

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Steeple Nursery School,
Antrim

Report of an Inspection in
January 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 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 staff holding specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a discussion with the staff;
- a meeting with a small group of parents; and
- the opportunity for the parents and staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

The parental responses to the questionnaire and the views of parents expressed during a meeting with the reporting inspector 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 wide range of stimulating learning experiences provided, the support provided for them as parents and the opportunities for them to be involved in the school. In addition they value the caring and professional staff team and the very good progress their children are making. The responses from the teaching and non teaching staff were wholly positive about the enjoyable and supportive work environment and the strong sense of team work.

2. Context

Steeple Nursery School is located on the large campus of Parkhall College and Antrim Grammar School on the outskirts of Antrim town. Almost all of the children attending the six part-time nursery classes are in their immediate pre-school year. A high percentage (27%) of the children currently enrolled have been identified as requiring additional support with their learning and development. Since the last inspection, two new members of teaching staff have been appointed and at the time of the inspection the Principal was non-teaching for the current academic year.

3. Focus of the 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	Outstanding
Leadership and Management	Outstanding

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are progressing very well in their overall learning and development in line with the pre-school curricular guidance.
- The children are well settled and are developing very positive attitudes and dispositions for learning. They make choices independently, co-operate very well with the daily routines and appear happy and secure in the nursery environment. Most of the children spend sustained periods exploring and persevering at activities within the playrooms and outdoor play area. The children who require additional support to settle and play productively are progressing well with sensitive and appropriate adult support.
- Although a high percentage of the children enrol with speech and language difficulties, the children are developing well their attention and listening skills and are confident to talk about their play and experiences with the adults and each other. Almost all of the children enjoy informal and larger group stories and referring to books through their play.
- The children use the wide range of art materials creatively and with imagination to draw and paint detailed representations of the world around them and make simple models. The children enjoy exploring musical instruments during freely chosen play and participate enthusiastically in group singing sessions. Most of the children enjoy taking on roles relating to their own home experiences and also play imaginatively in themed role play outdoors.
- The children are curious to explore the natural world through appropriate topics and resources both indoors and outdoors and engage well with the staff to discuss their discoveries. They enjoy experimenting with the natural resources available and use the construction materials well to make models and develop their small world imaginative play.
- The children are developing well their manual dexterity and use of a range of suitable tools such as brushes and pens. The children are confident to use the wide range of equipment outdoors and are developing well their larger motor skills as they dig, transport materials, ride, balance and climb.

6. Provision

- The nursery environment is stimulating, well resourced and all areas are used effectively to provide a high quality learning environment for the children. The nursery operates a partial open plan system which affords the children a high degree of choice. Materials are well presented to promote the children's independent choices and the inclusion of natural materials, books, photographs and displays of the children's work enhances the environment further. The entrance areas are used effectively to provide a wide range of very helpful information for parents.
- The learning activities are well planned to promote high quality experiences across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The medium term planning provides a good overview of the learning to be promoted over a six week period. The principal recognises that with the changes in the profile of staff it is timely to revisit and update aspects of the planning further. The guidance material from the Rights Respecting Schools project¹ is well embedded and implemented effectively into the daily curriculum.
- The staff are child centred in their approaches. They listen to the children, and provide consistent high quality caring support and encouragement to them. They promote very effectively, settled and sustained purposeful play and are good role models as they demonstrate respect and foster well the children confidence and self-esteem. They exploit skilfully the learning to develop the children's independence, problem solving, language and communication skills.
- Staff know the children, families and their needs very well and from the outset keep relevant observations and records of the children. The staff have a good shared understanding of the support the children require, through regular team discussions and, they use the full range of information to inform their planning and report to parents on their children's progress and achievements. Due to the open plan aspects of the nursery, all members of staff contribute effectively to the record keeping process.
- The nursery operates a dual day system within all three classrooms. Parents are welcomed into the classrooms at the beginning and end of the sessions which provides valuable opportunities to share information and experiences. The daily timetable is thoughtfully planned to ensure all time is used effectively to promote learning and development. There are smooth transitions between activities and the necessary routines.
- The children identified as needing support with aspects of their learning are all very well integrated and supported effectively in the nursery environment. They are identified at an early stage and appropriate action is put in place to address their individual needs. Parents are kept informed and appropriately involved in the process. The parents value the high level of support and guidance provided to them to help them work in partnership with the nursery in meeting their children's needs. The provision of additional support staff is having a positive impact on meeting these children's needs and the children are making good progress.

¹ The **UNICEF** Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA) recognises achievement in putting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) at the heart of a school's planning, policies, practice and ethos

- The outstanding pastoral care is exemplified in the excellent working relationships at all levels, the holistic approach to meeting the children's needs, including their emotional well-being, the support for the whole family and the nurturing ethos.

7. Leadership and management

- The principal leads and manages the nursery very effectively. Her work is clearly valued by the staff and the families in the community. There is a very strong sense of teamwork and dedication to providing high quality pre-school care and education among the whole staff team.
- The school development planning process is informed well by wide consultation and is linked to quality indicators. The priorities for development are guided by the needs of the children and supported by appropriate staff development opportunities. There is clear evidence of self-evaluation and ongoing improvement and development in key aspects of the curriculum, and for example, eco-schools and partnership with parents.
- The nursery provides a broad range of enjoyable and educational experiences for the parents to keep them informed, build relationships and help them to be purposefully engaged in their child's learning. In addition there is a very strong commitment to working in partnership with the wider community through for example the work of the Community Relations in Schools (CRIS) and the Carrick, Antrim and Newtownabbey (CAN) projects. Effective use has been made of extended schools funding to provide, for example, additional early morning and afterschool provision which is supporting families well, particularly working parents.
- On the basis of the evidence 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 relevant departments.

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 STEEPLE NURSERY SCHOOL

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3
Attending full-time			
Attending part-time	52	52	52
Under 3 years of age*	3	4	2
With statement of special educational needs		1	
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	5	3	4
At CoP stages 3 or 4**		1	
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	14	14	14
With English as an additional language	4	3	3

* 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.	18.5%
Average attendance for the previous year.	92

2. *Duration 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	4	
Nursery Assistants (qualified)	6	
Nursery Assistants (non-qualified)		
Special Needs Assistant		

Number of: ***	
Students	8
Trainees	

*** Total placements since September of current year

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