

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Cathedral Nursery School,
Belfast

Report of an Inspection
in November 2011

**STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON CATHEDRAL NURSERY SCHOOL, BELFAST
(113-6603)**

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	2
With statement of special educational needs	0	0
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	7	6
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	1	1
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	6	5
With English as an additional language	2	1

* 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.	79%
Average attendance for the previous year.	89%

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)	1	3
Nursery Assistants (non-qualified)	0	0

Number of: ***	
Students	2
Trainees	0

*** Total placements since September of current year

4. Parental Questionnaires (to be completed by Inspection Services Branch)

Number issued	52
Percentage returned	35%
Number of written comments	8

CATHEDRAL NURSERY SCHOOL, BELFAST, BT12 4HB (113-6603)
INSPECTED: 21 NOVEMBER 2011

1. Cathedral Nursery School is situated in the Divis area of West Belfast. Since the last inspection in 2004, one full-time, one part-time and one Special Educational Needs (SEN) assistant have been appointed.

2. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this nursery school is outstanding; the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. The nursery has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENTS

3. There is a very settled, caring atmosphere in the nursery school. The children respond positively to the staff's high expectations and display exemplary behaviour; they are eager to explore new learning and make full use of the stimulating indoor and outdoor learning environments. They are learning to share, take turns, and to persevere with tasks. The children clearly enjoy the excellent opportunities for learning in all areas of the curriculum and they all engage well in concentrated and productive play. The staff ensures the children's art work is celebrated through attractive displays around the playrooms.

4. The staff has worked hard to create a language-rich environment which promotes effectively the children's language development. Themed books enhance all the play areas and the children browse through these frequently. There are many, well-planned opportunities for the children to experiment with writing during the free-play session. In addition to the large group story session, there are regular opportunities for informal story, rhyme and music sessions with individuals and small groups. The majority of the children can talk about their experiences and express their thoughts and ideas confidently.

THE PROVISION FOR LEARNING

5. The quality of the interaction between the staff and the children ranges from good to outstanding; every opportunity is used to promote language and learning. The adults often engage the children in purposeful discussions and develop their language through skilful questioning. The thoughtful organisation of the daily timetable provides lengthy periods of free play and the necessary routines such as snack and tidy up time are well established and, as a result, the children display high levels of independence.

6. The staff has developed a rigorous method of planning which outlines variety, challenge and progression in the programme. Their reflective evaluations are based on the children's responses and are used effectively to inform future learning and to develop helpful guidance for planning cross-curricular activities. The adults know the children very well and work effectively as a team to ensure that the individual needs of all the children are met.

7. The parents are encouraged to become involved in the education of their children and the life of the nursery through a variety of ways, for example: meetings, newsletters, a parents' booklet and volunteering to help on outings. The nursery school employs a parent worker who supports the parents through a number of initiatives including The Incredible Years Parenting Programme which encourages the parents to become involved in their children's development. Very good links have been established with the local community including the primary schools to which the children will transfer.

8. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the nursery school is outstanding. Among the strengths are the excellent relationships and communication links between the staff, the children and their families and the inclusion of the children with additional needs in all aspects of the nursery school provision.

9. The nursery school has very good comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department.

10. The nursery gives outstanding attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity for example through the healthy breaks provided, and the excellent opportunities for energetic outdoor play which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

11. The Principal has been in post for 14 years and provides outstanding leadership and management in all aspects of the nursery school provision. She is highly committed to providing a high quality pre-school education for all the children in the nursery school and is an excellent role-model for the staff. The Principal has, over a long period of time, provided appropriate staff development; as a result, the hard working and dedicated teacher, assistants and support staff have a shared understanding of the aims and work of the nursery school and all contribute to the high standards achieved by the children.

11. The process of self-evaluation is well embedded in the nursery school, taking into account the views of all the stakeholders, including the children. The school development plan (SDP) outlines appropriate priorities for the future improvements in the provision.

12. The key strengths of the nursery include:

- the welcoming, inclusive ethos which supports all the children and their families;
- the highly motivated, confident and well behaved children ;
- the excellent opportunities for learning, indoors and outdoors across all areas of the pre-school curriculum;
- the high quality of the staff interactions with the children;
- the rigorous and detailed planning which builds effectively on the staff's observations of the children's learning; and
- the outstanding quality of the leadership and the commitment of all the staff to delivering high quality pre-school provision.

13. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this nursery school is outstanding; the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. The nursery has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

QUESTIONNAIRES

The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents and the staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Eighteen of the parents responded to the questionnaire and eight made additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaire were very positive and indicated a high level of satisfaction with all aspects of the nursery's work. The responses from the governors and the staff questionnaires were also very positive. All of the responses have been shared with the staff and the representatives of the Board of Governors.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

1. There is insufficient storage space for the nursery equipment.
2. The surface of the soft play area outside the parents' room is hazardous when wet.

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