



Pre-school campaign to tackle racism via cartoon

by **Niall Murray**
Education
Correspondent

PRE-SCHOOL children are learning about bullying and racism through a cross-Border television cartoon initiative which shows children learning about diversity.

A series of cartoon advertisements, which began airing during children's programmes yesterday, features playground pals from Asian and African backgrounds, and from both sides of the community in the North.

Under the title *Together in the Park*, the four cartoons — *We Can Stop the Bullying*, *Playing the Same Game*, *Kim Joins In* and *Tom Helps Out* — a series of lessons are learned about accepting those who are different.

Through play and interaction, they learn about diversity among those around them.

The ad campaign is part of the Media Initiative for Children (MIFC), an educational programme teaching three to five-year-olds to respect differences between themselves and others.

Already more than a dozen pre-school settings in the Republic are participating in the programme.

It is based on the view that TV ads and interactive classroom lessons can contribute to shaping children's values and their later perspectives as adults, and to children having an influence on their parents to change their attitudes and

behaviours.

The initiative began following research by Dr Paul Connolly of Queens University Belfast which found that children are sensitive to difference and diversity from an early age.

The cartoon which focuses on bullying was developed in co-operation with Children's Ombudsman Emily Logan's office and the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People.

"We are delighted to become involved with the development of the cartoon.

"Through the complaints and investigative function, my office receives a significant number of complaints regarding bullying," Ms Logan said.

"While the office does not investigate the substantive issue of bullying, it's obviously an issue of concern to children and young people and, therefore, to my office," she said.

Ms Logan said the children of pre-school ages, at whom the programme is targeted, are an important constituency group for her.

The MIFC was launched in the North in 2004 and extended to the Republic this year, focusing initially on physical, racial and cultural differences.

The latest message on bullying has been added as part of the ad campaign, which runs on RTE, TV3 and UTV until the end of this month.



Children from Holy Child Pre-School and the Larkin Centre help the Ombudsman for Children, Emily Logan, to launch a cross-Border project as part of the media initiative for children in association with the North.

Picture: Maxwell



Anti-racism and anti-bullying cartoon intended to promote an appreciation of diversity among children.