

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Bethlehem Nursery School,
Belfast

Report of an Inspection in
November 2013

eti

*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*

Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

CUSTOMER
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Quantitative terms

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

Performance levels

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels in reports:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

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1. Inspection method and evidence base

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of pre-school centres, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the Education and Training Inspectorate's (ETI) publication *Together Towards Improvement pre-school/Education and Training Inspectorate: a process for self evaluation* at: <http://www.eti.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-primary.htm>.

Inspectors observed teaching and learning through play, the children's achievements and standards, scrutinised relevant documentation, and held formal and informal discussions with children, and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a discussion with the staff;
- a meeting with those involved with leadership and management; and
- the opportunity for the parents, staff and members of the management group to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	52	15	29% ¹	7
Staff and governors	-	6	-	*

* fewer than 5

Almost all of the parents who responded were positive about all aspects of the life and work of the nursery school. The parents commented positively about the warm, friendly ethos and the enthusiasm and interest of the staff. The staff and governors were positive about all aspects of the nursery and commented positively on the very good working relationships at all levels.

2. Context

Bethlehem Nursery School is situated on the Ravenhill Road in Belfast and provides full-time education for 52 children in two classes. The nursery school shares a site with an adjacent primary school. Since the last inspection there have been a number of staffing changes including the appointment of a new teaching principal and a new assistant teacher.

3. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards;
- the quality of provision in the nursery school; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

¹ The ETI is trialling a new range of methods to collect the views of parents/carers and, as a result, the percentage of questionnaires returned may be low.

4. Overall finding

Overall Performance Level	Satisfactory
Achievements and Standards	Good
Provision	Satisfactory
Leadership and Management	Satisfactory

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

The children settle quickly to their play, are happy and engage purposefully throughout the session. The majority of them make independent choices about their activities, such as; selecting resources to use from the wide range available, self registration and assisting in the routines for tidying up. The majority of the children are beginning to play collaboratively, can take turns and share the resources with others.

The children have good communication skills and are keen to share their ideas with the adults and with each other. They enjoy the small-group time, large group and whole-class story sessions and join in very enthusiastically in songs and rhymes. A small number of the children are beginning to show an interest in print and mark making. The staff need to ensure that those children who are ready, have opportunities to develop further these skills; for example, progressing from using a picture symbol to using a name label. The children display good levels of independence and are very confident in the daily routines within the nursery. The daily timetable is well-organised to provide a good balance of free play and activities organised by the staff. The staff need to develop further the organisation of snack and lunchtime in order to maximise the children's learning opportunities and experiences.

During the inspection, the children were observed engaging in early mathematics activities, both indoors and outdoors, including; counting, sorting and matching by colour, shape and size. A small number of the children are developing their representational drawings and these are attractively displayed around the nursery with captions to record the children's language. The children need more opportunities to develop their creativity alongside their thinking and problem-solving skills in more open-ended activities.

6. Provision

The staff work hard to make the best use of all the available space in the nursery and to create a welcoming learning environment for the children. They make good use of the veranda area for large construction and imaginative role-play and have developed well the outdoor play areas. The children's educational programme is well-balanced with good opportunities for learning across most of the areas of the pre-school curriculum. The staff have identified appropriately the need to develop further the children's learning experiences in the World Around Us and in the creative areas.

The quality of the staff interactions with the children are always satisfactory and, on occasion, good. The staff need to broaden their range of strategies for developing the learning inherent in the activities and routines, including the use of more open-ended questioning, in order to extend more effectively the children's learning, language and thinking skills.

The staff meet regularly to plan the pre-school programme and have made a good start in developing medium and short-term planning, identifying some aspects of the learning to be developed and the role of the adult. There is currently no long-term overview for the progression of learning across the pre-school curriculum. The staff have developed a systematic approach to recording the children's responses to their play and identify early the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning. They now need to use these observations to; monitor and evaluate more effectively the children's progress, highlight how the learning will develop further, and ensure that the children's individual needs are met, including providing appropriate challenge for the more able children.

The nursery provides the children with good quality pastoral care and support. There is a warm and friendly ethos in the nursery. The children are very well-behaved and there is a strong atmosphere of mutual respect among and between both the adults and the children.

Very good attention is given to promoting healthy eating and physical activity through the provision of a healthy snack and good daily opportunities for energetic physical play outdoors.

7. Leadership and management

The principal has been in post for less than a year and in that time has initiated a collegiate team approach to developing the provision within the nursery. The school development planning processes are still at an early stage of development and staff have identified a limited number of key priorities with associated action plans through self-evaluation. The principal and staff, with focused external support, need to extend and develop the school self-evaluation and development planning processes to bring about further improvement in the nursery.

The staff have developed effective working relationships with the parents, local community and the adjacent primary school. There are good opportunities for meetings with parents through the 'Tuesday Talk Time' appointments. The staff have also been developing the monthly parent newsletter to provide the parents with regular information about the life and work of the nursery. They need to develop this further to include a focus on how the parents can support their children's learning at home.

On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the nursery school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

8. Conclusion

In most of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided in this nursery school is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in learning and teaching and leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively.

The areas for improvement include the need to:

- develop further the planning and assessment methods to ensure that the children's individual needs are met more effectively and that they have appropriate challenge and progression across the year;

- broaden the range of strategies used by the staff for developing the learning inherent in the daily activities and routines, in order to extend more effectively the children's learning, language and thinking skills; and
- extend and develop further the school self-evaluation and development planning processes, in order to bring about continuous improvement in the nursery.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the nursery school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12-24 month period.

APPENDIX

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON BETHLEHEM NURSERY SCHOOL, BELFAST (113-0027)

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending full-time	26	26
Attending part-time	0	0
Under 3 years of age*	0	0
With statement of special educational needs	0	0
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	0	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4**		0
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	0	0
With English as an additional language	1	0

*On 1 July.

** The stages refer to those set out in the Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs.

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	%
Average attendance for the previous year.	90%

2. Duration of Sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
4½ hours	-	-

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-Time	Part-Time
Teachers	2	0
Nursery Assistants (qualified)	2	1
Nursery Assistants (non-qualified)	0	0

Number of: ***	
Students	4
Trainees	0

*** Total placements since September of current year

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