

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Colmcille's Nursery School,
Downpatrick

Report of an Inspection
in March 2010

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON ST COLMCILLE'S NURSERY SCHOOL, DOWNPATRICK

1. Details of Children

| Number of children: | Class 1 | Class 2 |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| Attending full-time | 26 | 25 |
| 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 | 11 | 10 |
| At CoP stages 3 or 4** | 10 | 10 |
| At CoP stages 1 or 2** | 1 | 0 |
| With English as an additional language | 1 | 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. | 40% |
| Average attendance for the previous year. | 76% |

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) | 0 | 3 |
| Nursery Assistants (non-qualified) | 1 | 0 |

| Number of: *** | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Students | 0 |
| Trainees | 1 |

*** Total placements since September of current year

4. Parental Questionnaires

| | |
|----------------------------|-----|
| Number issued | 51 |
| Percentage returned | 51% |
| Number of written comments | 16 |

**ST COLMCILLE'S NURSERY SCHOOL, DOWNPATRICK, CO DOWN, BT30 8BJ
(413-6211)**

INSPECTED: 22 MARCH 2010

1. St Colmcille's Nursery School is situated in the grounds of St Colmcille's Primary School and adjacent to the Flying Horse and Model Farm estates in Downpatrick. Almost all the children come from the surrounding area. Since the last inspection, a new Principal and an assistant teacher have been appointed.

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. Approximately half of the parents (26) responded to the questionnaire and 16 made additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaires indicated that the parents regard the nursery very highly and appreciate the significant attention shown by the staff for the welfare of the children and the progress and development being made by the children. Five of the staff returned questionnaires, with two written comments. Seven of the members of the Board of Governors (governors) returned questionnaires and five made additional comments. All of the responses from the governors and the staff were wholly positive and indicated a high level of satisfaction with the nursery; in particular, they appreciated the sense of team-work which pervades the nursery. The collated findings emerging from the responses have been shared with the staff and management of the nursery.

3. The provision for pastoral care in the school 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 good quality of the programme provided. The children's personal, social and emotional needs are developed through the sensitive interaction of the teachers and the support staff.

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

5. The school gives outstanding attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, through the provision of healthy buffet snacks. The children have daily opportunities to play outdoors, including experiencing a varied and progressive range of energetic physical activities.

6. The children are happy and well-settled in their playrooms and outdoor areas and demonstrate enjoyment in their learning. The majority of the children engage in purposeful play; many make independent choices from the wide range of additional resources readily available to them. Many of the children show a good interest in books, particularly those linked to current themes and positioned adjacent to, or integrated into, the different play activities both indoors and outside. The children enjoy and respond well to rhymes, songs and music making. Many show a natural curiosity as they explore the materials and activities on offer. During the inspection, 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.

7. Approximately 40% of the children have been identified as having special educational needs; they are well integrated, receive well-planned support from the staff and are making good progress in their learning and development. A significant number of these children have speech immaturities or delays in their language and communication skills; the staff appropriately give high priority to developing the children's language and communication

skills. The planned activities provide many opportunities to enrich and extend the children's vocabulary and develop their listening skills, for example, the lunch-time routines are sensitively used by the adults to develop the children's social and conversational skills. The school is making effective use of its extended schools funding to employ a speech and language therapist (SpLT) to work with individual and groups of children and their parents three days per week. An additional SpLT, funded by SureStart, also provides advice and support to the staff which, in turn, continues to enhance their capacity to support children with language and communication difficulties. During the inspection, there was evidence that these joint actions and initiatives were having a positive impact on the development of the quality and range of the children's language.

8. The staff have worked creatively to make effective use of all of the available space within the classrooms and outdoors to provide a stimulating and attractive learning environment. 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. The staff's observations and assessments are used effectively to ensure there is a clear match between the planned activities and experiences, and the children's individual interests, development and needs. 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.

9. The staff have worked hard to promote and maintain links with parents and the local community. Regular newsletters and a range of workshops held in the attractive Parents' Room encourage parents to be actively involved in their children's learning and development at all levels.

10. 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 school development plan includes relevant action plans for all aspects of the work of the nursery school and there is evidence of continuous improvement.

11. The key strengths in this nursery school include:

- the settled, motivated and well-behaved children;
- the good progress being made by the children in relation to their stage of development;
- the attractive and stimulating learning environment and the wide range of interesting activities provided for the children;
- the early identification and excellent support being provided for children with speech and language difficulties;
- the highly skilful interaction of the staff with the children which promotes the children's learning and development;

- the excellent leadership and management; and
- the well established links developed with the parents.

12. 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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