

Education and Training Inspectorate

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



St Michael's Nursery School, Belfast

Maintained nursery school DE Ref No (113-6315)

Report of an Inspection (involving Action Short of Strike) in
February 2019



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



CONTENTS

Section	Page
1. Context	1
2. Views of parents and staff	1
3. Focus of the inspection	1
4. Overall findings of the inspection	2
5. Outcomes for learners	2
6. Quality of provision	2
7. Leadership and management	3
8. Safeguarding	4
9. Overall effectiveness	4

Appendices

- A. Inspection methodology and evidence base
- B. Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

1. Context

St Michael's Nursery is located in west Belfast and occupies a purpose built facility with access to a large outdoor play area. All of the children attending come from the local and surrounding area. Since the last inspection a new principal has been appointed. The school has received its second Makaton Friendly award and second ECO flag.

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending full-time	26	26
Funded by Department of Education	26	26
With statement of special educational needs	#	#
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	6	#
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	#	#
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	#	#

Average attendance for the previous year.	91
Number of days open in previous school year	181

Source: data provided by the setting.

* On 1 July.

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

fewer than 5

N/A not available

Four of the teaching unions which make up the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC) have declared Action Short of Strike (ASoS) in relation to a pay dispute. This includes non-co-operation with the ETI. Prior to the inspection, the school informed the ETI that the majority of staff would be co-operating with the inspectors. The inspection proceeded and the following evaluations are based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection.

2. Views of parents and staff

A significant minority of parents and the majority of staff completed the confidential questionnaire, the responses of which were very positive. The parental written comments highlighted in particular: the approachable, caring and helpful staff; the supportive and inclusive environment; and, the partnership established with outside agencies to support the needs of individual children. A summary of the responses from the questionnaires has been shared with the principal and chair of the board of governors.

3. Focus of the inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all children, the inspection linked internal and external approaches to evaluate the:

- outcomes for the children;
- quality of provision for learning; and
- leadership and management.

As a result of the industrial action taken, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the outcomes for learners and the quality of the provision. Where it has been possible to evaluate aspects of the foci, they have been reported below.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Unable to assure fully the quality of education
Outcomes for learners	No performance level available
Provision for learning	No performance level available
Leadership and management	Outstanding

5. Outcomes for learners

- The personal, social and emotional development of the children observed is a key strength. They engage in sustained, concentrated, collaborative play and have a clear awareness of their own feelings and emotions and those of others. With the support of the staff the children are beginning to self-regulate. The children are developing very positive attitudes to learning; display high levels of independence and assume enthusiastically roles of responsibility, for example ECO warriors and line leaders.
- Almost all of the children observed are making very good progress in mathematics as they count, sort, measure and make comparisons, and use mathematical language accurately as part of their play. Most of the children communicate confidently with their peers, adults and visitors about their play, interests and ideas. Their attention and listening skills are very well developed; they show an interest in the wide range of books on display; and the majority of the children show a keen interest in early mark making.
- Outdoors, the children participate confidently in a wide range of physical, energetic play activities and make very good use of the extensive range of natural and authentic resources as they investigate, problem solve and explore their environment.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- standards attained by the children;
- progression in the children's learning; and
- the children's wider skills and dispositions.

6. Quality of provision

- The staff have created a welcoming, inclusive learning environment where the children's individual and collaborative learning journey is celebrated and shared with the parents through annotated photographic wall displays. Routines are well-established and there is an appropriate balance of free play and organised learning opportunities both in the attractive, well organised classroom and in the extensive outdoor environment.

- The documentation provided shows a systematic approach to the observation, assessment and planning process. The planning identifies clearly the learning potential of the planned activities and takes account of the individual needs, interests and responses of all the children, to ensure variety and appropriate challenge in their learning. The documentation identifying the support provided for and the progress made by those children who require assistance with aspects of their learning and development, outlines appropriate targets and strategies to help ensure the children's needs are fully met. Valuable links have been established with a range of support agencies to assist in this work.
- The consistently high quality interactions observed between the staff and the children are a key strength. The staff are particularly skilful in developing the children's sense of curiosity, are confident in exploiting spontaneous opportunities for learning and apply consistently agreed strategies to promote and sustain the exemplary behaviour.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the nursery's approach to care and welfare impacts positively on their learning and development. The children observed are forming positive relationships with the adults and one another which is evident in their personal and social skills.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully;

- the quality of the curriculum (including breadth, balance and appropriateness);
- the effectiveness of the guidance and support in bringing about high quality individual learning experiences;
- the effectiveness and impact of planning, teaching, learning and assessment in promoting successful learning; and
- care and welfare.

7. Leadership and management

- A highly effective developmental process is in place which is underpinned by extensive, rigorous self-evaluation. It is informed by all stakeholders including the children, through their regular contributions to the planning and the oral children's audit which is conducted on annual basis. Continuous professional development of staff is planned for strategically and meets well the needs of the staff and school. A recent focus on behaviour management and the consistency of approach by staff has had a positive impact on the children's ability to self-regulate.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors have a broad range of complementary skills and are fully committed to the nursery and take a very active role in the life of the school through, for example, regular visits and the delivery of a physical development programme for the children.

- The staff are involved in a wide range of community partnerships through which they have both accessed and shared effective practice. There is extensive engagement with parents and extended families and regular communication via the website and social media keeps families informed of the life and work of the nursery. Parents accept readily the extensive range of support and workshops offered and the opportunities to become actively involved in the nursery, through for example, charitable fundraising. Past pupils and parents contribute to the learning experiences and enhance the children's development in music and physical education through workshops and visits. There are very effective links with the local primary schools which support the smooth transition of the children to year 1.

8. Safeguarding

During the inspection, the nursery provided evidence that arrangements for safeguarding the children reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education.

However, owing to the action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully, the outworking of the arrangements for safeguarding across the nursery.

9. Overall effectiveness

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, resulting from the co-operation of the majority staff, leadership and management is outstanding. However, as a result of the industrial action taken, aspects of the outcomes for learners and the quality of provision could not be evaluated wholly as outlined above.

Owing to the impact of the action short of strike being taken by the staff the ETI is unable to assure fully parents/carers, the wider school community and stakeholders of the quality of education. This will be reflected in future inspection activity.

Inspection method and evidence base

The effective practice and self-evaluation questions which guide inspection and self-evaluation of pre-school settings, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the ETI publication *The Pre-school Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework* at: <https://www.eti.gov.uk/publications/inspection-and-self-evaluation-framework-isef-effective-practice-and-self-evaluation>

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

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a meeting with those involved with leadership and management;
- a meeting with staff;
- a meeting with the chair of governors; and
- the opportunity for the parents and staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

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 when reporting on Achievement and standards, on Provision for learning and on Leadership and management:

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on governance:

High degree of confidence
Confidence
Limited confidence

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on safeguarding:

Reflects the guidance
Reflects broadly the guidance
Unsatisfactory

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on care and welfare:

Impacts positively on learning, teaching and outcomes for learners
Does not impacts positively enough on learning, teaching and outcomes for learners

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the school:

The school has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.
The school demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.
The school needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.
The school needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners. It requires external support to do so. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2019

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the ETI website: www.etini.gov.uk