

# PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Dunclug Nursery School,  
Ballymena

Report of an Inspection  
in November 2011

**STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON DUNCLUG NURSERY SCHOOL, BALLYMENA  
(311-6165)**

**1. Details of Children**

<b>Number of children:</b>	<b>Class 1</b>	<b>Class 2</b>	<b>Class 3</b>
Attending full-time	26	0	0
Attending part-time	0	26	26
Under 3 years of age*	0	0	10
With statement of special educational needs	***	***	***
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	0	0	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	***	***	0
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	9	7	***
With English as an additional language	***	***	***

\* On 1 July.

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

\*\*\* Denotes a number less than 5.

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	19%
Average attendance for the previous year.	89%

**2. Duration of Sessions**

<b>Full-time</b>	<b>Part-time: am</b>	<b>Part-time: pm</b>
4½ hours	2½ hours	2½ hours

**3. Details of Staff**

<b>Number of:</b>	<b>Full-Time</b>	<b>Part-Time</b>
Teachers	2	1
Nursery Assistants (qualified)	1	4
Nursery Assistants (non-qualified)	0	0

<b>Number of: ****</b>	
Students	2
Trainees	6

\*\*\*\* Total placements since September of current year

**4. Parental Questionnaires**

Number issued	78
Percentage returned	45%
Number of written comments	11

**DUNCLUG NURSERY SCHOOL, BALLYMENA, CO ANTRIM, BT43 6SU (311-6165)  
INSPECTED: 17 NOVEMBER 2011**

1. Dunclug Nursery School is situated on the Doury Road in Ballymena. The children who attend the school come from the town and from a wide surrounding radius. Since the last inspection, a new Principal has been appointed who teaches the morning part-time class. At the time of the inspection the teacher of the full-time class was absent and the teacher in the afternoon part-time class was employed as a substitute teacher on a temporary basis.

2. In most of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the nursery is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh the 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 Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) will monitor and report on the nursery's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12-24 month period.

### **CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENTS**

3. The children are settled, happy and confident and demonstrate good progress in their overall development in relation to their age and the time of the year. Almost all of the children demonstrate high levels of independence in accessing resources, self-registration and assisting in the routines for tidying up and snack time preparation. Most of the children can engage in sustained purposeful play and the majority of the children are beginning to work together collaboratively. They are well-behaved and co-operate readily with the staff, who provide appropriate support for the small number of children who have difficulty sharing and taking turns.

4. The children participate well in the group story sessions, they clearly enjoy the songs and rhymes and in particular the use of percussion instruments. During the inspection, a small number of children were observed accessing and sharing their personal 'All About Me' books with each other and with the staff who used them effectively to engage the children in discussions about themselves, their families and their interests. The children can access a range of writing and creative resources; they can label their work independently and their paintings and drawings are displayed attractively around the nursery. There is a need for the staff to encourage a greater interest in books and writing by providing more opportunities for the children to integrate mark-making and using books naturally through their play.

### **THE PROVISION FOR LEARNING**

5. The staff are hard-working and committed to providing quality educational experiences for the children. They have created an inviting and colourful learning environment and provide a good range of resources and opportunities for learning across most of the areas of the programme. In the best practice, the adults promote effectively the children's thinking and problem solving skills through skilful questioning. The children have good opportunities for developing early mathematical skills including counting, sorting, matching and measuring and their use of mathematical language was promoted well by the staff. The daily routines provide a long session of extended play along with time for story, rhyme and a short period of physical play. There is a need for staff to review the current timetable to provide for a longer daily session of outdoor physical play for all classes.

Individual education plans (IEPs) have been developed for a few children who are experiencing difficulties with aspects of their learning. The plans, which outline appropriate targets and strategies for improvement, are agreed in consultation with the parents. The Special Educational Needs assistants provide good support for the children and the nursery has been proactive in liaising with other external agencies for additional advice and training.

6. The staff plan for a varied pre-school programme through the use of themes and topics. The staff need to focus more sharply on the learning potential and link the observations of the children's responses more clearly within short-term planning, in order to demonstrate evidence of progression and challenge throughout the year for the children. There is a need for the Principal to ensure that all of the staff are more actively involved in the planning process in order to ensure that they have a shared understanding of the adult's role and the potential language and learning to be developed.

7. The nursery has developed good links with the parents and an informative parent notice board provides good information about the nursery and local community events. An attractive parent newsletter and a recently updated school website provide parents with good information about the life and work of the nursery and appropriate ideas to assist parents in supporting their children's learning at home. Good use is made of visitors to the nursery and educational trips to enhance the children's educational experiences.

8. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the nursery is very good. This is evidenced through the very happy and well-behaved children who are enthusiastic about their learning and the supportive, caring ethos which exists between the staff and the children.

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

10. The nursery gives very good attention to promoting healthy lifestyles through healthy eating and physical activity; for example, through the provision of a healthy snack and the good attention to hygiene.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

11. The Principal has been in post for 4 years and during this time she has had a number of long term sick leaves. During these times the school did not have an acting principal in place to take responsibility for the day-to-day management. The Principal is committed to the continuous improvement of the provision and demonstrates effective administrative skills. During the inspection, there was evidence of strained communication amongst the staff which has become a barrier to affecting improvement. There is an urgent need for the Principal, supported by the North Eastern Education and Library Board and the Board of Governors (governors), to work towards developing more open, trusting and confident communication and professional working relationships at all levels, in order to bring about improvements in the provision.

### **12. The key strengths of the nursery include:**

- the confident, well-behaved children who display good levels of independence and engagement with their learning;
- the happy, caring, inclusive ethos that exists between the children and the staff;

- the broad and balanced programme which provides good opportunities to learn in most areas of the pre-school curriculum; and
- the effective procedures for early identification of need and implementation of strategies which enable these children to make progress in their development.

**13. The areas for improvement are:**

- the urgent need for the Principal, supported by the NEELB and the governors, to work towards developing more open, trusting and confident communication and professional working relationships amongst the staff, in order to bring about improvements in the provision; and
- the need to develop further the planning and assessment methods in order to focus more sharply on the learning potential of the activity, the language and learning to be developed and the role of the adult.

14. In most of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the nursery is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh the 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 Inspectorate will monitor and report on the nursery's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12-24 month period.

**QUESTIONNAIRES**

The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents, staff and the governors to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Thirty-five of the parents (45%) responded to the questionnaire and eleven made additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaire were very positive and indicated a good level of satisfaction with nearly all aspects of the centre's work; in particular the parents praised the very caring and friendly staff and the good range of experiences and resources provided for their children. The responses from the management group were very positive. The staff responses raised concerns about the effectiveness of the leadership and management of the nursery and in particular the poor communication between the Principal and the staff. All of the responses have been shared with the Principal and governors of the nursery.

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