

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Ashgrove Nursery School,
Newry, Co Down

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 board of governors to complete a confidential questionnaire or to meet with the inspection team.

The parental responses to the questionnaire indicate very high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the educational and pastoral provision provided by the nursery school. In particular, they appreciate the welcoming, happy and safe environment created by the committed staff; the wide range of high quality indoor and outdoor learning experiences available to children; the regular communication through informative newsletters; and, the progress evident in their children's learning and development. The responses from the teaching and non teaching staff were wholly positive highlighting the strong sense of teamwork.

2. Context

Ashgrove Nursery School is a single unit controlled nursery school situated in Chestnut Grove, a residential area on the outskirts of Newry. The nursery operates two part-time sessions. The majority of the children come from the local area. The principal and one staff member have been in post since the last inspection in February 2006.

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	Outstanding
Achievements and Standards	Outstanding
Provision	Very good
Leadership and Management	Outstanding

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- The children demonstrate very good progress in all areas of the curriculum. They display high levels of independence and confidence and are very familiar with the daily routines. Almost all of the children engage in sustained periods of concentrated and purposeful play. They are very keen to explore and investigate the wide range of stimulating activities available to them.
- The children talk confidently about their experiences and a significant minority use sophisticated vocabulary to express their thoughts and ideas. All of the children listen very attentively during story time and demonstrate a keen interest in books and posters which are integrated naturally throughout the learning areas both indoors and outdoors. Most of the children engage readily in mark making and a minority are able to write their own name.
- The children are developing well early mathematical concepts and were observed sorting, counting, naming 2-dimensional shapes, using positional language and comparing and contrasting objects for size and colour.
- The children have a natural interest and curiosity about their environment. During the inspection, most of the children were observed playing imaginatively, for example, making lentil soup in the home corner, exploring the properties of materials and experiencing different types of weather outdoors. All of the children are developing well their physical and creative skills through experimenting with the wide range of well-chosen resources made available both indoors and outdoors. They readily engage in planned and spontaneous music making, singing songs and rhymes enthusiastically.

6. Provision

- A supportive and caring family ethos permeates the nursery. The staff have worked diligently to create a bright, attractive and welcoming learning environment where the children's work is presented attractively and labelled with text which is developing effectively the children's awareness of the written word. The easy access of materials promotes independence and choice in the children's play.
- The staff have a very good understanding of the pre-school curriculum. The interactions with the children are consistently of a very good quality. There are outstanding instances where the staff build effectively in the children's interests and ideas. They listen well to the children, model language and use appropriate questioning to extend their thinking.
- All the staff plan together regularly, taking account of the needs and interests of the children, to create a planned programme which provides excellent opportunities for learning across all areas of the curriculum. Appropriate individual targets are set and monitored closely through the use of a traffic light system. Whilst staff have made very good progress in developing an effective system for recording their observations, it will be important to develop further a more cohesive approach to linking the observations and evaluations to future planning.

- The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are supported effectively and sensitively by the staff. The individual education plans outline appropriate targets, are monitored effectively on a regular basis and demonstrate progression in the children's learning.
- The outstanding pastoral care is exemplified in the excellent relationships at all levels, the caring ethos and the child-centred, inclusive environment. The staff treat the children with care and respect and provide a safe, secure and stimulating environment that helps the children grow in confidence.
- The nursery gives outstanding attention to healthy eating and physical activity. The school has recently been the recipient of a healthy eating award and the children grow and harvest their own fruit and vegetables.

7. Leadership and management

- The principal is highly motivated and provides outstanding strategic leadership. She is ably supported by her hard-working team who display a collegiate approach to providing high quality care and education. Priority is given to the professional development of all staff and their talents are utilised well to provide a broad and balanced learning experience for the children.
- The rigorous school development planning process is underpinned by wide and effective consultation and identifies sharply focused areas for development. Of particular note, is the very effective working relationship between staff and governors to promote improvement.
- There are excellent links with the parents who are kept well-informed about events within the nursery through the parents' information board, the monthly newsletters and the informative website. A key feature of the nursery is the excellent use of parents and visitors to develop further the children's artistic and musical skills. The nursery has recently developed a Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) programme with two local schools to develop further the children's awareness of diversity.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this nursery school is outstanding; the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. The nursery school has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON ASHGROVE NURSERY SCHOOL

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3
Attending full-time	-	-	-
Attending part-time	27	26	-
Under 3 years of age*	0	0	-
With statement of special educational needs	1	1	-
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	-	-	-
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	-	1	-
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	1	-	-
With English as an additional language	2	4	-

* 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.	11.3%
Average attendance for the previous year.	92%

2. Details of Sessions

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

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-Time	Part-Time
Teachers	1	1
Nursery Assistants (qualified)	1	1
Nursery Assistants (non-qualified)	-	-

Number of: ***	
Students	3
Trainees	-

*** Total placements since September of current year

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