downshire Integrated Nursery School held an inspiring two-day art exhibition at Lurgan Model Integrated Primary School on 22-23rd April. The exhibition showcased artwork the children created throughout the year as part of PEACEPLUS ASPIRE.

Over the course of the project, children from both settings participated in shared creative arts sessions, exploring activities such as painting, pottery, sewing, and flower printing. Reflecting on the experience, Kathryn Campbell, Principal of Downshire Integrated Nursery School, said, "The children eagerly anticipated each shared session and spoke with enthusiasm and joy about their new friends from Lurgan." This has enabled children of all abilities to express their creativity while building friendships with peers they may not have otherwise had the opportunity to meet.

In addition, Judith Divers the Quality Mentor for this partnership states, "It has been wonderful to observe the partnership between Lurgan Model Integrated Nursery Unit and Downshire Integrated Nursery School, underpinned by shared pedagogy, thoughtful planning and a clear vision for shared education. Warm, nurturing and child-led adult interactions, alongside reflective planning, have helped ensure children's voices and experiences remain central to the success of this partnership."

This exhibition focused on process art, celebrating the creative journey rather than the finished product. Each child contributed artwork and shared their ideas through short descriptions, allowing families and visitors to gain an insight into their creative thinking and development.

The exhibition concluded with a family celebration where children and parents explored a range of hands-on activities, including dough play, light and shadow exploration, and contributing to a live art display. To mark the occasion, every child received a copy of *The Dot* by Peter Reynolds, a story that encourages creativity, confidence and self-expression. Sarah McKinney, Head of Nursery at Lurgan Model Integrated Nursery Unit said: "A focus on process art was central to the project, supporting creativity, exploration, communication and social skills during this early and vital stage of development. Shared sessions provided opportunities for children to play, learn, and build friendships together, while parents have valued seeing increased confidence and creativity, alongside a stronger connection to Nursery."



St John the Baptist Nursery School and Edenderry Nursery School, Portadown

In May, the children at St John the Baptist Nursery School and Edenderry Nursery School came together for a session focusing on eco-activities and community engagement. Together, they planted flowers which were donated to local care homes, helping the children develop teamwork and collaboration, while supporting their wider community. They were joined by Lord Mayor Alderman Stephen Moutray and Simon Quinn from the Portadown Wellness Garden Centre, who donated the flowers.

Speaking on the how the project has enhanced community connections, Cathy Armstrong, Principal of St John the Baptist Nursery School said: "We are extremely grateful for the support of Portadown Wellness Centre who helped the children to plant and who are donating the resources. It's a wonderful whole opportunity to foster community relations."

Angela Lynn, a parent from St John the Baptist said that PEACEPLUS ASPIRE "removes barriers from a socio-economic perspective, giving the children opportunities to engage with children they don't normally see on a day-to-day basis and helping build their confidence and social skills." Additionally, Emma Magowan, the Quality Mentor for this partnership, "this partnership and session exemplify how meaningful collaboration can enrich children's learning experiences by fostering social skills, teamwork, and a sense of community responsibility. It also highlights the value of cross-community engagement and external partnerships in broadening children's opportunities and promoting inclusive, confidence-building interactions."

Learning Through Play at Rashenny Sport Day

A shared celebration of active learning and community connections took place at Rashenny Football Pitch recently, bringing together children from Bizzy Bees Preschool and Donagh Crèche Preschool for a fun-filled Sports Day. Children participated in a variety of activities including running races, egg-and-spoon races, parachute games, football challenges, songs, and rhymes. These shared experiences allowed them to develop confidence, teamwork, communication skills, and new friendships while learning and playing together.

Parents and caregivers joined in on the activities and helped to create a warm, inclusive atmosphere. Children supported and encouraged one another in mixed groups, celebrating each other's achievements and enjoying opportunities to build positive relationships. The day concluded with every child receiving a medal in recognition of their participation and effort.

The event highlighted the value of shared learning in bringing children, families, and communities together, creating meaningful experiences that foster belonging, inclusion, and lasting connections.



Tree-Planting Event Celebrates Successful Partnership Between Holy Child Nursery School and Harmony Nursery Unit



Children, educators, and families from Holy Child Nursery School and Harmony Nursery Unit in Belfast recently came for a special tree planting celebration to mark their Shared Education partnership through PEACEPLUS ASPIRE. Held at Harmony Nursery Unit, the event celebrated a successful year of learning, friendship and collaboration between the two settings.

As part of the celebration, the children helped plant an apple tree to symbolise the strong connections formed throughout the project and the hope that these relationships will continue to grow in the years ahead.

Reflecting on the partnership, Emma Montgomery, lead teacher at Harmony Nursery Unit, said, "Our schools share core values of respect, inclusion, and joy, and today's tree planting is a lasting reminder of our partnership and our commitment to working together long term."

Aimee Todd, the Quality Mentor for this partnership states, "Your inspirational leadership has effectively engaged families, empowering them to value shared education. Both settings show strong passion and commitment to a shared vision, with a clear whole-team approach."

The event marked the culmination of a highly successful year of collaboration through the PEACEPLUS ASPIRE Project, which both settings joined at the beginning of the 2025-2026 academic year, providing valuable opportunities for children to learn, play and grow together through shared education.

The tree planting event provided a fitting way to celebrate the success of the partnership and the positive impact it has had on both nursery communities. It also highlighted the lasting benefits of Shared Education in bringing children, families and educators together through meaningful experiences.





Celebrating Friendship and Achievement at Our Child-Led Shared Sports Day

Children from Roslea, Cross community PG, Fermanagh and Knockatallan Pre-school Monaghan services recently came together for a Child-Led Shared Sports Day at their local community centre to celebrate a year of shared learning.

The sports day was planned entirely with the children at the centre of the decision-making process. The practitioners and children worked together to design their own games and challenges in addition to choosing equipment, developing rules, and think about how activities could be adapted so that everyone could participate and have fun. Through this process, the children developed important skills including creativity, critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving.

The Sports Day was filled with excitement, laughter, and enthusiasm. Children took the lead, explaining games, encouraging their friends, and guiding activities throughout the day. Children from both settings played together, supported one another, and celebrated each other's achievements. The teachers and practitioners enthusiastically joined in the races and activities, highlighting the positive relationships that had developed throughout the shared programme.

The event was a fitting celebration of the friendships formed between the two pre-school groups and the confidence the children had gained over the year. It showcased the power of child-led learning and demonstrated how children can successfully contribute to planning meaningful experiences when their voices are heard and valued.

The Quality Mentor for this setting, Karen Smyth states, "This Sports Day beautifully demonstrated the value of child-led learning, showing how meaningful participation empowers children to develop confidence, creativity, and lasting friendships while fostering a truly inclusive learning environment."



PEACEPLUS ASPIRE is supported by PEACEPLUS, a programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB)

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