

# PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

St Joseph's Nursery School,  
Antrim

Report of an inspection in  
May 2016

*eti*

The Education and Training Inspectorate  
Promoting Improvement

**Providing Inspection Services for:**

Department of Education  
Department for the Economy  
Department for Communities



## Quantitative terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

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 when reporting on Achievement and standards, on Provision for learning and on 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 nursery school / playgroup has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the nursery school / playgroup sustains improvement.
The nursery school /playgroup demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the nursery school/ playgroup sustains improvement.
The nursery school/ playgroup needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the nursery school's/ playgroup's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.
The nursery school / playgroup needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all learners. It requires external support to do so. The ETI will monitor and report on the nursery school's / playgroup's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

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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 publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self-evaluation* at: [Together Towards Improvement Pre-school | Education and Training Inspectorate](#)

Inspectors observed learning and teaching 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;
- a meeting with a group of parents; and
- the opportunity for the parents and staff to complete confidential questionnaires.

The responses to the confidential questionnaire and those conveyed at the meeting with the reporting inspector were highly positive about all aspects of the nursery school. In particular, they reported their appreciation of the high quality learning experiences provided, the care and commitment of the staff to developing each individual child and the very good opportunities for them to be involved in the life of the nursery school. The staff responses to the questionnaire were also very positive about all aspects of the provision.

## 2. Focus of inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all children, the purpose of inspection is, through effective linking of internal and external approaches, to evaluate the:

- children's achievements and standards;
- quality of provision for learning; and
- quality of leadership and management.

## 3. Context

St Joseph's Nursery School is accommodated in purpose built premises within the grounds of St Joseph's Primary School, Antrim. Since the last inspection, the outdoor areas have been landscaped and resourced. The school has gained the Eco-school and Rights Respecting School awards.

## 4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Achievements and standards	Outstanding
Provision for learning	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding

## **5. Achievements and standards**

- The children have positive attitudes towards their learning and clearly enjoy their pre-school experiences; they are progressing very well across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. Those identified with additional needs are also making very good progress with appropriate adult support.
- Most of the children are developing very well as independent learners; they make choices and decisions, initiate, sustain and develop their own play. The children persevere at tasks and spend prolonged periods exploring activities with a high level of engagement. They are developing very well their social skills, empathy and understanding of other people's feelings.
- The children have a wide range of language and communication skills. They are all progressing well in developing and using these skills to communicate their ideas with an increasing confidence and range of vocabulary. The children are confident to ask for support when required and use their communication skills well to work collaboratively at activities and to resolve disagreements with each other. The children explore independently story and information books during their play and respond very well to whole group stories, songs and rhymes.
- The progression of the children's imaginative and creative play is evident in the well developed role-play and the effective use of the wide range of art materials. The children take on roles confidently to explore their own home experiences and develop their small world play at the fire station and jungle animals with imagination. The children explore and talk about colour and pattern using both their fingers and a wide range of tools at, for example, the dough, paint, chalks and craft area. Their representational work of people and objects in their environment is developing very well.
- The children have an increasing understanding of early mathematical concepts and the associated language which they use as they count, sort, match and explore patterns and shape through a wide range of play activities both indoors and outdoors. Their gross motor skills are progressing very well as, for example, they dig, run, climb and balance with confidence and dexterity.
- The children use their senses to explore mini-beasts, growing fruit and vegetables, and other natural materials in the classroom, playground area, woodland area and polytunnel. They make close observations of their environment, show curiosity, ask questions and have an interest in the seasonal topics. The children solve problems and investigate how things fit together as they use the large and small construction materials to make simple models and constructions.

## **6. Provision for learning**

- The high quality learning environment indoors and outdoors, combined with the effective management of the open plan approach, ensures the children from all classes have the opportunity to access a very wide range of experiences. The environment is language rich and well organised to promote choice and the children's independence.

- The staff demonstrate a very good, shared understanding of the pre-school curriculum through their high quality interactions with the children. They foster a calm, caring and respectful environment using consistent and positive approaches to promoting positive behaviour and celebrating the children's achievements. The staff are very skilful in modelling language skills and vocabulary that enables the children to communicate more effectively with one another and they ask effective open -ended questions that extend further the children's thinking and ideas.
- The very detailed short, medium and longer term planning is implemented consistently by the staff to provide excellent opportunities for learning across all aspects of the pre-school curriculum. The detailed evaluations and broad range of assessment records are used effectively for early identification of need, to inform intervention strategies for smaller groups and to provide detailed information of their progress to the parents.
- The children with additional needs are identified early and their needs are being met with a combination of high quality individual support, smaller group support and effective liaison with parents, health professionals and other agencies. The staff have improved further their professional capacity and skills to meet the diverse range and increasing number of children presenting with additional needs. The children's learning has benefited from the early intervention work provided by the additional staff support because of the successful funding applications to increase staff hours.
- The quality of pastoral care is outstanding. There is a very caring and inclusive ethos in which children and families from a diverse range of backgrounds and cultures are valued and welcomed. The focus on promoting the children's well being and respect for each other is well embedded and evident through the daily practice. The children are caring and respectful to one another, the adults and their environment. The small number of children who still require adult support with their social skills respond well to the consistent implementation of positive strategies used by the staff to help them develop their social skills.
- The opportunities for the children to grow, cook and talk about healthy foods, the attention to dental care and, the excellent range of opportunities for energetic, physical play, music and movement all contribute very well to promoting a healthy lifestyle.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The nursery school is managed and led very effectively by the principal who provides clear and strategic direction focused on high quality pre-school education that meets the needs of the children and families in the area. There is a very strong collegial team approach; the principal encourages members of the teaching and support staff to develop their leadership capabilities by improving different aspects of the provision.
- There is a well established culture of self-evaluation through reflective practice, consultation with staff and parents and rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating the provision. Staff development is linked effectively to the priorities in the school development plan. There is clear evidence of continuous whole school development and improvement including, for example, the enhanced learning experiences developed outdoors, increased involvement of parents and the focus on the developing the children's language skills and emotional well-being.

- There are very effective links and partnerships with a very wide range of schools, pre-schools and other agencies. These links combined with the wide range of visits and visitors from the local community enable the staff to share practice, promote mutual understanding and enhance further the learning for the children.
- Parents are encouraged to be involved in the life and work of the nursery school and their contributions are valued. They are provided with a very good range of information about the curriculum and have very good opportunities to attend classes and events to support both their personal development and role as a parent. A parent worker has been appointed recently between the schools participating in the Shared Education programme to progress further this work.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the nursery school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

## **8. Overall effectiveness**

St Joseph's Nursery School has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all learners. The ETI will continue to monitor how the nursery school sustains improvement.

## STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON ST JOSEPH'S NURSERY SCHOOL, ANTRIM

### 1. Details of children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3
Attending full-time	28	0	0
Attending part-time	0	28	28
Under 3 years of age*	0	0	0
Funded by Department of Education	28	28	28
With statement of special educational needs	***	0	0
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	***	5	***
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	***	5	***
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	11	6	7
With English as an additional language	5	5	7
Who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	***	0	0

\* 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

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	100
Average attendance for the previous year.	93%
Number of days open in previous school year	185

### 2. Duration of sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
9:00 am-1:30 pm	09:00 am-11:30 am	12:15 pm-3:00 pm 12:15 pm-1:45 pm

### 3. Details of staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff including, Teachers/Leaders	2	6
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification	1	4
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification	1	2
New appointments within the previous 12 months	0	0

Number of: ****	
Students	4
Trainees	1

\*\*\*\* Total placements since September of current year



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