



*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**



Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection

**Orchard Playgroup
Loughgall, Co Armagh**

April 2011

FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF ORCHARD PLAYGROUP, LOUGHGALL, CO ARMAGH, BT61 8PX (5AB-0500)

The inspection in March 2009 highlighted strengths in the playgroup's friendly, welcoming ethos, the good working relationships at all levels, the good quality interaction between the staff and the children and the satisfactory opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The inspection identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

to develop further the methods of planning and assessment to guide the work of the staff and to help them meet the differing needs of the children.

In the interval since the inspection, the following actions which affect the work of the playgroup have taken place:

- the playgroup has relocated to purpose-built accommodation in the grounds of St Oliver Plunkett Primary School;
- three additional members of staff were appointed; and
- the playgroup was successful in obtaining a substantial grant to develop the outdoor play area and this work is now completed;

The neighbouring primary school's policy of enrolling individual children in the reception class, on or immediately after, their fourth birthday, is continuing to have a negative impact on the funding and hence the sustainability of the playgroup. This practice also provides the children concerned with a disjointed pre-school and primary school experience.

The Education and Training Inspectorate carried two monitoring visits in January 2010 and October 2010, and a follow-up inspection on 5 April 2011.

The action plan produced by the playgroup in response to the 2009 inspection findings was of good quality.

The monitoring visit in October 2010 identified the need for further improvement in the following areas:

- develop aspects of the planning further to focus more on the learning to be promoted in all areas, including outdoor play;
- review aspects of the organisation of the day, particularly the snack routine and the transitions between key times of the day; and
- ensure that all staff implement effectively the behaviour management policy and take more account of the diverse needs of the group.

The playgroup's development plan has been adjusted in light of the inspection findings.

Good progress has been made in the areas for improvement identified during the original inspection.

The following are the most important improvements since the inspection in 2009:

- the staff have created a more attractive learning environment that provides a broader range of activities for the children;
- aspects of the daily timetable have been reviewed to help ensure all time is used more effectively to promote learning;
- there is effective teamwork among the staff who are more focused on implementing strategies to promote settled and purposeful play; and
- the staff have made a useful start in the process of self-evaluation.

The area which requires further improvement is:

- the need to continue to focus on the learning to be promoted in the planned activities and ensure there is adequate progression in the routines throughout the year.

In the areas inspected, the playgroup has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified minor areas for improvement which the playgroup has the capacity to address.

The playgroup's progress on the areas for improvement will be followed-up by monitoring visits, conducted by the District Inspector.

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