

Education and Training Inspectorate

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Newtownards Nursery School, Newtownards, County Down

Controlled Nursery School DE Ref No: 411-0035

Report of an Inspection in March 2020

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1. Context

Newtownards Nursery School is situated on the Portaferry Road in Newtownards. The children attending the two full-time nursery classes are in their immediate pre-school year and come mainly from the local area. Almost 39.6% of the children have been identified as requiring additional support with their learning and development. Since the last inspection, there have been several changes in staffing.

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending full-time	27	26
Funded by Department of Education	27	26
With statement of special educational needs	#	#
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	#	9
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	#	#
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	7	9
With English as an additional language	#	#

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	100
Average percentage attendance for the previous year.	170
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

Just over forty per cent of parents replied to the confidential questionnaire; they indicated very high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the nursery school's educational and pastoral provision. In particular, the parents highlighted: the approachability of the friendly, professional staff; the high quality of the children's learning experiences; and the effective provision for children who require additional support with aspects of their learning and development. All of the staff responded to the questionnaire; their responses were also highly positive. The staff commended the inspiring leadership, the high morale within the team and the regular opportunities for relevant professional development. A summary of the questionnaire responses was shared with the principal and representatives of 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	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Outcomes for learners	Outstanding
Quality of provision	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding

5. Outcomes for learners

- The children play with high levels of interest in their self-chosen activities; concentrating and collaborating for extended periods. They make lots of independent choices, try out their ideas and take appropriate risks in their play indoors and outdoors. They speak and listen confidently with one another, the staff and visitors.
- The children's personal, social and emotional development is a key strength; their perseverance and self-management skills are very well established. They investigate independently a wide variety of small items such as watch parts, padlocks and keys, and outdoors are curious to explore the force of the water from the hose-tap and different ways to mix and use powder paints. They listen with interest to and make up new versions of familiar stories; using their own ideas and taking on character roles as they lead the staff within the imaginative role play.
- The children produce well-developed representational artwork; a significant minority are developing well their early mark-making. For example, they design and create model homes for the 'Three Little Pigs' using a range of materials and label their own work. The children are developing a very secure understanding of early mathematical concepts in meaningful contexts, including number, measures, shape and space and patterns. They extend their energetic physical play in inventive ways, climbing, running, puddle-jumping and pulling wagons to move their equipment around. They participate enthusiastically in music-making and dancing in the outdoor music area and are facilitated by the adults to explore and investigate their ideas about the natural and man-made world around them.
- The children respond very well to the staff's high expectations, frequent praise and the consistently used positive behaviour strategies. For example, they understand and operate well their daily routines and use timers independently to negotiate in relation to sharing their resources. All of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, are making excellent continuous progress across all aspects of the pre-school curriculum.

6. Quality of provision

- The staff have developed a highly engaging environment to extend the children's learning and interests. They select and arrange purposefully many natural and authentic real-life items of high interest for the children to explore and use; the available space is used very effectively and imaginatively to progress the children's perseverance and creativity as well as their investigative play and physical development.

- The staff have a well-developed understanding of the learning to be promoted through the play and regular routines. The high-quality of their interactions extends the children's vocabulary and language development. There are frequent examples of the staff using spontaneous questions and timely opportunities to increase the children's learning. They use early mathematical and scientific terms in meaningful contexts as they arise naturally during play; helping the children to explore new concepts and relevant new words.
- The progression and challenge in the planned activities and resources develop the children's disposition to learn; particularly their curiosity, creativity and problem-solving. The staff are currently developing a more child-led approach to planning to reflect the children's stages of development and interests within their individual learning journeys. They use effectively the information from their interactions with the children, along with their observations and assessments of the children's learning, to inform the future planning and meet the children's needs. The pre-school programme provides an excellent balance of free play indoors and outdoors with time for more structured activities.
- The staff's approaches to meeting individual children's needs are highly effective. They monitor and support the children sensitively, and as a result, all of the children are included fully in the various activities. The staff communicate effectively and regularly with the parents and external support agencies to bring about continuous progress in the children's development.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the nursery school's approach to care and welfare impacts positively on learning and teaching, and the children's outcomes. The staff take time to reflect on the children's individual interests and stages of development and adapt and extend the approaches they take and resources they provide to ensure that all children are making excellent progress across all areas of the pre-school curriculum.

7. Leadership and management

- The outstanding and transforming leadership and management of the nursery school promotes effective teamwork and deploys to very good effect the various skills and interests of the staff in the best interests of the children and for the continuous development of the provision.
- The nursery development plan, and the associated action plans, have been informed by a well-embedded and rigorous self-evaluation process and provide clear strategic direction for the staff team. The development plan is underpinned by appropriate staff development opportunities.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be a high level of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors understand how to exercise their responsibilities, including how to challenge as well as support the staff in their work.
- The nursery school has established numerous excellent links with the parents, relevant agencies, feeder primary schools and the local community, which directly benefit the children and their families. For example, the staff provide parent workshops and use a range of digital communication tools effectively to share and celebrate the children's learning.

8. Safeguarding

- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

9. Overall effectiveness

Newtownards Nursery School has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners.

The ETI will monitor how the nursery school sustains improvement.

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:

- meetings with those involved with leadership and management, including representatives of 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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