

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

McArthur Nursery School,
Belfast

Controlled Nursery School

Report of an Inspection in
November 2018



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments

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1. Context

McArthur Nursery School is situated just off the Newtownards Road, in East Belfast. There are currently 52 children attending the two full-time sessions. A new principal has been appointed recently.

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending full-time	26	26
Funded by Department of Education	26	26
With statement of special educational needs	0	#
At CoP stages 3 or 4*	0	#
At CoP stages 1 or 2*	#	6
With English as an additional language	#	0

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	100%
Average percentage attendance for the previous year.	89%
Number of days open in previous school year	187

Source: data provided by the setting.

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

fewer than 5

2. Views of parents and staff

A minority of the parents and all of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. All of the responses were wholly positive about all aspects of the life and work of the nursery school. The parents commented on the professional, approachable staff and their children's enthusiasm to come to nursery. The staff expressed their satisfaction with the current working ethos and sense of collegiality within the school and their appreciation of the leadership. The questionnaire responses were shared with the principal and representatives from the board of governors.

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

- Most of the children are well-settled and their behaviour is good. They are developing appropriate social skills as they play collaboratively with each other and engage confidently with the adults. Most of the children have good levels of independence as they: choose where they wish to play; put on their coats for outdoor play; and follow well the established routines associated with break, dinner and transitions during the day. The children do not select independently enough the resources they require to initiate or extend their own play.
- The children are achieving good standards across almost all areas of the pre-school curriculum. They sustain purposeful collaborative play, in particular, at the dough and small-world play areas and persevere at designing and constructing, using a range of materials, in both the indoor and outdoor environments.
- A majority of children enjoy the large-group story where they listen attentively and contribute confidently to the conversation. They have a good understanding of key mathematical concepts and terminology associated with number, shape and measures.
- Almost all of the children engage in physical, energetic play outdoors and are developing well their gross-motor, turn-taking and games skills.

6. Quality of provision

- The cycle of planning, observation and assessment is an important area for improvement. The short-term planning does not guide sufficiently the learning and teaching; the staff have identified appropriately the need to develop this in order to raise further the quality of the learning experiences and outcomes for the children. The recently-introduced approach to medium-term planning and evaluation reflects the pre-school curriculum and identifies more clearly the intended learning. A systematic and shared approach to recording observations of the children's learning has also been recently introduced. While there are some instances of this information beginning to inform planning, it is not being used consistently enough to ensure there is a planned programme for learning that meets effectively the needs of all the children.
- The staff have created an attractive, well-resourced learning environment and have provided a good range of commercial, natural and authentic resources. The children however do not have independent access to additional resources and as a result do not develop sufficiently their creativity and extend their own play.
- There are well-embedded routines throughout the day and transitions around the playroom, and from indoor to outdoor play, are smooth and well-managed. The outdoor play session at the beginning of the day is particularly effective and provides opportunities for the children to engage in collaborative, free-play across all areas of the curriculum. A small number of the activities and routines indoors are too structured and over directed by the adults which impedes the development of the children's independence, creativity and problem-solving skills.

- The interactions between the staff and the children are mostly good. In the most effective practice: the staff model play effectively; build skilfully on the children's interests and responses; and encourage the children to have-a-go.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the nursery's approach to care and welfare impacts positively on the outcomes for the learners. The welcoming ethos and good working relationships create a nurturing environment in which the children are happy and well-settled.

7. Leadership and management

- School development planning and self-evaluation have been guided by consultation and have informed improvements in, for example, the medium-term planning and the organisation of the start of the day. There are currently too many targets in the action plans which are not streamlined enough to enable the staff to prioritise and develop further the recently-established process of self-evaluation leading to improvement.
- The nursery experienced a period of instability in leadership and management for a number of years which impacted greatly on: staff morale and attendance; strategic development planning; and self-evaluation leading to improvement, at all levels. There is now a shared, collegial approach to all aspects of the life and work of the nursery and the leadership reports that staff morale, confidence and attendance have improved.
- There are effective links with the parents whose opinions are sought and valued. The parents are kept informed about the life and work of the nursery through: the welcoming and informative foyer; regular newsletters; and a recently introduced communication App.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The recently reconstituted board of governors are very supportive of the new principal and are committed to supporting the staff in their improvement journey.

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 nursery needs to:

- ensure that all draft versions of relevant safeguarding and child protection policies are updated in line with most recent guidance and are ratified by the governors.

9. Overall effectiveness

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

The areas for improvement are:

- to improve the short-term planning in order to guide sufficiently the learning and teaching and improve further the quality of the learning experiences and outcomes for the children; and
- to develop further the recently-established process of self-evaluation in order to bring about further improvement in the quality of provision and the outcomes for the children.

The ETI will monitor and report on the nursery'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 board of 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 management¹:

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

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on governance:

High degree of confidence
Confidence
Limited confidence

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on safeguarding:

Reflects the guidance
Reflects broadly the guidance
Unsatisfactory

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on care and welfare:

Impacts positively on learning, teaching and outcomes for learners
Does not impact positively enough on learning, teaching and outcomes for learners

¹ And the overall provision in a subject area or unit, as applicable.

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.

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