

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Newtownards Nursery School,
Co Down

Report of an Inspection in
May 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 children, and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a discussion with the staff;
- 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.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	52	9	17% ¹	5
Staff	*	*	*	*

* fewer than 5

The parental responses indicate very high levels of satisfaction with nearly all aspects of the educational and pastoral provision provided by the nursery school. In particular, the parents appreciate the progress evident in their children's learning and development, the opportunities provided for them to be involved in the work of the school and their child's learning, and the very good support for children with additional support needs.

2. Context

Newtownards Nursery School is situated on the Portaferry Road in Newtownards. Almost all of the children attending the two full-time nursery classes are in their immediate pre-school year and come from the local area. Almost 29% of the children have been identified as requiring additional support with their learning and development. Since the last inspection, a new principal was appointed and took up post in September 2012, and the building was extended to incorporate a new multi-function room in 2014.

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.

¹ The ETI is trialling a new range of methods to collect the views of parents/carers and, as a result, the percentage of questionnaires returned may be low.

4. Overall finding

Overall Performance Level	Very Good
Achievements and Standards	Very Good
Provision	Very Good
Leadership and Management	Very Good

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- The children display a positive attitude to their learning and respond well to the high expectations of the staff. Most of the children show good levels of concentration and perseverance with their chosen activities. The children's behaviour is excellent and they clearly enjoy learning.
- The children display high levels of independence they can access resources to extend their play and attend to their own needs at the snack routine. The children are at ease with the staff and turn to them confidently for support or to join in their play.
- As a result of the staff using appropriate mathematical language when participating in the children's play, they have promoted well the children's understanding of size, shape, weight, capacity and positional language. A majority of the children use mathematical language and demonstrate a good understanding of early mathematical concepts for their age and stage of development.
- The quality of the children's representational art work and model making is of a high standard. A majority of the children can, or are attempting to, write their own names. Children are developing very good oral language skills, for example by recalling past events as they browse in the class photo album. There is good use of books throughout the nursery, the children frequently browse and share books throughout the session. The children are very attentive during the group story sessions.

6. Provision

- There are very good opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The development of the children's personal, social and emotional development, language and communication skills and their understanding of early mathematical concepts are particular strengths of the nursery school's provision. The very positive ethos in the nursery is child-centred and each child is valued; their independence, confidence and self-esteem are effectively promoted. The attractively presented and well organised playrooms provide very good opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The new extension is used well to extend the children's learning opportunities.

- The quality of the staff's interaction is of a very high quality; they skilfully extend the children's language and thinking skills, a particular strength is the emphasis placed on the development of early mathematical concepts. The staff engage meaningfully in the play activities; they value the children's opinions and build effectively on their ideas.
- The programme provides a good variety of stimulating activities and learning experiences for the children in all areas of the pre-school curriculum throughout the year. The staff know the children very well and they are making increasingly effective use of their observations to assess the children's progress, to identify their individual needs and to inform their interactions with them.
- There are good links with the parents who are kept well informed about events within the nursery through the parents' information board and an informative newsletter.
- 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 support needs in all aspects of the nursery school provision.

7. Leadership and management

- The principal has been in post for two years and provides very good 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 of the children in the nursery school and is an excellent role-model for the staff. 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.
- The staff are beginning to develop the process of self-evaluation in the nursery school. The school development plan outlines appropriate priorities for the future improvements in the provision.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection the nursery has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding the children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department.
- The nursery gives appropriate attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity for example through the healthy breaks provided, and the very good opportunities for energetic outdoor play which encourage the children to adopt a healthy lifestyle

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of the 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.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON NEWTOWNARDS NURSERY SCHOOL

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

* 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.	98%
Average attendance for the previous year.	89%

2. Duration of Sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
4 ½ hours	0	0

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-Time	Part-Time
Teachers	2	0
Nursery Assistants	0	0
Qualified Nursery Assistants	2	0

Number of: ***	
Students	4
Trainees	

*** Total placements since September of current year

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued	52
Percentage returned	17%
Number of written comments	5

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