

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Sunnylands Nursery School,
Carrickfergus, Co Antrim

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 settings, 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 responses from the parents and the staff were wholly positive. The parents praised highly the approachable, hard working and caring staff, the effective levels of communication and the range of stimulating activities provided for the children. The staff value the promotion of child-centred approach, the positive working relationships, the caring environment and the training opportunities provided to improve the children's experiences.

2. Context

The nursery school is situated in the residential area of Sunnylands in Carrickfergus. The children attending the nursery school come from a wide catchment area. Since the last inspection, the nursery school has benefited from a spacious extension which provides a new foyer, staff room and offices.

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	Very Good
Achievements and Standards	Very Good
Provision	Very Good
Leadership and Management	Very Good

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- All of the children settle very quickly to the planned activities and engage in purposeful and sustained play in a range of interesting activities. The children's behaviour is exemplary; they regularly show affection and kindness to each other and are respectful to the staff and to visitors. The children display high levels of independence and their social skills are very well developed; they are able to play co-operatively in small groups, take turns and share resources.
- All of the children, including those who require additional support with their learning, are making good progress for their age and stage of development. They show a keen interest in books and use the readily available reading resources with care and respect. All of the children listen attentively during story time and use a wide range of vocabulary to ask questions and express their own ideas. The children engage in early mark making in a range of imaginative role play activities and in the writing areas. They understand and use mathematical language relating to number, measure and pattern.

6. Provision

- The available space in the nursery school has been used imaginatively to provide a stimulating, welcoming and inclusive environment for the children and their families. There is a good range of appropriate commercial and natural resources available to the children. The staff have placed a particular emphasis on providing a literacy rich environment to stimulate the children's interest in reading for example the new story sack initiative and lending library is well supported by the children and their parents. The use of the outdoor play area has recently been reviewed and is creatively arranged and well equipped. There is ample space for physical play and there are attractive planters and raised beds which are used by the children in the popular gardening club. Further development of the provision should include a review of the number of wheeled vehicles available to ensure a balance of opportunities for children to play across a greater range of outdoor activities.
- The staff plan for all areas of the pre-school curriculum with a particular emphasis placed on the development of language and communication through for example, a range of imaginative role play areas which are popular with the children. The range of activities is reflective of the sensitivity of the staff to engage the interests of both the boys and the girls. The children respond enthusiastically to opportunities to sing and develop a sense of rhythm through playing musical instruments, particularly through their use of the large outdoor musical equipment.
- There is a strong sense of team work and collegiality with a shared understanding of the learning outcomes which leads to consistently high quality interactions with the staff and the children. Open ended questioning is used effectively to stimulate meaningful discussions and to encourage the children to express their own ideas and opinions. The staff know the children well and are intuitive to their needs and interests.

- The timetable is well organised, daily routines are very well established and there are smooth transitions throughout the day. The snack routine should be reviewed to promote further the children's independence and provide a wider range of foods throughout the year.
- The work of the staff is guided by comprehensive long and medium term planning which is appropriately evaluated and used alongside perceptive observations to inform the future learning needs of individual children.
- Children requiring additional support with their learning are appropriately identified and education plans are in place. The nursery school has established links with an extensive range of external agencies and skilfully incorporates the advice from these agencies into planning for individual children. The staff have undertaken a range of appropriate professional development, particularly in response to the additional learning needs of the children.
- The quality of the pastoral care in nursery school is outstanding. There are excellent working relationships at all levels and the staff provide the children with a safe, caring and child-centred environment.

7. Leadership and management

- The principal provides very effective leadership and management of the nursery school. She is very well supported by the assistant teacher and the support staff. There is evidence of a culture of self-reflection and self-evaluation, leading to improvement. Appropriate priorities have been identified in the development plan and associated detailed action plans support the on-going improvement process.
- The nursery school has well established links with parents and families through regular correspondence and opportunities to meet with staff, both formally and informally, to discuss their children's progress. The school forms part of a local cluster group and share the services of a family worker. The cluster also provides opportunities for parents to participate in social and training events. The staff have developed effective links with the local Sure Start provider and local primary schools.
- On the basis of the evidence available 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 Department of Education.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this nursery school is very good. The nursery school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

**STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON SUNNYLANDS NURSERY SCHOOL ,
CARRICKFERGUS (3116150)**

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending full-time	-	-
Attending part-time	52	52
Under 3 years of age*	5	7
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**	1	8
With English as an additional language	0	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.	21%
Average attendance for the previous year.	87%

2. Duration of Sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
	2½ hrs	2½ hrs

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-Time	Part-Time
Teachers	2	-
Nursery Assistants (qualified)	3	-
Nursery Assistants (non-qualified)	-	-

Number of: ***	
Students	9
Trainees	-

*** Total placements since September of current year

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