

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

College Farm Nursery School,
Armagh

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 COLLEGE FARM NURSERY SCHOOL, ARMAGH
(513-6607)**

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	0
With statement of special educational needs	0	0
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	0	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	0	0
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	3	0
With English as an additional language	2	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.	15.4%
Average attendance for the previous year.	95%

2. Duration of Sessions

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

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-Time	Part-Time
Teachers	2	0
Nursery Assistants (qualified)	2	0
Nursery Assistants (non-qualified)	0	1

Number of: ***	
Students	0
Trainees	0

*** Total placements since September of current year

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued	53
Percentage returned	60.4%
Number of written comments	21

COLLEGE FARM NURSERY SCHOOL, ARMAGH, BT61 8AN (513-6607)
INSPECTED: 10 MAY 2010

1. College Farm Nursery School is located off the Cathedral Road in the centre of Armagh City. Since the last inspection, a new assistant teacher has been appointed; she took up her post in February 2010.

2. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this nursery school is good. The nursery has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement, which the nursery has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) will monitor the nursery's progress on the areas for improvement.

CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENTS

3. Almost all of the children demonstrate high levels of independence and autonomy in their personal care, decision-making and use of materials. They are very well-settled and engage in lengthy periods of sustained and concentrated play across a range of activities. The children's creative work is very well developed; they choose and use the available materials with confidence, for example, to make models. There are many good examples of the children's own, well-developed representational work on display.

4. The children's language and communication skills are well developed. Most of the children participate in imaginative role-play linked to a planned theme, and almost all communicate effectively with one another and the staff. The children have opportunities to handle and explore a wide range of books and enjoy stories, both independently and in group situations. They participate well in and enjoy songs and rhymes. Many of the children show an interest in early writing and can recognise their own name.

THE PROVISION FOR LEARNING

5. The staff work hard to create an inviting and interesting learning environment for the children, and make very good use of all the available space both indoors and outdoors. They provide the children with many opportunities to explore and investigate many natural and authentic items that are incorporated into the areas of play. There are good opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum, and a particularly strong emphasis is placed on the children's creative development. The staff use a thematic approach to their planning to ensure variety in the programme throughout the year, however, there is a need to review aspects of the planning, to ensure more balance in all areas of the pre-school curriculum, and greater variety in the activities provided beyond the chosen theme. The daily routine is managed effectively, however, there is a need to review aspects of the lunch routine to ensure that the best use is made of all of the time available for learning.

6. During the inspection, the quality of the interaction observed between the staff and the children was consistently of a high standard and, on occasions, it was excellent. The staff listen to the children's own ideas, have realistically high expectations, and promote language and learning effectively through the play. The staff keep detailed observations and records of the children's progress, and use the information to meet the individual needs of the children and to report to the parents.

7. The provision for pastoral care within the nursery school is outstanding; especially notable is the very good care and sensitive support provided by the staff, and the excellent behaviour of nearly all of the children.

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

9. The children have regular access to outdoor play, and are provided with good opportunities to promote their physical development. Although the staff provide a healthy snack for the children during the morning session, the current system of promoting only the eating of packed lunches, provided by parents, for all of the children at mid-day needs to be reviewed urgently. The school needs to ensure that a well-balanced nutritional meal is available for those children who are entitled to free school meals, and for other children whose parents who wish to avail of such provision.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

10. The staff are hard-working and dedicated, and work well as a team. There is a comprehensive school development plan, which identifies appropriate priorities for improvement. There are excellent relationships with the parents, and very good links have been developed with several local schools.

11. The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents and the staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Thirty two of the parents responded to the questionnaire and twenty one made additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaire were highly affirmative of the provision, and indicated that the parents appreciate the caring staff and the progress their children are making in their learning and development. The responses from the Board of Governors (governors) and the staff questionnaires were also very positive. A summary of the responses have been shared with the staff and a representative of the governors of the nursery school.

12. The key strengths in this nursery school include:

- the happy, caring ethos, based on good working relationships at all levels, and reflected in the children's excellent behaviour;
- the attractive and interesting indoor and outdoor learning environments;
- the consistently high, and, on occasions, excellent quality of the interaction between the staff and the children ;
- the good opportunities to learn in nearly all areas of the pre-school curriculum;
- the very good quality of the children's progress in learning, and their development of independence and creativity, and
- the hard-working and dedicated team.

13. The priorities identified for improvement are the need to:

- review aspects of the lunch routine to make more effective use of all of the time available for learning; and

- review aspects of the planning to ensure more balance in all areas of the pre-school curriculum, and greater variety in the activities beyond the chosen theme.

14. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this nursery school is good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the nursery school has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Inspectorate will monitor the nursery school's progress on the areas for improvement.

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