

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Holy Cross Nursery School,
Belfast

Maintained nursery school

Report of an Inspection in
May 2018



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
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1. Context

Holy Cross Nursery School is a double unit nursery located in the grounds of Holy Cross Boys Primary School. A new Principal took up post in September 2017. At the time of the inspection a temporary teacher and nursery assistant were employed. A high number of children have been identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning.

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending full-time	26	26
Under 3 years of age*	1	0
Funded by Department of Education	26	26
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	#	6
At Cop stages 3 or 4**	#	#
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	11	11

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	100%
Average attendance for the previous year.	89.4%
Number of days open in previous school year	184

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

2. Views of parents and staff

A minority of the parents and nearly all of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. Nearly all of the responses were positive about all aspects of the nursery school. The parents commented on: the children's enjoyment of school; the helpful information provided for parents to support the children with their language and learning; and, the caring staff who ensure the children are well-prepared for primary school. In their written comments, the staff emphasised the collegial team who are committed to the children, the school and the community.

3. Focus of the inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all children, 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	Capacity for sustained improvement
Outcomes for learners	Very good
Quality of provision	Good
Leadership and management	Good

5. Outcomes for learners

- The children are making very good progress across almost all areas of the pre-school curriculum. They settle quickly to activities and most of them sustain good levels of involvement in their play. The children respond well to the visual cues which guide them effectively to make independent choices at the beginning of the day. A range of interesting activities arouse the children's natural curiosity as they observe and care for living creatures.
- Most of the children collaborate well during their play, communicate confidently with the staff and one another and use an increasing vocabulary. They are interested in mark making and making patterns and are beginning to understand that print has meaning. The children are also beginning to use simple mathematical language to describe size and shape; they have a very good understanding of the sequence of the daily timetable.
- The children use the wide range of art materials, dough and small world role play with independence to initiate and develop their own imaginative ideas. They make patterns, design simple models, paint and draw early representational pictures of a good quality in response to the world around them.
- They listen attentively during story time and most of the children join in enthusiastically when reciting rhymes and singing songs. They have developed a wide repertoire of songs and rhymes that has extended well their vocabulary and awareness of early number.
- Outdoors, the children participate in a range of physical, energetic play activities and avail of further opportunities to develop their independence, turn-taking and self-management skills.
- The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are identified at an early stage. The children benefit from effective, individualised support programmes within a highly inclusive learning environment, and their parents are encouraged and supported to engage fully in their child's learning.

6. Quality of provision

- The nursery is very attractively presented and enhanced by relevant photographs and displays of the children's own work. The learning environment is well resourced and provides a range of materials and experiences which arouse the children's curiosity and encourages them to explore the activities on offer. The outdoor area is thoughtfully planned to ensure a wide and rich range of learning across the curriculum.

- The staff make some relevant observations of the children's responses to the play activities; the assessment information is not used to inform the short-term planning to identify the support and activities required to support progression in individual children's learning. The planning does not provide sufficient detail about the language and learning inherent in the activities to guide the whole staff team. Information on the children's progress is collated and shared with the parents at termly meeting.
- The staff are caring and supportive; they are child led and skilful in promoting and developing the children's self-esteem and confidence. The quality of the interactions between the staff and the children is variable. In the best practice, the staff use open-ended questions to develop the children's language and problem-solving skills. On occasions the writing and numeracy activities on offer are too formal and are not aligned with the pre-school curriculum.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the staff's approach to care and welfare impacts positively on learning. The staff create a caring, supportive and safe learning environment for the children which impacts positively on their behaviour.
- The organisation of the day is an important area for improvement. While the early part of the day is organised to allow the children free choice of activity, the dinner, snack and tidy-up routines do not exploit fully enough the learning inherent in the activities. The latter part of the day does not provide the children with opportunities to choose freely from an appropriate range of activities.

7. Leadership and management

- The self-evaluation processes are developing well; since taking up post the new Principal has carried out detailed audits on several aspects the school's work and through self-evaluation has identified appropriate areas for improvement. Going forward the staff should develop further the self-evaluation processes to include action plans that outline how the pace of change will be managed and the impact of the actions on the children's learning.
- The staff work very well as a team and are committed fully to providing the best outcomes for the children and the families in the area. The board of governors are fully aware of their responsibilities and support the staff very well. Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated.
- The nursery school has established excellent links with parents, relevant agencies and the main feeder primary schools for the benefit of the children.
- The school operates a highly effective Shared Education project with a local controlled nursery school. Both schools have recently received an award in recognition for bringing both communities together in the interest of a shared future for the children.

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

Holy Cross Nursery School demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. There are areas for improvement that the nursery school has demonstrated the capacity to address. The areas for improvement are to:

- improve the cycle of planning, observations and assessment to improve the overall quality of provision and meet more effectively the needs of all the children;
- develop further the self-evaluation processes to include action plans that outline how the pace of change will be managed and the impact of the actions on the children's learning; and
- improve the organisation of the day to ensure that the necessary routines are used effectively to promote learning and that the latter part of the day provides the children with opportunities to choose freely from an appropriate range of activities.

The ETI will monitor how the nursery school sustains improvement.

Health and Safety

- The outdoor sandpit cannot be used due to domestic animals accessing the area.
- The low wall around the sandpit is in a dangerous state.
- The outdoor safety surface is no longer fit for purpose.

Inspection method and evidence base

The effective practice and self-evaluation questions which guide inspection and self-evaluation of pre-school settings, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the ETI publication *The Pre-school Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework* at: <https://www.eti.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:

- a meeting with those involved with leadership and management, including the 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 management:

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

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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