

Report of a Pre-school Inspection
Forge Integrated Pre-school

December 2024



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Throughout the report the use of an asterisk * denotes further information included in Appendix 2.

1. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Forge Integrated Pre-school is located in the grounds of Forge Integrated Primary School in South Belfast. Thirty-five children, all of whom are of pre-school age, attend either a morning or afternoon session. Almost all of the children come from the local area and a small number of children have been identified as having special educational needs (SEN). There are four full-time staff members; a leader, deputy leader and two assistants. The pre-school leader assumes the role of the Independent Early Years Specialist (EYS) for the pre-school.

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.

Twenty-seven percent of parents/carers responded to the online confidential questionnaire and almost all of these responses included additional written comments. The responses praised: the approachable, friendly staff; the broad range of learning experiences; the pre-school's high quality pastoral care and the excellent communication between home and school.

All of the staff responded to the questionnaire and their responses were wholly positive, including the written comments which referenced the strong commitment of the staff to the aims of the pre-school and of integrated education.

C. THE PROCESS OF INSPECTION

The ETI worked alongside the pre-school to consider how well the pre-school:

- 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

- Forge Integrated Pre-school is fully committed to their shared vision for “happy, healthy children who play learn and grow together”.
- The processes for self-evaluation and ongoing monitoring and review of the provision within the pre-school, are highly effective.

- Professional learning and reflection on educational pedagogy and research is valued and used appropriately by the staff to develop the provision in the identified priority areas.
- Detailed records of planned and incidental observations of children's learning are used very effectively to inform planning and to monitor the individual progress of the children.
- All of the children are making good progress across the six areas of the pre-school curriculum. They are happy and show high levels of participation and independence as they engage fully in sustained and purposeful play.
- The development of the children's personal, social and emotional skills is prioritised appropriately, and the children's ideas and opinions are valued and respected and integrated into the planning for the curriculum.
- The staff work in close partnership with allied health professionals and, through professional learning and observations of learning, develop and implement effective and appropriate strategies to meet the needs of all of the children.
- The staff collaborate and communicate very effectively with each other, with parents and with outside agencies to support the learning and development of each child.
- At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by the pre-school demonstrates that the arrangements for child protection align to the current statutory guidance.

3. MAIN REPORT

A. SETTING THE VISION

All of the staff in Forge Integrated Pre-school are fully committed to the vision to provide an inclusive learning environment where all of the children and their families are welcomed, respected and valued. Their motto "Happy, healthy children who play, learn and grow together" underpins their commitment to the holistic development of every child, supported by excellent relationships with parents. A recent focus and consultation on the longstanding vision of the pre-school affirmed its relevance and alignment to the principles of integrated education: Equality, Faith and Values, Parental Involvement and Social Responsibility.

The staff have engaged recently in a thorough self-evaluation process to identify improvement priorities, which include the further development of the outdoor learning environment and a focus on improving further the pre-school's links with parents/carers. The management committee are committed to the pre-school's vision and are supportive of the work of the staff in enabling the holistic development of every child. They contribute to the self-evaluative culture by providing constructive guidance and supportive advice, using their particular skill sets.

B. IMPLEMENTING AND IMPROVING TO ACHIEVE THE VISION

There is a well embedded, collaborative team approach to ongoing self-evaluation in the pre-school. The staff are committed to an ongoing and ambitious focus on improvement to build on existing effective practice within the indoor and outdoor learning environment. The staff regularly reflect on their work and evaluate its impact on the children's learning. Professional learning and reflection on educational pedagogy and research is valued and used well by the staff to support their improvement work. All stakeholders are consulted as part of the self-evaluation process and their ideas and opinions inform the identification of the priorities for improvement in the pre-school. The staff's collegial approach to planning, observation and assessment is robust and focused on the children's learning experiences and the outcomes they attain. The staff have established thorough and detailed observation processes to monitor each child's progress across the six areas of the pre-school curriculum. All of the children are making good progress across the six areas of the pre-school curriculum. They are happy and show high levels of participation and independence as they engage fully in sustained and purposeful play.

The development of the children's personal, social and emotional skills has been prioritised appropriately by the staff. The children's ideas and opinions are valued and respected and integrated skilfully in the curriculum planning. Through staff participation in the PATHS* programme, there is a well embedded culture of respect in the pre-school. The staff nominate a 'child of the day' who receives compliments from their peers and the staff, which are then shared with parents, to support the development of the child's confidence and self-esteem and to grow the home/school partnership.

C. BUILDING EQUITY

There is an unwavering commitment to meet the needs of every child which is driven by the dedicated staff team. Their proactive approach to identifying and accessing appropriate support, and the strong links established with outside agencies, enables the children to access timely support linked to their particular need. The staff align their professional learning to the needs of the children and are consistent in their implementation of strategies and support. They research and investigate proactively ways to support the children and take great pride and delight when a child makes progress as a result of the support provided.

The specific and detailed planning for children with SEN is sensitive, carefully considered and is carried out in partnership with parents. The parents are kept very well informed about their child's progress and are assisted to access additional support services. Through effective interactions and questioning, the staff support skilfully the children to make progress in their learning. The children are very happy and enjoy positive and caring relationships with the staff which supports them to feel safe, included and valued.

D. DEFINING, CELEBRATING AND EMBEDDING SUCCESS

All of the children respond well to the embedded routines. The use of daily visual schedules supports them to know and understand what is happening, and fosters a sense of security and familiarity with the established routines.

The children show high levels of participation and independence as they engage fully in sustained and purposeful play. They are curious in their learning and show concentration, enjoyment and perseverance during long periods of uninterrupted play. They are beginning to collaborate well with each other and with staff and can work together to solve problems. The role of the 'class helper' is relished by the children who enjoy and respond positively to peer direction at key transition points, for example, announcing the 'snack of the day' and tidying up after snack time.

The staff praise, encourage and affirm regularly the children's achievements, big and small. As children receive 'stickers' and other rewards, they are encouraged to talk about what they have done well with other staff. Each day, time is set aside to celebrate the children's achievements, and success is celebrated through a round of applause from the rest of the class. As a result, the children are developing a healthy sense of their own self-worth and learn to value and appreciate the achievements of others.

Detailed records of planned and incidental observations of children's learning are used very effectively to inform planning and to monitor the progress of each child's learning across the pre-school curriculum. An online digital application is used to very good effect to collate, share and celebrate each child's achievements and progress with their parents/carers.

E. GROWING A COMMUNITY OF LEARNING

There is a strong sense of shared purpose and a clear commitment to the vision among the dedicated staff in the pre-school. Collaboration and communication with each other, parents, and outside agencies is prioritised to support the learning and development of the children, and through this collaborative work, the needs of each child are met very well.

Parents/carers are kept well informed about key policies and events through a weekly note, a monthly news sheet and an online digital application which is used to share information and advice. "Stay and Play" sessions and termly progress meetings support parents to understand the pre-school curriculum, the progress their child is making and how best they can create a positive learning environment at home.

The pre-school has well established links with other pre-school settings and health professionals, such as speech and language therapists and occupational therapists. The staff access targeted professional learning and training by the health professionals; they observe them supporting the children with specific needs, in order to learn the skills necessary to replicate this support with the children.

Transitions between the pre-school and primary schools are thoughtfully considered. Relevant information is shared in a timely manner by the pre-school staff to support each child's transfer to primary school and enable their new teacher to plan for their transition.

F. CHILD PROTECTION

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

4. GOING FORWARD

Forge Integrated Pre-school is successful in achieving its vision to provide an inclusive learning environment where all children and their families are welcomed, respected and valued. This is achieved by a highly committed staff team who engage in very effective self-evaluation and who are always striving to improve their pre-school provision for every child.

ETI will continue to work with Forge Integrated Pre-school, including to share examples of highly effective practice from which others may learn. The aspects of practice which should be shared more widely include:

- the strategic and thorough approach to self-evaluation that consistently values and acts upon the views of all the pre-school community.

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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Barnardos PATHS Programme is a social and emotional learning schools programme which empowers all children to develop the fundamental social and emotional learning skills which aims to enable them to make positive choices throughout life.

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