

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Magherafelt Nursery School,
Co Londonderry

Report of an Inspection
in February 2010

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON MAGHERAFELT NURSERY SCHOOL (311-6177)

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3
Attending full-time	26	0	0
Attending part-time	0	52	52
Under 3 years of age*	0	0	5
With statement of special educational needs	1	1	2
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	5	3	9
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	3	1	0
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	3	13	7
With English as an additional language	0	0	3

* 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.	6%
Average attendance for the previous year.	96%

2. Duration of Sessions

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

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-Time	Part-Time
Teachers	3	1
Nursery Assistants (qualified)	3	0
Nursery Assistants (non-qualified)	0	0
General Assistant (special educational needs)	0	1
Classroom Assistant (special educational needs)	0	1

Number of: ***	
Students	0
Trainees	0

*** Total placements since September of current year

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued	130
Percentage returned	75%
Number of written comments	75

MAGHERAFELT NURSERY SCHOOL, CO LONDONDERRY, BT45 6BL (311-6177)
INSPECTED: 2 FEBRUARY 2010

1. The nursery school is situated on the Fairhill Road, Magherafelt. The children come from the town and a wide surrounding area within a radius of approximately 12 miles. At the time of the inspection, five children were in their penultimate pre-school year. Since the last inspection, two new assistant teachers have been appointed. The nursery school is waiting for new purpose-built accommodation on the Castledawson Road, Magherafelt.

2. 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 (75%) of the parents responded to the questionnaire and 75 made additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaires indicated that almost all the parents regard the nursery very highly and appreciate:

- the high concern shown by the staff for the welfare of the children;
- the highly effective leadership and management;
- the highly stimulating learning environment, both indoors and outdoors;
- the progress and development being made by all of the children; and
- the many courses and workshops provided for them to become informed and more involved in the education of their children.

All of the responses from the 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.

3. The provision for pastoral care in the nursery is outstanding. Among the strengths, are the excellent relationships and communication links between the staff, the children and their families, the staff's high expectation of the children, and the high quality of the programme provided.

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

5. The nursery gives outstanding attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, the children are involved in regularly making a variety of healthy snacks and drinks, they have access to drinking water throughout the day. The children are also involved in setting their own tables and serving the school meal each day. They have daily opportunities to play outdoors, including experiencing a varied and progressive range of energetic physical activities.

6. The majority of the children engage in purposeful play; many make independent choices from the wide range of additional resources readily available to them. During the inspection, many of the children were observed designing, creating and constructing their own ideas. Small groups of children were engaged in lengthy periods of co-operative and imaginative play. The staff encourage and support the small number of children who are still

at the stage of engaging in solitary and parallel play, to participate where appropriate, in small groups with their peers. The children are keen to draw from observation, with attention to detail and realistic representation. Many examples were observed of the children engaged in early mark-making and emergent writing.

7. The staff give high priority to developing the children's language and communication skills. The planned activities provided many opportunities to enrich and extend the children's vocabulary. Many of the children demonstrated good progress in their developing vocabulary, listening and conversational skills. While many of the children spoke fluently and clearly about their play, others were developing the confidence to use short, simple sentences. Excellent links with the various speech and language therapists have been developed to reinforce the individual support provided for these children within the nursery programme.

8. The staff have worked tirelessly and creatively to develop an ever-changing and rich environment throughout the nursery. All indoor and outdoor spaces are used effectively during all the daily sessions. Displays of the children's work, inviting interest areas and the imaginative use of real and natural materials provide the children with a celebration of their work and the developing topics and themes. The adults ensure that every opportunity is availed of to promote learning across all six areas of the pre-school curriculum. For example, during the inspection the staff promoted rich mathematical language during the course of the children's play which was extended by the skilful and effective use of open-ended questions.

9. All members of staff are clear about the learning opportunities they are providing through the play activities, the group sessions and the daily routines. They respond effectively and skilfully to the children's spontaneous requests and confidently guide and support them in their individual explorations. The staff are prompt to identify, refer where appropriate, and support effectively those children who require additional help with aspects of their learning and development in a fully inclusive manner.

10. The nursery has been involved in a Comenius project for a number of years. Recently, this project has involved the staff working with other pre-school settings across Europe on a comparative study on gender equity; this involvement has enhanced the range of activities and resources provided for the children within all the playrooms. Self-evaluation is a particular strength of the nursery; the staff continually review, adapt and update their planning and the delivery of the programme, which results in a richness in the quality of the children's experiences. There is a clear match between the planned activities and experiences, and the children's individual interests, development and needs.

11. When communicating with the parents, the staff use a variety of highly effective methods. The nursery, for example, avails of an e-mailing and texting service and a plasma-screen television in the foyer provides up-to-date relevant information; along with the monthly newsletters which contain news, advice and rhymes, these methods together ensure that, the parents are kept well informed about the day-to-day work with the children. Through the use of the workshop and courses, and in particular, the 'Incredible Years Parenting Programme', the parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their children's development and learning at all levels.

12. The excellent leadership and management provided by the Principal has ensured that the quality of education provided by this nursery school is outstanding. She sets high standards for herself and others, provides effective professional support and training for the staff and has developed a strong sense of team-spirit among the more recently appointed staff. The Principal's enthusiasm for self-evaluation and staff development has empowered all members of staff to share her vision for the continued development of the nursery.

13. The key strengths in this nursery school include:

- the independent, settled and motivated children;
- the quality and richness of the extensive programme provided which results in the good progress being made by the children in all areas of the pre-school curriculum;
- the consistent, skilful interaction and involvement of all the staff;
- the priority given to the personal and professional development of the staff and the well-embedded culture of self-evaluation and continuous improvement;
- the excellent leadership and management; and
- the well established links developed with the parents, outside agencies and feeder primary schools.

14. 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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