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*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

Round Tower Community Playgroup Antrim

May 2013

FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF ROUND TOWER PLAYGROUP, ANTRIM, BT41 2TH (3BB-0536)

The inspection in December 2011 highlighted strengths including the caring nature of the staff and their efforts to provide a purposeful and inviting learning environment for the children. It also identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- the staff to outline how the children's learning will develop systematically, to ensure that differing needs are met effectively, and to facilitate the provision of evidence of adequate challenge and progression over time;
- the staff to improve their understanding in how to promote the children's language and learning, and in particular, how to extend the children's level of concentration through the play activities; and
- the leadership, at all levels, to focus more clearly on providing and evaluating quality learning experiences.

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

- the layout of the room, the daily routines and the use of resources have been reviewed and improved;
- new formats for planning and recording observations of the children's learning have been introduced and further adapted as a result of a staff review;
- the staff now have dedicated time each week to plan together formally and develop aspects of the provision;
- the playgroup is participating in the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) Special Educational Needs Capacity Building Project;
- the leader and staff have recently started to use self evaluation and are becoming more reflective on their practice; and
- the playgroup have had a number of changes in their independent early years specialist (IEYS) and have recently started to receive focused support on a monthly basis.

The Education and Training Inspectorate carried out two monitoring visits in November 2012 and March 2013, and a follow up inspection on 10 May 2013.

The action plan received by the Department of Education (DE) following the inspection was of a good quality.

The following are the most important improvements that have taken place since the original inspection:

- the re-organisation of the playroom and revised routines enable the children to develop well their independence and the staff now make more appropriate use of the resources to create opportunities for learning;

- the revised planning and assessment procedures and the formalised weekly staff meetings support the staff more effectively and they are developing a shared understanding of the learning to be promoted through the planned activities; as a result, there has been an improvement in the quality of the interaction between the staff and the children;
- the support and training received through the NEELB Special Educational Needs Capacity Building Project has increased the staff knowledge and understanding of how to identify children with additional learning needs and they have put in place effective strategies to support these children. As a result a number of children have made significant progress in overcoming their barriers to learning;
- the increased time allocated for staff meetings has had a very positive effect in enabling the staff to develop a shared understanding of the self evaluation process and begin to evaluate the impact of the changes they are currently making; and
- the current IEYS has provided well-focused support to enable the staff to reflect on areas of their current practice and make relevant changes. It will be important that this level of monthly support continues in order to ensure that the improvements to date are sustained and built upon further.

CONCLUSION

In most of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this playgroup is now satisfactory; the strengths outweigh the areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in learning and teaching and leadership and management, which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively.

The areas for improvement include the need:

- to continue to develop the staff's understanding and implementation of the planning and assessment procedures;
- to develop further the children's programme for physical play both indoors and outdoors; and
- for leadership and management at all levels to ensure that the progress made since the last inspection is sustained and effectively built upon.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will carry out a further follow-up inspection within 12 months and a report will be published.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- A risk assessment of the surface at the entrance of the enclosed play area should be carried out urgently.

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