

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Maria Goretti Nursery
School, Belfast

Report of an Inspection
in February 2011

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON ST MARIA GORETTI NURSERY SCHOOL, BELFAST (113-6353)

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*	1	0
With statement of special educational needs	1	1
without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for SEN	0	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	1	1
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	2	3
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.	71%
Average attendance for the previous year.	95%

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	2
Nursery Assistants (non-qualified)	0	1

Number of: ***	
Students	2
Trainees	0

*** Total placements since September of current year

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	52
Percentage returned:	42%
Number of written comments:	12

ST MARIA GORETTI NURSERY SCHOOL, BELFAST, BT12 7PS (113-6353)
INSPECTED: 23 FEBRUARY 2011

1. St Maria Goretti Nursery School is situated in Whiterock Gardens off the Whiterock Road, Belfast. The majority of the children come from within the St John's Parish or from neighbouring parishes. Since the last inspection in 2004 a new assistant teacher has been appointed; she took up post in 2009.

2. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this nursery school is very good. The nursery school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENTS

3. The children are very motivated and clearly enjoy their learning; most of them can play collaboratively and engage well with each other. The children identified as having special educational needs are well-integrated with their peers and are making progress with their learning. Almost all the children showed good levels of concentration and perseverance with their tasks. They use a wide range of materials creatively and the majority of children are beginning to make simple representations in their drawings and paintings. During the session observed, the children enjoyed spontaneous singing of songs and rhymes whilst at play. The children show a good level of interest in early mathematics and were observed making patterns, sorting, comparing and counting.

4. The children are very confident in engaging in conversations with each other and the staff. The majority of the children demonstrate a keen interest in books; they refer to them frequently during play and enjoy opportunities for storytelling in both large and small groups. Many of the children engage in early mark-making and writing and a small number are beginning to show an interest in letters and print.

THE PROVISION FOR LEARNING

5. The staff team have worked hard to create a stimulating and attractive learning environment enhanced with bright displays of the children's art work and the use of photographic records in storybook form which the children clearly enjoy referring to. All areas of the nursery are available for the children to use through the successful management of the open-plan classrooms and hall area. This arrangement is used effectively to support the children's independence and provides good space for the very wide range of activities offered. The daily routine offers a good balance between activities freely chosen by the children and adult-led group sessions.

6. The whole staff team demonstrate a very good understanding of how to promote learning across all the areas of the pre-school curriculum. Very good support is given to those children with additional learning needs. There are many occasions when the staff build well on the children's ideas to extend their vocabulary and understanding and promote their independence and social skills. The adults introduce mathematical language naturally in all areas of play and use open-ended questions to encourage the children to think and problem solve. During the larger group story and rhyme sessions the staff successfully generates a high level of enjoyment and involvement with the children.

7. The staff team work collaboratively to plan and review the programme on a regular basis. Detailed short-term planning for indoor play provides effective guidance on the learning to be promoted; it is implemented consistently. The staff makes good use of ongoing observation records to assess the children's learning and target support for their further development. This information is also used to inform the parents of their child's progress during their pre-school year through a parent/teacher interview and two written reports.

8. The nursery has very good links with the parents who are kept well-informed about the programme and their children's progress; their contribution to the life of the nursery is valued and they are actively encouraged to become involved in their child's learning.

9. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the nursery school is outstanding. This is evidenced by the welcoming, friendly and inclusive ethos, the very good working relationships at all levels and the excellent behaviour of all the children.

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

11. The nursery school gives excellent attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. This includes for example, the clear emphasis on health promotion through the curriculum, the provision of healthy breaks and the attention to dental care. There are very good opportunities for the children to engage in energetic physical play outdoors which encourages them to adopt healthy lifestyles.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

12. The Principal is highly committed to providing high quality pre-school provision for the children in her care. She fosters a strong team approach between the staff and the parents. The Principal manages the nursery school very effectively and is committed to continuous improvement.

13. The school development plan identifies appropriate priorities for future development including the need for the staff to develop more detailed planning for outdoor play. There is evidence that staff training opportunities have been effective in building the capacity of the staff to promote the children's language.

14. The key strengths of the nursery school include:

- the very positive ethos and the excellent pastoral care which effectively builds the children's confidence and self-esteem;
- the happy, settled and well-behaved children who engage confidently with their learning;
- the broad and balanced programme which provides good to excellent opportunities to learn in all areas of the pre-school curriculum;
- the many examples of very good staff interaction and involvement which support the development of the children's language and learning;

- the very good links established with the parents; and
- the Principal's effective organisation and management of the nursery school and the valuable contribution of all the staff.

15. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this nursery school is very good. The nursery school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children; and 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, staff and the Board of Governors (governors) to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Twenty-two of the parents responded to the questionnaire and 12 made additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaire were very positive and indicated a very high level of satisfaction with all aspects of the nursery school's work; in particular the parents praised the friendly, caring and supportive staff and were very appreciative of the very good progress made by their children since joining the nursery. Six of the staff and six of the governors responded to the questionnaire all of whom were very positive about all aspects of the nursery's work. Three of the staff and three of the governors made additional comments indicating their strong support for the nursery and their appreciation of the hard-working staff and Principal. The responses from the questionnaires have been shared with the Principal and governors of the nursery.

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