

# PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Ballymoney Nursery School,  
Co Antrim

Report of an inspection in  
March 2015

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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

CUSTOMER  
SERVICE  
EXCELLENCE



## Quantitative terms

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%

## Performance levels

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels in reports:

<b>DESCRIPTOR</b>
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

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## 1. Inspection method and evidence base

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of pre-school settings, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the ETI's publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self evaluation* at: [Together Towards Improvement Pre-school | Education and Training Inspectorate](#)

Inspectors observed teaching and learning through play, the children's achievements and standards, scrutinised relevant documentation, and held discussions with the staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a discussion with the staff;
- a meeting with those involved with leadership and management; and
- the opportunity for the parents, staff and members of the management group to complete a confidential questionnaire or to meet with the inspection team.

Eighteen percent of the parents responded to the questionnaire and most of them included additional written comments. The responses were highly positive and indicated a very high level of satisfaction with almost all aspects of the setting's work; in particular, the parents praised the approachable, hard-working and caring principal and staff and the varied learning experiences provided for the children. The responses from the staff questionnaires were very positive and they highlighted the strong team spirit and the focus on self-evaluation and staff development. The ETI has reported the main issues emerging from the questionnaires to the principal and a representative of the board of governors.

## 2. Context

Ballymoney Nursery School is accommodated in spacious pre-fabricated building situated in Ballymoney, County Antrim. The nursery was last inspected in 2005 and, since that time, the nursery has increased in enrolment and now operates four part-time sessions. An additional teacher has been appointed to teach one of the sessions.

## 3. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards;
- the quality of provision; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

## 4. Overall findings

<b>Overall Performance Level</b>	<b>Very good</b>
<b>Achievements and Standards</b>	<b>Very good</b>
<b>Provision</b>	<b>Very good</b>
<b>Leadership and Management</b>	<b>Very good</b>

## **Key findings of the inspection**

### **5. Achievements and standards**

- The children are very sociable and engage purposefully in collaborative play for extended periods of time. They demonstrate very good levels of independence in following the routines of the nursery and in accessing the resources they require. Most of the children have very good speech and language skills and are confident in approaching the adults to seek help if required. They have good listening skills and participate well in the small and large group story sessions.
- The children enjoy the role-play opportunities and can adopt and sustain roles in, for example, the hospital play-area. In all classes, the children have a good interest in early mark-making and they make very good use of the writing opportunities in all other play activities. They recognise their names, can label their work independently and a number are beginning to write their names. The children engage in creative art activities with good levels of concentration and are developing well their fine motor skills. They produce good representational drawings and the majority of them have good scissor skills.
- A number of the children have a developing awareness of numbers and enjoy the regular opportunities provided for them to count in the playroom. During the inspection, the children were observed counting, sorting and matching and using accurately some early mathematical language for shape, size and capacity.
- The children have a very good understanding of the World around Us. They are developing well their observation skills and are very keen to make use of the binoculars to watch and identify the birds in the outdoor environment.

### **6. Provision**

- The staff provide a very attractive and stimulating learning environment both indoors and outdoors. The broad and balanced programme provides very good opportunities for learning across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. In particular, there are outstanding learning opportunities for the children in the World around Us which, at the time of the inspection, included incubating eggs, bird-watching, tree-planting, sorting and matching natural resources and a range of visitors linked to the current theme of 'People who Help Us.'
- The staff interactions with the children are consistently good, and, at times, are of a very high quality. In the best practice, the staff model very effectively the language and actions in the role play areas. They support well the development of the children's observation skills and early mathematical language. To improve further, the staff need to maintain high quality interactions with the children throughout the whole session and to make more effective use of a problem-solving approach to develop the children's thinking skills.
- The staff plan and evaluate the children's learning very effectively and, consequently, have a shared understanding of the learning to be developed. The detailed weekly plans provide progression in learning and are well evaluated to inform future planning and to ensure that the interests and needs of the children are well met. The staff make excellent use of information and communication technology (ICT), including photographs, to record the children's learning experiences, and an ICT programme which allows staff and children to create talking books.

- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the nursery is outstanding. There is a welcoming and inclusive ethos and a caring atmosphere that fosters respect for others. The staff are consistent in their use of the 'Golden Rules' and other positive behaviour strategies and, as a result, the children are all well-behaved and keen to help and support each other.
- The nursery gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity which encourages the children to adopt healthy lifestyles; for example, the healthy break, the focus on recycling as an eco-school, and the regular opportunities for energetic physical play.
- The staff provide very good support for those children identified as having additional learning needs. They work closely with a range of external agencies in planning appropriate programmes and strategies which ensure that the children make good progress in their learning. The individual education plans are reviewed regularly to monitor each child's progress and they are shared with the parents.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The staff work together very effectively as a team in bringing about continuous improvements in the nursery. The principal provides a clear strategic vision for ensuring the highest quality pre-school provision where every child can reach his or her full potential.
- The school development planning processes are informed by thorough self-evaluation involving all staff, parents and governors. The school development plan is of a high quality and supported by appropriately detailed action plans.
- There are very good links with the parents; the monthly newsletter provides very good information on the life and work of the nursery along with information on how the parents can support their children's learning at home. A range of fund-raising activities and events provide good opportunities for parents and families to become involved in the nursery. The nursery has well-established links with the neighbouring primary school and local post-primary schools. A wide range of visitors to the nursery enriches the children's learning experiences.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the nursery has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

## **8. Conclusion**

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this nursery is very good. The nursery is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the learners; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

## STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON BALLYMONEY NURSERY SCHOOL

1. Details of Children

<b>Number of children:</b>	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4
Attending full-time				
Attending part-time	26	26	25	25
Under 3 years of age*			3	3
With statement of special educational needs		1		1
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs		2	2	1
At CoP stages 3 or 4**		2	2	1
At CoP stages 1 or 2**			1	2
With English as an additional language				2

\* 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.	94%
Average attendance for the previous year.	93%

2. Details of Sessions

<b>Full-time</b>	<b>2 Part-time: am</b>	<b>2 Part-time: pm</b>
	2½ hours	2½ hours

3. Details of Staff

<b>Number of:</b>	<b>Full-Time</b>	<b>Part-Time</b>
Teachers	2	1
Nursery Assistants (qualified)	2	1
Nursery Assistants (non-qualified)		

<b>Number of: ***</b>	
Students	1
Trainees	

\*\*\* Total placements since September of current year

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