

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Downpatrick Nursery School,
Co Down

Report of an Inspection in
November 2014

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 children, and 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.

The parental responses indicate very high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the educational and pastoral provision provided by the nursery school. In particular, the parents appreciate the dedication and enthusiasm of the staff and the provision of a wide range of resources for the children.

2. Context

Downpatrick Nursery School is situated within the learning centre in Mount Crescent, Bridge Street, Downpatrick. Since the last inspection there have been staffing changes which include the appointment of a new principal. The nursery operates one full-time class of pre-school age children drawn from a wide catchment area.

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	Good
Achievements and Standards	Good
Provision	Satisfactory
Leadership and Management	Good

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- Most of the children are well settled for the time of year and can make independent choices. Many show good levels of concentration and perseverance with their chosen activities.
- The quality of the children's representational art work is of a good standard. Writing tools and paper are provided around the playroom and this is encouraging the children to mark make as they 'design' their buildings in the construction area.
- Most of the children can co-operate and take turns and some firm friendships are developing. Most of the children are attentive during group story sessions and are developing appropriately an understanding of early number through the use of songs and rhymes.

6. Provision

- The development of the children's personal, social and emotional development, is a particular strength of the nursery school's provision. There is a very positive ethos in the nursery and each child is valued. The children's art work is displayed and creates colourful presentations throughout the school.
- The quality of the staff's interaction is of a good quality; the children are at ease with the staff and turn to them confidently for support or to join in their play. The staff often use appropriate mathematical language when participating in the children's play and they place a high priority on promoting the children's understanding of number and positional language. It will be important for the staff to plan more carefully to ensure the children get opportunities to explore a wider range of early mathematical ideas and concepts across the curriculum.
- The pre-school programme provides a variety of stimulating activities and learning experiences for the children including the provision of creative interest areas and themes that arouse the children's natural curiosity. The provision in the outdoor area is a particular strength of the curriculum; it is well resourced and used very well to provide a wide range of interesting activities and play experiences that the children clearly enjoy. There is an inappropriate balance of time spent developing the children's awareness of phonics and the staff need to give a higher priority to developing the children's oral skills as they engage with them naturally through the play programme. Books are provided in areas of play and the children have regular opportunities to borrow books to read at home. The staff need to ensure that the provision for learning reflects more fully the pre-school programme as set out in the Curricular Guidance for Pre-school Education.
- The dinner and snack routines, are organised well and provide the children with good opportunities to make independent choices and to develop their social skills. However, there is a need to review the overall organisation of the day to ensure that more time is provided for learning through the free play sessions. It is important that the play sessions continue throughout the day to ensure that all of the children have access to activities that are age and stage appropriate for most of the session.

- The staff are making some useful observations to assess the children's progress. As the staff continue to develop their assessment methods, their observations of the children's responses to the play programme need to inform more fully the future planning so that it meets more effectively the needs of all of the children.
- There are very good links with the parents who are kept well informed about events within the nursery through the parents' information board and an informative newsletter. The staff have also developed very good links with local nursery schools and the wider community.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the nursery school is very good. The staff are very caring and supportive to the children and to each other. They provide a safe and secure environment for the children.

7. Leadership and management

- The principal has been in post for three years; she values the contribution of her staff and involves them fully in all aspects of the life and work of the school. Since taking up her post she has worked hard to develop various aspects of the schools work.
- The staff have begun to engage in the process of self-evaluation and the school development plan outlines appropriate priorities for future improvements. It will be important that the school development plan is adjusted to take account of the areas for improvement outlined in this report.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection the nursery has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding the children. The staff need to develop further the intimate care policy and share it with the parents.
- The nursery gives appropriate attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity for example through the healthy breaks provided, and the very good opportunities for energetic outdoor play which encourage the children to adopt a healthy lifestyle

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the nursery school is good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified a key area for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address:

- to ensure that the provision for learning reflects more fully the pre-school programme as set out in the Curricular Guidance for Pre-school Education and that the children have more access to learning through free play activities.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the school's progress on the area for improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON DOWNPATRICK NURSERY SCHOOL

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending full-time	26	
Attending part-time	0	
Under 3 years of age*	0	
With statement of special educational needs	0	
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	11	
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	10	
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	1	
With English as an additional language	1	

* 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.	38.5%
Average attendance for the previous year.	89.8%

2. Duration of Sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
4½ hours	0	0

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-Time	Part-Time
Teachers	1	0
Nursery Assistants	1	1
Qualified Nursery Assistants	2	0

Number of: ***	
Students	
Trainees	

*** Total placements since September of current year

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued	26
Percentage returned	23%
Number of written comments	3

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