

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Stanhope Street Nursery
School, Belfast

Report of an Inspection
in March 2010

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON STANHOPE STREET NURSERY SCHOOL, BELFAST (111-6157)

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*	13	10
With statement of special educational needs	0	0
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support 1 from other professionals for special educational needs	3	2
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	1	1
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	1	1
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.	19%
Average attendance for the previous year.	85%

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	0	0
Qualified Nursery Assistants	2	2

Number of: ***	
Students	1
Trainees	1

*** Total placements since September of current year

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued	52
Percentage returned	48.1%
Number of written comments	11

STANHOPE STREET NURSERY SCHOOL, BELFAST, BT13 1BX (111-6157)
INSPECTED: 4 MARCH 2010

1. The nursery school is situated in Carrick Hill, off Clifton Street, and provides two full-time classes. Since the last inspection, the number of children who will currently have two years in the nursery has increased from 22% to almost 50%. At the time of the inspection there were recent changes to the staff team; the assistant teacher had assumed the role of Principal for one school year and a substitute teacher was in post. An additional classroom assistant is employed to help support the needs of the younger children. The school provides a breakfast club and an oral language club through extended schools funding.

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. Twenty-five of the parents responded to the questionnaire and 11 made additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaire indicated a very high level of satisfaction with the provision; in particular, they appreciated the caring, friendly and dedicated staff. The six responses from the staff were positive about their work with the children and parents; there was less satisfaction with the opportunities available for staff training and development. The responses from the management group endorsed the work of the staff. All of the responses have been shared with the staff and management of the nursery.

3. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the nursery is good. The strengths include the caring relationships between the staff and the children and the staff's commitment to their well-being.

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

5. The nursery gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity through, for example, the regular provision of a fruit break, the involvement in a dental scheme and regular opportunities provided for physical activity.

ACHIEVEMENTS

6. Many of the children choose and use equipment with confidence and independence. They show care for one another, play co-operatively in the role-play areas and are beginning to form friendships. Small groups of children can sustain prolonged periods of concentrated play as they explore the interesting resources at the water and sand activities. The children are mainly at the exploratory and experimental stage of using the creative materials as appropriate to their stage of development. A few are beginning to make simple representations of people and objects in their environment. The children enjoy making simple constructions with a range of materials. The younger children show enjoyment and confidence to climb and balance on the large equipment outdoors. At times, the older children lacked purpose in these activities when they had insufficient challenge. A significant number of the younger children are still overly dependent on the adults to use materials and sustain their play, and a small number appear to lack the maturity to benefit fully from a full nursery day. High quality play which meets the needs of the full range of children needs to be fostered more consistently in the nursery.

7. The nursery places a high priority on developing the children's oral language. The children all listen attentively during large and small group story and activity sessions. A majority can discuss their ideas and experiences with the staff and one another. The children benefit from the opportunity to take part in small group activities through the oral

language club to promote their listening and language. These sessions should be planned for and assessed more systematically. A few children show an early interest in books and mark making; more emphasis should be given to the promotion of these activities within the areas of play to stimulate the children's interest and language development. A significant minority of children display speech immaturities or delays in their speech which the staff are working to address.

THE PROVISION FOR LEARNING

8. The staff have worked very hard to create a stimulating and richly resourced learning environment for the children to explore. The introduction of a range of authentic and natural items enhances the quality of the play opportunities.

The staff know the children well and provide high levels of care and support for them. In the best practice, the staff interactions are well-matched to the children's varying stages of development, and the staff value and build on the children's own ideas supporting them effectively to be independent learners. The staff make good use of songs, rhymes and planned activities to support the children's understanding of early mathematical concepts; they ask appropriate questions and reinforce the children's social skills, behaviour and daily routines through effective use of praise and consistent strategies. Where the staff are too directive in their approach and have less effective daily routines, the children lack the skills to settle and purposefully sustain their play and to be creative in their use of materials.

The staff have produced useful long-term planning which provides a broad and balanced overview of the pre-school programme. The recently introduced changes to the planning and assessment methods need to be developed further and embedded into the daily practice. The planning needs to identify more consistently the intended learning for both age groups, be evaluated more regularly and include planning for learning outdoors. The assessment methods need to be developed to provide sufficient information to track children's progress in learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

9. At the time of the inspection, the Principal was on a period of leave; the assistant teacher had temporarily taken over the Principal's role. The school development plan needs to be amended and developed in line with guidance from DE, and should address the issues raised during the inspection. The staff and management need to ensure there are sufficient opportunities for the continued professional development of all of the staff.

10. The key strengths of the nursery include:

- the very attractive and stimulating learning environment prepared by the staff;
- the good opportunities for children to develop their mathematical language, the effective group sessions and sustained exploratory play in the sand, water and construction activities;
- the effective use of a range of visits and visitors to enhance the children's learning experiences;
- the caring and committed staff; and
- the good links being developed with the parents.

11. The priorities for development include the need to:

- develop a more consistently high quality of staff interaction and management of daily routines to promote the children's learning;
- continue to develop and embed the recent changes to the planning and assessment to track children's progress more effectively and tailor the programme to the needs of all of the children; and
- improve the processes for self-evaluation and whole-school improvement.

CONCLUSION

12. In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this nursery school is satisfactory. The strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision, but the inspection has identified a number of areas for improvement in learning and teaching and in leadership and management, which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the nursery school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

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