

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Convent of Mercy Nursery
School, Downpatrick,
County Down

Maintained nursery

Report of an Inspection in
April 2018



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



CONTENTS

Section	Page
1. Context	1
2. Views of parents and staff	1
3. Focus of the inspection	1
4. Overall findings of the inspection	2
5. Outcomes for learners	2
6. Quality of provision	2
7. Leadership and management	3
8. Safeguarding	3
9. Overall effectiveness	3

Appendices

- A. Inspection methodology and evidence base
- B. Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

1. Context

Convent of Mercy Nursery School is located in purpose-built accommodation in the centre of Downpatrick. The nursery school operates two full-time funded sessions. Since the last inspection, there have been a significant number of staffing changes. At the time of inspection, a substitute teacher was employed in one of the rooms. An additional assistant is employed to support children who have speech and language difficulties.

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending full-time	26	26
Under 3 years of age*	0	0
Funded by Department of Education	26	26
With statement of special educational needs	#	0
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	#	8
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	#	5
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	#	5
With English as an additional language	#	#

Average percentage attendance for the previous year.	92
Number of days open in previous school year	185

Source: data provided by the setting.

* On 1 July.

** The stages refer to those set out in the Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs.

fewer than 5

N/A not available

2. Views of parents and staff

A minority of the parents and all of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. The responses were wholly positive about all aspects of the nursery school. The parents commented on: the children's enjoyment of school; the helpful courses provided for parents to support the children with their learning; and, the caring staff who ensure the children are well-prepared for primary school. In their written comments, the staff emphasised the caring team who are committed to the children, the school and the community.

3. Focus of the inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all learners, the inspection linked internal and external approaches to evaluate the:

- outcomes for the children;
- quality of provision for learning; and
- leadership and management.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Important areas for improvement
Outcomes for learners	Good
Quality of provision	Important areas for improvement
Leadership and management	Important areas for improvement

5. Outcomes for learners

- All of the children are happy and settled. They are independent in selecting areas to play, choosing resources and managing their snack routine. The majority of children engage in sustained and collaborative play indoors. Almost all of the children are confident in sharing their learning with staff and readily ask for help when needed.
- Overall the children achieve a good standard in almost all areas of the curriculum, with the exception of the arts. Most of the children engage well when singing rhymes and songs and a small number of children were observed mark-making in the construction area and at the writing table. Most of the children count, match and measure using appropriate mathematical language. The children's physical skills are well-developed.
- The children who require support with aspects of their learning are making good progress. They integrate well and use their schedules effectively to plan their play.

6. Quality of provision

- Outdoor play planning is under-developed and is an important area for improvement. The staff plan together regularly and the planning for indoor play is detailed and outlines clearly the learning potential. However, the staff do not take sufficient account of the children's learning to inform progression within the short-term planning.
- The staff use an online application to gather observations of the children's learning; however, there is insufficient monitoring of the children's progression in their learning across all areas of the curriculum.
- The quality of the interactions between the staff and the children is variable. In the best practice, the staff use open-ended questions to develop the children's language and problem-solving skills. During outdoor play, the adult interactions are supervisory in nature and subsequently there are fewer opportunities for the children to develop their learning.
- The Arts provision is an important area for improvement. The children have limited opportunities to make and respond to music and to develop creativity outdoors. The development of the children's personal, social and emotional skills is a particular strength of the provision.
- The staff create an attractive learning environment, using some authentic and real resources, which the children can access readily to develop their play.

- The individual education plans for those children with additional needs are of a good quality and outline a range of appropriate strategies to support the children with their learning.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the nursery school's approach to care and welfare impacts positively on the outcomes for the children. A supportive and caring ethos pervades the nursery and relationships at all levels are very good.

7. Leadership and management

- The use of self-evaluation is underdeveloped. Whilst the development plan outlines a number of priorities for future improvement and the action planning process is detailed, the priorities are not focused sufficiently on improving the provision and outcomes for the children. The use of monitoring and evaluation to measure the impact of improvement work is limited. The staff have accessed training, in particular, to support children with additional needs. The school development planning process, however, has not been underpinned by appropriate and sufficient professional development opportunities to effect improvement in the provision for learning for all children.
- The staff work very well as a team and are fully committed to providing the best outcomes for the children and the families in the area. The board of governors are fully aware of their responsibilities and support the staff very well. Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated.
- The nursery values its link with parents and actively promotes opportunities for the parents to become involved with their child's learning through the provision of: a wide range of curricular workshops; a weekly lending library; and, home packs to support the children's mathematical, language and physical development. In addition, the staff make very good use of technology to share the work of the nursery with the parents and show them how they can support their children at home through topic related activities.

8. Safeguarding

- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education; however, the Convent of Mercy Nursery School needs to: review the positive behaviour policy to ensure it is age and stage appropriate.

9. Overall effectiveness

Convent of Mercy Nursery School needs to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners.

The areas for improvement are:

- to develop further planning and assessment methods to improve the overall quality of provision and outcomes for the learners; and

- to develop the process of self-evaluation in order to bring about further improvement to the arts and outdoor play provision.

The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection in 12 to 18 months.

Inspection methodology and evidence base

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework is available on the ETI website <https://www.etini.gov.uk/publications/inspection-and-self-evaluation-framework-isef-effective-practice-and-self-evaluation>.

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

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a meeting with those involved with leadership and management, including the governors; and
- the opportunity for the parents and staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

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 ETI use the following performance levels when reporting on outcomes for learners, quality of provision and leadership and management:

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the school:

The school has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.
The school demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.
The school needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.
The school needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners. It requires external support to do so. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2018

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the ETI website: www.etini.gov.uk