

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Brefne Nursery School,
Belfast

Report of an Inspection in
February 2015

eti

*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:

DESCRIPTOR
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 centres, 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 formal and informal discussions with staff holding specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- discussions with the staff;
- a meeting with a group of the governors; and
- the opportunity for the parents and staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

The parental responses to the questionnaire and the views of parents and carers expressed during a meeting with the reporting inspector indicate a very high level of satisfaction with all aspects of the educational and pastoral provision provided by the nursery school. In particular, the parents appreciate the wide range of activities provided, the caring and approachable staff and the progress their children are making. The staff responses were also very positive; they reported a strong team approach and commitment to the children.

2. Context

Brefne Nursery School is located in Salisbury Avenue in North Belfast. It is a single unit nursery school with one full-time class. Most of the children come from the local area. At the time of the inspection, the nursery school was in the process of recruiting a permanent principal. This follows a transition period of approximately eighteen months during which the acting principal post was filled on a continuous short-term basis.

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

Overall Performance Level	Satisfactory
Achievements and Standards	Satisfactory
Provision	Satisfactory
Leadership and Management	Satisfactory

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- Most of the children are making satisfactory to good progress the pre-school curriculum areas. Key strengths include the good development of the children's social skills and their high level of interest in books and stories. In order to raise standards further, the staff need to plan consistently challenging experiences across all areas of the curriculum.
- The children are developing very well their social skills; they can collaborate during play and are respectful to the staff and to one another. A majority of the children can concentrate for sustained periods at their play, particularly when they are encouraged by the adults to complete tasks. They choose activities and manage their snack routine and personal care with independence. A small number of children require further adult support to sustain and develop their concentration.
- A majority of the children are confident to share their ideas, talk to staff and each other about their own experiences. There is a high level of interest in mark making and emergent writing among the girls in particular. The children enjoy browsing books independently or with their friends and they are developing very good attention and listening skills as demonstrated, for example, during the enjoyable whole-group stories. The staff need to model good quality use of language and ensure that appropriate sustained interactions are used consistently through the play activities to raise further the standards of the children's language and communication skills.
- The children use with confidence a wide range of art materials to draw, paint and make junk models that represent and develop their own ideas. They enjoy singing and most participate well when the session is for an appropriate length of time. While the children engage in some imaginative role play, the staff have appropriately identified this as a priority area for further development.
- A small number of children are beginning to explore mathematical concepts and language associated with number, shape and sorting during their play. They enjoy investigating patterns using a range of tools in the sand and are beginning to show an awareness of environmental topics as they make bird feeders and plant bulbs.
- A majority of the children are developing well their fine motor skills and use of tools for example, in the construction and writing areas. They participate confidently in energetic play activities outdoors such as peddling their bikes, digging, balancing and running.

6. Provision

- The attractive learning environment is organised to provide a wide choice of activities indoors and outdoors. The staff work hard to make use of all of the available space for learning and there are attractive displays of the children's own artwork and relevant photographs of the children engaged in their learning. Aspects of the layout should be reviewed with a view to developing further the adult and child social engagement at meal times and to encourage further the children's exploration, investigation and imaginative play indoors and outdoors.

- The staff are all caring and supportive in their interactions with the children and they engage them with a friendly, caring and positive approach. A majority of staff interactions are of high quality and promote the children's learning and development. In the best practice the staff settle the children to persevere and sustain their play and extend effectively the children's ideas, language and thinking. The group story was very well-managed to engage the children effectively. The best practice needs to be shared and built upon so that it is consistently implemented by all of the adults.
- The staff meet regularly to plan together a broad programme and an interesting range of experiences which cover all areas of the pre-school curriculum. They have identified appropriately, the need to develop this further. The current planning is not specific enough to guide all of the adults on the learning to be promoted on a daily basis. It needs to be improved so that it is informed appropriately by the assessment information and it provides sufficient progression in all areas of the curriculum.
- The staff make regular observations of the children's responses which are used effectively for the early identification of additional support needs and to inform the feedback at progress meetings with parents. The children identified with additional support needs are very well integrated, supported effectively, and are progressing very well in their learning and development of social skills. The individual education plans, for children identified with additional needs, are detailed and relevant; they guide the staff effectively in meeting these children's individual needs. The staff are piloting the use of ICT to record and collate their observations and have identified appropriately the need to refine their systems to track more systematically the children's progress across all six areas of the curriculum.
- The quality of the pastoral care is very good. The children and the staff are very respectful of one another and the children's behaviour is very good. Key features of the pastoral care include the warm, caring and inclusive ethos and the good working relationships between the staff, parents, children and governors. The governors have provided high levels of support for the staff during a period of change in the nursery, this has been well focused on the welfare of the staff and the children.
- The children are encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle through relevant topics in the curriculum and routines of the day such as the provision of a healthy break, tooth brushing and regular opportunities for energetic physical play.

7. Leadership and management

- The governors have provided very effective leadership in the nursery, during a prolonged period of uncertainty and transition, to minimise disruption and ensure stability and continuity in the ongoing work of the nursery school. The acting principal has provided valuable interim leadership for the staff team and been active in developing links with other settings.

- A preliminary School Development Plan has been drawn up identifying some relevant priorities. This needs to be built upon and developed further. It will be important that the Employing Authority, governors and staff continue to work closely during this interim period and use the inspection's findings to prioritise and inform further development.
- There are very good links with the parents. The parents are provided with a very good range of information about the nursery, their child's progress and on how to support their child's learning at home. The nursery staff values the parents views and contributions. In addition, links with other schools and pre-schools are being developed well and good use is made of relevant visitors from the local community to enhance the children's learning experiences further.
- On the basis of the evidence at the time of the inspection, the nursery school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant departments.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this nursery school is satisfactory. The strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in standards, teaching and learning, and leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all of the children are to be met more effectively.

The key areas for improvement identified are to:

- develop the curriculum planning to ensure there is sufficient progression and challenge in all aspects of the children's learning;
- ensure a greater level of consistency in the quality of the staff interactions with the children to fully promote all opportunities for learning; and
- continue to develop the processes for whole school improvement.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12-24 month period.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON BREFNE NURSERY SCHOOL

1. Details of Children

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

* Denotes less than 5

* 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.	100%
Average attendance for the previous year.	96%

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	1	
Nursery Assistants (qualified)	1	2
Nursery Assistants (non-qualified)		
Special Needs Assistant		

Number of: ***	
Students	2
Trainees	

*** Total placements since September of current year

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