

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Bernadette's Nursery School,
Belfast

Report of an Inspection in
January 2014



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 centres, 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.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	52	*	6 ¹	*
Teacher	*	*	100	*
Staff	6	6	100	*

* fewer than 5

All of the questionnaire returns were entirely positive about the work of the nursery, and in particular, how the nursery staff ensure the safety, well being and personal development of all the children.

2. Context

St Bernadette's Nursery School is situated in Glenalina Road in the Ballymurphy Estate in Belfast. The children who attend the school come from the local area.

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.

¹ The ETI is trialling a new range of methods to collect the views of parents/carers and, as a result, the percentage of questionnaires returned may be low.

4. Overall finding

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

- The children are making very good progress in all areas of the pre-school programme. They show enjoyment in their learning, and are motivated and confident. Most of the children settle very quickly to purposeful and productive play; they make choices, share ideas, and co-operate very well with one another. The development of the children's communication skills is a priority for the staff, and during the inspection, most of the children responded with confidence to the adults and were keen to talk about their play experiences. The children are secure and relaxed, and turn willingly to the adults for support.
- The children understand well the daily routines within the nursery. They use the play resources imaginatively and demonstrate increasing levels of independence, for example, by tidying away materials after play time.
- Through the staff's careful planning and very good use of mathematical language, most of the children have a good understanding of, for example, time, shape, position and number. Many of the children enjoy browsing through the wide variety of books available to them; they listen attentively during story time and are developing confidence in expressing their own ideas, both orally and through their drawings.

6. Provision

- The quality of the pastoral care in the nursery is outstanding. The staff are caring and supportive and enjoy very positive working relationships at all levels; they create a stimulating, creative learning environment where the children and their parents are welcomed.
- The quality of the staff's interaction with the children is a key feature of the provision and is of a consistently high standard. The adults are adept at using open-ended questioning to encourage and extend the children's reasoning and creativity. They provide very good role models for the children. Regular praise and encouragement from the staff develops the children's self-esteem and positive dispositions to learning.
- The staff provide an interesting, well balanced and progressively challenging pre-school programme that meets effectively the varying needs of the children. Planning is comprehensive, including the planning for the children who require additional support with their learning. The staff are currently developing further the detailed observations of the children's responses to the activities, linking these more closely to the evaluation of the learning, and to guide future planning.

- The nursery gives very good attention to healthy eating and physical activity. The children's conversational skills develop well during the snack and lunch time routines. The staff need to use these opportunities to develop further the children's independence. The outdoor area provides very good opportunities for the children to engage in a very good range of physical and energetic play.

7. Leadership and management

- The principal provides very good leadership and management in all aspects of the nursery school provision; she has a thorough knowledge and understanding of the pre-school curriculum and has developed an effective self-evaluative approach to the review of the provision leading to ongoing improvement. In this work, the principal is very ably supported by the assistant teacher, the classroom assistants and the support staff who work well together as a coherent team.
- The staff have developed very good and effective links with the parents, the local community and neighbouring schools. These links are supported very well through the school's participation in various well co-ordinated programmes, such as Extended Schools, the Early Years Inclusion Team and A Shared Vision. The very good link between the nursery and the local primary school supports well the effective transition from pre-school to primary school.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the nursery 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 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 ST BERNADETTE'S NURSERY SCHOOL, BELFAST

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3
Attending full-time	26	26	N/A
Attending part-time	0	0	N/A
Under 3 years of age*	N/A	N/A	N/A
With statement of special educational needs	0	0	N/A
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	6	*	N/A
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	*	*	N/A
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	N/A	*	N/A
With English as an additional language	N/A	*	N/A

* 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.	80
Average attendance for the previous year.	91

2. Duration of Sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
09:15 – 13:45	N/A	N/A

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-Time	Part-Time
Teachers	*	N/A
Nursery Assistants (qualified)	*	N/A
Nursery Assistants (non-qualified)	N/A	N/A

Number of: ***	
Students	
Trainees	

*** Total placements since September of current year

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued	52
Percentage returned	6
Number of written comments	*

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