

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Downshire Nursery School,
Banbridge, Co Down

Report of an Inspection in
November 2014

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 ETI's publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self evaluation* at: [Together Towards Improvement Pre-school | Education and Training Inspectorate](#)

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

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a discussion with the principal;
- a meeting with representatives from the board of governors;
- 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.

The parental responses to the questionnaire indicate very high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the educational and pastoral provision provided by the nursery school. In particular, the parents appreciate the very good working relationships that they have with the staff, the commitment of the staff to the care and wellbeing of the children and the wide range of quality learning activities and experiences available to children throughout the year. The parents indicate that the school is highly regarded by the local community. The staff responses indicated a strong sense of team work and a dedication towards meeting the needs of the children and their families.

2. Context

Downshire Nursery School is located in close proximity to Abercorn Primary School and Banbridge High School in Banbridge. All of the children attending the two full-time nursery classes are in their immediate pre-school year and come mainly from the local area. Approximately twelve percent of the children currently enrolled have been identified as requiring additional support with their learning and development. The nursery operates an open plan system.

3. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

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

4. Overall findings

Overall Performance Level	Outstanding
Achievements and Standards	Outstanding
Provision	Outstanding
Leadership and Management	Outstanding

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- The children settle quickly on arrival in the nursery and immediately set about exploring and investigating the wide range of interesting activities available to them both indoors and outdoors. They display high levels of independence and self esteem and, when asked, are happy to discuss and explain their work and play. The children spend lengthy periods at self chosen activities and the quality of their work is often of a high standard. Most of their paintings and models are close and detailed representations of the world around them as they see it.
- The children engage in very good imaginative role play which is often based on their own ideas of personal experiences outside the nursery environment. They show a good awareness of different character roles and confidently act out scenarios. The literacy rich environment ensures that the children have excellent opportunities to develop their early writing skills and a keen interest in books. Several of the children can recognise and attempt to write, or form letters, in their own name. They participate well in group sessions, demonstrate good listening skills and show a high regard for the views and opinions of others and their environment. The children display a very good understanding of early mathematical language and can apply this in the correct context.

6. Provision

- The staff present the learning environment both indoors and outdoors to a very high standard and every opportunity is used effectively to promote language and learning across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. Excellent use is made of the children's art work and topical displays to enhance the learning environment and the resources are presented in an attractive manner to arouse curiosity and encourage the children to explore and investigate all areas of the nursery. The children have good opportunities to use technology to further their learning experiences. The promotion of the children's language and listening skills, mathematical awareness and the world around us are particular strengths. The organisation of the day is effectively managed to ensure routines are well established and transitions between activities and key times are smooth.
- The quality of the staff interactions with the children are consistently of a very high quality. They engage readily with the children in their play and often act as role models prompting and encouraging extended responses from them and developing their thinking skills.

- The staff plan a varied and progressively challenging programme throughout the year. They use the information gained from their first hand knowledge of the children and observations of their responses to make appropriate adjustments to the planning to ensure that their individual needs and interests are very well catered for. The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are identified at an early stage and appropriate advice and guidance is sought to address their needs. Parents are actively encouraged to become involved in their children's learning and are provided with regular information on their progress.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is outstanding. A friendly caring atmosphere, based on mutual respect, permeates the nursery and the relationships at all levels are excellent. The behaviour of the children is exemplary.

7. Leadership and management

- The principal provides highly effective leadership and management of the nursery school. She is very well supported in her leadership role by the hard working and dedicated staff who all contribute to the high quality of the provision. The staff and governors have a shared vision for the future development of the school. The school development planning process provides a sound basis for the strategic development of the nursery and the associated action plans provide an appropriately paced and prioritised approach to the implementation of the identified priorities. The nursery engages in effective links with parents, external agencies and the local community for the benefit of the children.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the nursery school has comprehensive arrangements in place for the safeguarding of children. The arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant departments.

8. Conclusion

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

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON DOWNSHIRE NURSERY SCHOOL

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3
Attending full-time	26	26	
Attending part-time			
Under 3 years of age*			
With statement of special educational needs			
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	2	0	
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	2	0	
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	1	3	
With English as an additional language	0	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.	21%
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	
Nursery Assistants (qualified)	1	2
Nursery Assistants (non-qualified)		
Special Needs Assistant		

Number of: ***	
Students	4
Trainees	

*** Total placements since September of current year

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