

Report of a Pre-school Inspection  
Bangor Integrated Nursery School

November 2024



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# **1. INTRODUCTION**

## **A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Bangor Integrated Nursery School was established in September 2022, following Bangor Central Nursery School's successful transformation to integrated status. There are two part-time classes and one full-time class, and the majority of the 78 children attending come from the local Bangor area. A small number of children have a statement of Special Educational Need (SEN).

The nursery school is oversubscribed each year and their application to the Department of Education's (DE) Standardisation of Pre-School Classes\* has received approval. As a result, the nursery school will offer three full-time classes from September 2025.

The staff complement consists of a teaching principal, one teacher, two nursery assistants, two classroom assistants and three additional staff. The nursery school has successfully attained a range of awards in the last two years including the Makaton Friendly Accreditation (Silver Award), the Autism NI Impact Award Education Champion and the Housing Executive Eco School of the Year 2022-23.

## **B. VIEWS OF PARENTS AND STAFF**

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) issued online confidential questionnaires to parents and staff in advance of the inspection.

Approximately 30% of parents (23) completed the questionnaire, the responses of which were very positive. They reported their child is happy in the nursery school, they are content with the pastoral care provided by the staff, and they are clear on how to report a safeguarding or child protection concern. The (16) written comments, together with the feedback received from a number of parents who met with the inspectors highlighted: their appreciation of the tailored induction programme which supported their child to settle easily into the nursery school; the progress their child is making; and the helpful support, guidance and advice they receive from the staff.

Almost all of the staff completed the questionnaire, and the responses were mainly positive.

A summary of the questionnaire responses, including any concerns raised, was shared with the principal and the chair of the board of governors.

## **C. THE PROCESS OF INSPECTION**

The ETI worked alongside Bangor Integrated Nursery School to consider how well the nursery:

- has identified and articulates its vision;
- prioritises actions to achieve the vision;

- overcomes the main challenges it faces;
- monitors and reviews progression to identify, celebrate and embed success; and
- grows and develops an inclusive community of learning.

## **2. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS**

- Welcoming, respectful relationships exist at all levels across the nursery school. The creation of an inclusive, child-centred environment enables the staff to “Nurture little learners in the heart of the community”.
- The children’s personal, social and emotional skills are a key strength; they take the lead in their own learning and engage respectfully with their peers and adults in sustained and purposeful play.
- The very detailed planning incorporates an extensive range of learning opportunities which staff have the confidence to adapt in response to the needs and interests of the children and supports all of them to make progress.
- The recent changes made to the classrooms have created learning environments which are impacting positively on the children’s ability to regulate their emotions and to focus more readily on their learning.
- The high quality, skilful staff interactions support effectively the development and extension of the children’s language and vocabulary and facilitates their thinking, explorative and investigative skills.
- The staff value the opportunity to work in partnership with parents; this work is having a positive impact and allows all of the children to make progress in the nursery school and supports parents in extending their child’s learning at home.
- The board of governors is invested in the nursery school, value the contributions made by all stakeholders and engage proactively with the leadership and staff to support its continued development.
- At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by the nursery school demonstrates that the arrangements for child protection align to the current statutory guidance.

### Area for action:

- to develop further the children’s access to and engagement with a broader range of natural and authentic materials to enhance their sensory exploration and creativity.

### **3. MAIN REPORT**

#### **A. SETTING THE VISION**

As part of the recent transformation to integrated status, all stakeholders have been involved in the review of, and are clear on, the nursery school's vision to support each child's holistic development and 'Nurture Little Learners in the heart of the community'.

The carefully considered development plan has been informed by ongoing self-reflection and includes appropriate priorities for improvement. The recent changes made to the classrooms have created learning environments which are impacting positively on the children's ability to regulate their emotions and to focus more readily on their learning.

The board of governors is supportive of the work of the staff. Their decision to employ additional adults to meet more fully the children's range of needs and assist the delivery of high-quality learning experiences has been beneficial for all of the children.

#### **B. IMPLEMENTING AND IMPROVING TO ACHIEVE THE VISION**

The planning within the nursery school is detailed and provides an extensive range of learning opportunities across the pre-school curriculum. The staff gather a wide range of information, including input from parents and the planned and incidental observations, to build a comprehensive baseline of the children. A detailed learning journey is created for each child which provides a progressive overview of their development throughout the year. The staff use this detailed knowledge of the children to very good effect; they plan and adapt provision which reflects the children's interests and needs and supports all of them to make progress.

The children's personal, social and emotional skills are a key strength. They have the confidence to lead their learning as they engage respectfully with their peers and adults in sustained and purposeful play. The well-established routines and the skilful interaction and engagement of the adults during play, supports effectively the development of the children's high levels of independence. All children assume responsibility easily as part of specific helper duties, such as setting the table for dinner, or during 'tidy up time'.

The emotional health and wellbeing of the children is a priority for all of the staff. The staff encourage the children to reflect on their feelings and teach the use of breathing techniques, which helps the children to manage their emotions and persist with their learning. The children engage enthusiastically in the wide range of learning opportunities in the garden and outdoor play environments which promote very well their physical and gross motor skills development.

## **C. BUILDING EQUITY**

Bangor Integrated Nursery School provides an inclusive and caring environment where all are welcomed and valued. The values of equality and respect are central to the nursery school's vision. All cultures, nationalities and faiths are recognised and celebrated, and the views of all stakeholders are sought and respected.

The children with special educational needs (SEN) are being supported effectively by the staff in the nursery school. The staff know the children very well, understand their diverse needs and recognise their individual starting points. The staff collaborate very effectively with parents and allied health professionals, and use the information gathered to plan for the successful inclusion and progression of each child. A range of strategies, including Makaton, are used skilfully and effectively by all staff to facilitate the engagement of the children in their learning and to develop their communication skills. The parents are involved in setting the targets in their child's individual education plan, which are reflective of the child's needs, interests and abilities and include regular monitoring which supports the child's progression in learning.

## **D. DEFINING, CELEBRATING AND EMBEDDING SUCCESS**

The relationships between the staff and the children are warm and pastoral. The staff have high expectations for each child. Praise and encouraging language are used consistently by all of the staff to facilitate learning and foster positive behaviour. The children are respectful of and caring towards each other, the staff and their environment. They engage in collaborative play, share easily their resources and display very good behaviour. The well-established daily routines across the nursery school day allow the children to move easily between the play environments and continue their learning with ease. Almost all of the children engage in creative and investigative play for sustained periods of time and are developing well their perseverance, independence and curiosity.

The success of each child is celebrated and recognised. The children make use of their individual display space in the shared spaces between the classrooms to exhibit and celebrate their creative work which can be seen by parents and visitors.

## **E. GROWING A COMMUNITY OF LEARNING**

The staff team are supportive of each other, and the caring, respectful, and professional relationships which are in place ensure new members of staff are warmly welcomed and upskilled. The staff are encouraged and facilitated to access professional learning to meet more effectively the children's needs. The Makaton training, completed by all staff, is supporting effectively the development of the children's communication skills.

Parental involvement and engagement in all aspects of nursery school life is valued and promoted. There is a well-established, informative and detailed process of induction which is tailored to meet the needs of individual children and supports a smooth transition to the nursery school. The parents are involved actively in the

focused observations of their child, during which they provide valuable information and support the creation of their child's comprehensive learning journey. This learning journey is shared with parents and, together with the top tips and helpful strategies included in the monthly newsletter, supports and extends the child's learning at home.

The staff cluster with a number of local nursery schools as part of the Department of Education's (DE) Extended Schools programme and the Education Authority's (EA) Pathways to Partnership programme. The involvement of staff in these programmes has supported them to deliver several parental workshops, including sessions on healthy eating and the sharing of information and strategies to support their child's speech and language development.

The children and parents are encouraged to become members of the Eco Council and to participate jointly in eco activities throughout the year which is helping the children develop a sense of environmental responsibility and deeper understanding of their world around them.

The governors are invested in the nursery school and are wholly committed to providing inclusive child-centred full-time nursery education across the three classes. Their range of skills and professional experiences provide great support to the staff and parents. They value the collective engagement of all stakeholders to support the continued development of the nursery within the community.

## **F. CHILD PROTECTION**

At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by the nursery school demonstrates that the arrangements for child protection align to the current statutory guidance.

## **4. GOING FORWARD**

The staff and governors of Bangor Integrated Nursery School are achieving their vision. They are living out their motto 'Nurturing Little Learners in the Heart of the Community' to foster happy and confident children who are supported effectively to make progress from their individual starting points.

Through district inspector engagement, the ETI will monitor the progress of the school in addressing the area for action set out in the body of this report, which the nursery school is well placed to take forward.

## 5. APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1: 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%



## APPENDIX 2: NOTES

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#### **Standardisation of Pre-school Classes**

DE, in conjunction with the Education Authority, is progressing a Pre-School Standardisation programme for approximately 100 pre-school settings to deliver full-time pre-school education (22.5 hours per week) from September 2025 or as soon as possible thereafter.

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