

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Matt Talbot Nursery School,
Belfast

Report of an Inspection
in May 2013



Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



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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%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON MATT TALBOT NURSERY SCHOOL, BELFAST NURSERY SCHOOL

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending full-time	25	25
Attending part-time	0	0
Under 3 years of age*	0	0
With statement of special educational needs	1	0
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	1	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	2	1
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	12	12
With English as an additional language	0	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.	90%
Average attendance for the previous year.	83%

2. Duration of Sessions

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

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-Time	Part-Time
Teachers	2	0
Nursery Assistants (qualified)	4	0
Nursery Assistants (non-qualified)	0	0

Number of: ***	
Students	11
Trainees	0

*** Total placements since September of current year

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued	48
Percentage returned	32%
Number of written comments	12

1. Introduction

Matt Talbot Nursery School is situated in the New Barnsley Estate in West Belfast. The school currently has 90% free school meals.

2. Inspection methods and evidence base

The inspection evaluations are based on evidence gained from in-class observations and from a range of documentation provided by the nursery.

The views of the parents, staff, and management group were sought through a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Forty-eight questionnaires were issued to the parents and fifteen were returned, twelve with written comments. The staff and the management group also returned the questionnaires with written comments. All of the returns from the questionnaires indicated high levels of satisfaction with the work of the nursery school. In particular the parents valued the helpful and approachable staff and the welcoming, happy learning environment. Many also commented on the progress their child had made since starting in the nursery school. The staff noted their appreciation of the wide range of resources available and the warm, friendly working environment. The Board of Governors praised highly the care and education provided by the staff for all the children.

3. Overall finding of the inspection

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the nursery school is outstanding; the quality of the pastoral care is also outstanding. The nursery school has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

Summary of key findings

Children's Achievements Quality of Provision Leadership and management	Outstanding Outstanding Outstanding
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KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

4. Children's achievements

The quality of the children's achievements is outstanding.

- The children are very well settled, highly motivated and engage well in sustained periods of purposeful play. They are confident in their approach to activities and in their interactions with adults and peers. The staff provide a wide range of creative and natural resources and the children use these materials creatively and imaginatively in their play activities. Almost all of the children demonstrate their curiosity and interest in the natural world by asking insightful questions of the adults, who in turn extend the children's language by supporting them in accessing a range of sources of information including interactive technology.

- A particular strength of the nursery school is the development and use of language including early mathematical language. The children's conversational skills are very well developed and they talk confidently about their play activities and experiences outside the nursery school. The children are able to use early mathematical language associated with number, shape, size, quantity and position and apply this in the correct context.
- The children show a keen interest in books. They use the books and other sources of information available at the various activities both indoors and outdoors and frequently browse in the well stocked book areas. The children request stories of the adults and listen attentively at storytime, joining in enthusiastically with songs and rhymes. There is an appropriate emphasis placed on the development of early writing skills and many of the children are able to write their own names. The children's early representational drawings and paintings show very good attention to detail.

5. Provision for learning

The quality of the provision for learning is outstanding

- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is outstanding. There are excellent working relationships at all levels and the learning environment is characterised by a sense of enjoyment and productivity. The behaviour of the children is exemplary and they show consideration to their peers and respect towards the adults in the nursery. The staff are very caring to the children and use skilful and sensitive approaches to build the children's self-esteem and confidence. Routines are well established and the children play an active role in looking after their learning environment.
- The staff interactions with the children are of a consistent high quality. They respond skilfully to spontaneous learning opportunities and build effectively on the children's ideas and interests. The staff support the children in making connections across the pre-school curriculum and in particular help them to relate their early mathematical experiences to real life situations. The staff model the use of appropriate language and use effectively the play opportunities to extend the children's thinking skills. The children have very good opportunities to experiment with and investigate the properties of a wide range of materials.
- The staff have worked hard to create a stimulating and exciting learning environment. All of the available indoor and outdoor areas have been used imaginatively to create learning opportunities for the children and the extensive provision of real life and natural resources has developed the children's sense of resourcefulness and inquisitiveness in the world around them. The children are also confident in the use of technology including interactive whiteboards and mobile devices to further their learning experiences.

- The staff plan effectively across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The planning is modified appropriately to meet the individual needs and interests of all the children. The observation and assessment strategies in place are of a high quality and these are used very well to identify the children with additional learning needs. The staff have accessed extensive external support from a range of agencies to support the children in their learning, particularly in the development of speech and language. Parents are actively encouraged to become involved in their children's learning and are provided with regular information on their child's progress.
- The nursery school gives outstanding attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity through the provision of a healthy snack and excellent opportunities for energetic play. There is an on-going programme of development for the outdoor play area.

6. Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management is outstanding

- The Principal provides outstanding leadership and has appropriately high expectations for the continued development of the nursery school within the local community. She is very well supported in her leadership role by the hard working, skilled and dedicated teacher and classroom assistants.
- The School Development Planning process provides an excellent basis for the strategic development of the nursery school. The principal is reflective in her approach to improvement and has provided regular opportunities for members of the school community, including pupils, parents, staff, the Board of Governors and local pre-schools and primary schools, to be involved in the process of self-evaluation. Information from this feedback has informed the future development of the nursery school and the associated action plans provide an appropriately paced and costed approach to the implementation of the identified priorities.
- The nursery school engages in extensive and effective links with parents and external agencies. A particular strength of the nursery school is the link established with the local primary schools whereby a series of staff exchange visits provide valuable opportunities for the staff to experience first hand and engage in professional dialogue about progression and continuity from the pre-school to the foundation stage.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the nursery school has comprehensive arrangements in place for the safeguarding of children. The arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department.

CONCLUSION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this nursery school is outstanding; the quality of the pastoral care is also outstanding. The nursery school has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

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