

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Ballymena Nursery School,
Co Antrim

Report of an Inspection
in May 2010

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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*

Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON BALLYMENA NURSERY SCHOOL

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending full-time	0	0
Attending part-time	52	43
Under 3 years of age*	0	4
With statement of special educational needs	1	1
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	4	2
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	2	3
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	2	3
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.	10.5%
Average attendance for the previous year.	89%

2. Duration of Sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
-	2½ hours	2½ hours

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-Time	Part-Time
Teachers	1	1
Nursery Assistants	2	2
Qualified Nursery Assistants	0	0

Number of: ***	
Students	6
Trainees	0

*** Total placements since September of current year

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued	94
Percentage returned	63 %
Number of written comments	29

**BALLYMENA NURSERY SCHOOL, CO ANTRIM, BT43 7BL (311-0037)
INSPECTED: 24 MAY 2010**

1. Ballymena Nursery School is situated in Trostan Avenue, Ballymena. The children come from the town of Ballymena and the wider area. There have been two staff changes since the last inspection. The nursery school has had major refurbishment making significant improvements to the quality of the accommodation. At the time of the inspection four children were in their penultimate 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 vast majority of the children are consistently engaged in high levels of concentrated play; all make independent choices from the wide range of resources which are readily available and easily accessible to them. During the inspection, many of the children were observed, creating and constructing their own designs. Many were playing imaginatively in the fruit and vegetable shop, the beach area and the camping kitchen. The children are keen to draw detailed and representational drawings of mini-beasts, chicks, plans for house constructions and the outdoor planting area, creatively using materials for pattern making and figurative representation. The children care for and respect their newly hatched chicks, visiting birds, mini-beasts and herb garden. They are becoming very involved in collecting and sorting recyclable and reusable materials. The children demonstrate very good levels of self-confidence, self-control and self-discipline. They are eager to explore the stimulating learning environment.

4. The development of the children's language and communication skills are key priorities throughout the nursery. The planned programme, both indoors and outdoors, provides excellent opportunities to enrich and extend the children's vocabulary. The majority of the children demonstrate very good progress in their developing vocabulary, listening and conversational skills. They can, for example, ask probing questions, follow directions and complex recipe cards, and many do so with confidence. There is also a minority of the children who are developing their vocabulary, and expressing fluently their thoughts and ideas at a slower pace. All the children love books, stories and join in enthusiastically during innovative and exciting story sessions. They are engaged in many opportunities in early mark-making and writing in most play areas. Excellent links with the speech and language therapist have been developed to reinforce the individual support provided for these children within the nursery programme and ensure that support targets are sharply focused, regularly reviewed and updated.

THE PROVISION FOR LEARNING

5. The staff demonstrate highly skilful involvement with the children in all areas of learning both indoors and outdoors. Recent whole school staff development prioritised and has subsequently enhanced the children's thinking skills. The staff ensure that every opportunity is availed of to promote learning in all six areas of the curriculum. During the inspection, the staff promoted rich mathematical language, creativity, construction, investigative and problem-solving skills. Books and reading materials are incorporated effectively throughout every play area.

6. The staff have developed a sound and effective system for planning a stimulating and balanced programme. They regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the programme, and the children's ideas and comments are clearly reflected in the choice of stimulating topics and themes. The staff have also adopted a systematic, discrete and manageable approach to observing and recording the children's progress.

7. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is outstanding. Among the strengths are the warm, welcoming and child-friendly environment for both children and the parents which permeates the nursery, the celebration of the children's work and progress, the respect for one another, the value placed on the children's views and the children's excellent and courteous behaviour.

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

9. The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity; for example the children have healthy daily snacks, some of which they prepare independently and they have excellent opportunities to play outdoors, including experiencing a varied and progressive range of energetic physical activities.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

10. The Principal is highly enthusiastic, motivated and provides excellent leadership for the school. She sets high standards for herself and others, provides excellent support and training for the staff and has established a culture of self-evaluation to promote continuous improvement. She and the staff have worked tirelessly to improve the quality of the provision, and to raise the profile of the nursery within the local community. The comprehensive and sharply focused nursery development plan identifies relevant priorities for improvement including the physical play programme both indoors and outdoors, extending the children's thinking skills, the involvement of the parents and the community and meeting individual needs.

11. The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents, the governors and the staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. A majority (63%) of the parents responded to the questionnaire and twenty-nine made additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaire indicated that almost all the parents regard the nursery very highly and appreciate:

- the caring staff who are highly concerned for the well-being of the children and their family;
- the children's achievements and the many skills they are learning through the excellent programme and the extended activities promoted on the school website; and
- the continually developing learning environment both indoors and outdoors.

All of the responses from the Board of Governors and the staff were wholly positive and indicated a high level of satisfaction with the nursery. All of the responses have been shared with the staff and management of the nursery.

12. The key strengths in this nursery school include:

- the high standards achieved and the excellent progress being made by the children in relation to their age and stage of development;
- the quality and richness of the extensive programme and the range of challenging experiences offered;
- the excellent provision for those children who require additional support with aspects of their learning;
- the excellent quality of staff interaction in promoting the children's care, learning and development;
- the excellent links established with the parents, other schools and agencies within and beyond the community; and
- the outstanding leadership provided and the competent and supportive staff who work well as a team to promote continuous improvement.

13. 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.

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