

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Holy Cross Nursery School,
Belfast

Report of an Inspection
in January 2011

STATISTICAL INFORMATION HOLY CROSS NURSERY SCHOOL, BELFAST

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	3	1
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	0	0
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	2	6
With English as an additional language	0	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.	60%
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
Qualified Nursery Assistants	2	1
Nursery Assistants (non-qualified)	0	1 (Temp)

Number of: ***	
Students	4
Trainees	0

*** Total placements since September of current year

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued	52
Percentage returned	84.6%
Number of written comments	18

HOLY CROSS NURSERY SCHOOL, BELFAST, BT14 7NZ (113-6360)
INSPECTED: 24 JANUARY 2011

1. Holy Cross Nursery School is situated in the Ardoyne area of west Belfast. Since the last inspection in 2004, two new classroom assistants and a parent co-ordinator have been appointed. The children who attend come mainly from the immediate area. The nursery operates two full time classes of children who are all in their immediate pre-school year.

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 school has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENTS

3. The children are very confident as they make independent choices and decisions during the free play sessions both indoors and outdoors. They spend extended periods of time settling to activities and using the wide range of materials creatively and productively. The children clearly enjoy their learning and almost all demonstrate high levels of involvement during their play. The children share and co-operate with one another and the staff; their behaviour is excellent. The few children who are still developing their social skills and levels of attention are given good support by the staff and are making progress in managing their own behaviour.

4. The children participate enthusiastically in the opportunities for dancing, music and songs during play and as an integral part of the daily routines. They make independent use of the wide range of art materials to explore and experiment with colour, texture and pattern. A few children are beginning to make simple representations of people and objects. Many children show an interest in sorting, counting, investigating capacity and shape as they play. The children use the large and small construction materials imaginatively to make simple models and structure. Many display curiosity and an interest in the natural world supported through the range of meaningful activities provided both indoors and outdoors.

5. The children are making very good progress in developing their listening and oral language skills. They are confident to ask questions and to talk about their experiences to the staff and to one another. The children enjoy books and engage in a wide repertoire of songs and rhymes.

THE PROVISION FOR LEARNING

6. The staff provide a high quality, language rich environment both indoors and outdoors. The open plan arrangements in the classrooms and the zoned areas outdoors are very well organised and managed to ensure a wide range of richly resourced and well supervised areas of play.

7. The staff and students are deployed effectively throughout the nursery day and all contribute fully to the high levels of meaningful engagement with the children. The continuous well focused staff training and development ensure the staff have a shared understanding of the learning to be promoted and use this to interact very effectively with the children. The staff listen carefully to the children and value their ideas, they manage small and large group sessions to promote the children's language and listening skills; they frequently extend the children's vocabulary and mathematical language as an integral part of the play. The staff are all caring and supportive in their approach; the children respond well to their appropriately high levels of expectation of acceptable behaviour.

8. The staff all contribute to the planning and assessment processes. The planning, which is detailed and evaluated regularly, guides the staff effectively in their practice and ensures a broad and well balanced pre-school curriculum. There are very good to outstanding opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The children's progress is monitored regularly and the information shared with parents who are encouraged to be an integral part of this process as soon as their child starts the nursery. Records of children identified as requiring additional support are well documented; the staff implement meaningful strategies and work in close liaison with parents and other relevant agencies.

9. The strong commitment to working in partnership with parents and the promotion of cross-community links are important features of the nursery. The appointment of an effective parent co-ordinator and the availability of a parents' room have been very important aspects in developing this work. Parents are encouraged to be involved in their child's learning and development and are clearly valued as the child's first educator. The effective cross-community link developed over several years with Edenderry Nursery School is an example of excellent practice, benefiting the parents, children and the local communities.

10. The quality of pastoral care within this school is outstanding. The strengths include the caring and supportive ethos, the excellent behaviour of the children and the excellent relationships between the staff and the children.

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

12. The nursery gives very good attention to promoting the children's health and well-being, including opportunities for a healthy fruit break and excellent opportunities for energetic physical activity.

13. The Principal provided excellent leadership and management of the nursery; she has a clear vision for the work in the nursery based on the needs of the children, parents and local community. The staff, who work very well as a team, are well trained and effectively deployed.

14. The school development planning process appropriately focuses on developing new areas of work while keeping a strong commitment to continuous review and improvement within the core elements of the teaching and learning.

15. The key strengths in this nursery school include:

- the very positive ethos;
- the high quality learning environment both indoors and outdoors;
- the professional skill and expertise of the staff;
- the effective links with the parents including the development of cross-community links;

- the very good to outstanding opportunities for learning in all aspects of the pre-school curriculum; and
- the excellent leadership and management provided by the Principal and the contribution of the whole staff team.

16. 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 school 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, the staff and the Board of Governors (governors) to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Almost 85% of the parents responded to the questionnaire and 18 parents provided additional written comments. The responses from the parents, staff and governors indicated a very high level of satisfaction with the educational and pastoral provision within the nursery; in particular, they highlighted the caring and supportive staff, the valuable role of the parent co-ordinator, the benefit of the cross-community links and the good progress being made by their children. All of the responses have been shared with the Principal and the governors.

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