

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Oliver Plunkett Nursery
School, Belfast

Report of an inspection in
March 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 discussions with the 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 or to meet with the inspection team.

Twenty-three percent of the parents responded to the questionnaire and most of them included additional written comments. The responses were highly positive and indicated a very high level of satisfaction with almost all aspects of the setting's work; in particular, the parents praised the enthusiastic, welcoming and professional staff and the good information shared with them about their child's progress. The responses from the staff questionnaires were also very positive. The ETI has reported the main issues emerging from the questionnaires to the principal and a representative of the board of governors.

2. Context

St Oliver Plunkett Nursery School is a purpose-built nursery school situated in west Belfast. The nursery operates two full-time classes and, in addition, offers both a breakfast and an afterschool club. At the time of the inspection, a significant number of the nursery support staff were acting in a temporary capacity.

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	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 well-settled and engage enthusiastically and purposefully with their play for sustained periods of time. Many of the children are beginning to play collaboratively; they can access the resources they require with good levels of independence and are confident in engaging with the adults.
- The children enjoy browsing in books and join enthusiastically in the small group and class story and rhyme sessions. The children have a good interest in early mark making, for example, using the clipboards at the construction area and writing shopping lists or 'space writing' in the role play areas. They are developing their thinking and problem solving skills effectively and were observed verbally planning the construction of a rocket and solving a seating shortage at the snack table. The nursery staff have identified a number of children as having speech and language difficulties and these children are being well supported and are making good progress in overcoming their difficulties.
- A number of the children are developing an awareness of numbers and enjoy the regular opportunities provided for them to count in the playroom. They recognise patterns and engage well in sorting and matching activities. The children are developing their early mathematical language and can recognise and name a range of shapes.

6. Provision

- The staff provide a bright and stimulating learning environment both indoors and outdoors. The children's work is celebrated in attractive displays around the playroom. The routines in the nursery provide effective transitions across the day and develop well the children's independence.
- The staff interactions with the children are of a consistently high quality; excellent use is made of effective questioning to encourage a problem-solving approach. The staff provide appropriate levels of support and respond well to the interests of the children allowing them to take the lead and explore. They use the story and rhyme sessions to develop effectively the children's early mathematical understanding in a relevant context.
- The broad and balanced programme presents very good opportunities for learning across almost all of the areas of the pre-school curriculum. The weekly planning provides very good guidance to the staff and is evaluated well to ensure that it informs the following week's planning and builds well on the children's prior experiences and needs. The staff are currently piloting the use of an electronic recording system for their observations and assessment of the children's learning. They have identified a number of challenges that the system has presented in building a profile of each child's learning across the areas of learning and as to how the observations are informing the planning. It will be important that the staff keep reviewing the effectiveness of the system and modifying their approach to overcome these challenges.

- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the nursery is outstanding. There is a welcoming and inclusive ethos and a caring atmosphere that develops the children's understanding of respecting others. The staff make very effective use of the positive behaviour strategies and as a result the children are well-behaved.
- The nursery gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity which encourages the children to adopt healthy lifestyles, for example, the healthy break and the regular opportunities for energetic physical play.
- The children with additional learning needs are identified early and individual play planners with appropriate targets are in place and are reviewed regularly. The staff have recently received additional training in special educational needs through the Early Years Inclusion Team and work closely with a range of external agencies in providing appropriate support. The support provided for the children who have additional learning needs is of a very good quality and the children respond well to the range of strategies employed.

7. Leadership and management

- The staff work collaboratively and there is effective team-work and commitment to the continued improvement and development of the nursery. The principal has a clear vision for providing high quality pre-school education, which is tailored to the needs of each child and she is a very good role-model in her own work with the children.
- The school development plan is of a good quality and based on effective self-evaluation processes. The staff have recently reviewed the practices and provision to ensure effective inclusion within the nursery and have identified a number of areas for improvement as a result.
- There are very good links with the parents who are kept well informed about their child's progress in the nursery. The regular parents' newsletter includes good information on the life and work of the nursery and family days and events provide good opportunities for parents and wider family to visit and become involved in the nursery. The staff have well-established links with the local primary and pre-school playgroup.
- 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. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this nursery is very good. The nursery is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the learners; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON ST OLIVER PLUNKETT NURSERY SCHOOL

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3
Attending full-time	26	26	
Attending part-time			
Under 3 years of age*			
With statement of special educational needs	1		
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs			
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	3	3	
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	10	10	
With English as an additional language			

* 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.	44%
Average attendance for the previous year.	87%

2. Details of Sessions

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

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-Time	Part-Time
Teachers	2	
Nursery Assistants (qualified)	1	4
Nursery Assistants (non-qualified)		

Number of: ***	
Students	6
Trainees	

*** Total placements since September of current year

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