

# PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Ballee Pre-School Playgroup,  
Ballymena

Report of an Inspection  
in March 2012

## STATISTICAL INFORMATION

<b>Name of playgroup centre:</b>	Ballee Pre-School Playgroup
<b>Address:</b>	20 Antrim Road BALLYMENA Co Antrim BT42 2BJ
<b>Management Type:</b>	Voluntary

<b>Date of inspection:</b>	5 March 2012
<b>Date of previous inspection:</b>	N/A

### 1. Details of Children

<b>Total number of children:</b>	<b>am session</b>	<b>pm session</b>
attending the playgroup centre	27	30
in their immediate playgroup year	21	13
funded by Department of Education (DE)	20	13
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	6	3
with a statement of special educational needs	0	0
without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	5	3
with English as an additional language	2	1
who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	0	
<b>Attendance:</b>		
attendance** of funded children for the previous school year	80.8%	78.8%

\* Special Educational Needs = fewer than five

\*\* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

## 2. Details of Staff

<b>Number of:</b>	<b>Full-time</b>	<b>Part-time</b>
Staff, including leader	4	1
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	4	1
New appointments within previous 12 months	2	0

<b>Number of: ***</b>	
Students	0
Trainees	0

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

## 3. Details of Sessions

<b>Duration of morning session</b>	<b>Duration of afternoon session</b>	<b>Number of days open in previous year</b>
2½ hours	2½ hours	188

## 4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	40
Percentage returned	51%
Number of written comments:	11

**BALLEE PRE-SCHOOL PLAYGROUP, BALLYMENA, CO ANTRIM, BT42 2BJ  
(3AB-0568)**

1. Ballee Pre-School Playgroup is situated in the Ballee area on the outskirts of Ballymena. It is accommodated in a purpose-built community child care facility and operates daily two part-time funded pre-school sessions. The children who attend the morning session, and a majority of the children in the afternoon session, are in their immediate pre-school year; the remainder will experience two years of pre-school education. The children come mainly from the local area. The pre-school is in its second year of receiving funding from the Department of Education as part of the Pre-school Expansion Programme.

2. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this playgroup is good. The playgroup has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the organisation has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) will monitor the playgroup's progress on the areas for improvement.

#### CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENTS

3. The children settle quickly to activities and most spend prolonged periods of time engaging in productive play in a wide range of activities. The children demonstrate independence as they select and use their own choice of resources; and are making progress in managing their own snack routine.

4. The children are developing very good social skills as they co-operate with the staff and many are developing friendships with one another. The staff are aware of a small number of children who still require adult support to engage fully and are sensitive to their needs.

5. Most of the pre-school aged children communicate freely and confidently to express their ideas and talk about their experiences. Almost all of the children enjoy listening to enjoyable group stories and participating in action songs and rhymes. A small number of children require support to engage in conversation and would benefit from smaller informal group story sessions.

6. Groups of children make very good use of the opportunities for mark making and a few children show an interest in emergent writing. The children would benefit from a broader range of tools and experiences to develop their fine motor skills.

7. The children participate in a range of creative activities including painting, collage work and junk modelling. A small number of children are beginning to make simple representations of people and objects. The children play collaboratively and with imagination in the role play area for extended periods. The children nearly all enjoy and participate enthusiastically in music and movement sessions both indoors and outdoors and would benefit from more regular, planned opportunities to explore rhyme, rhythm and sound.

8. A majority of the children show an awareness of basic mathematical concepts and a few are beginning to use appropriate mathematical language as they count, sort and make comparisons. Many of the children show an interest in the natural environment as they investigate the resources associated with the Spring theme. More experiences should be planned and provided by the staff to develop the children's interest in construction and early technology on a daily basis.

9. The children clearly enjoy the regular opportunities to engage in energetic physical play outdoors. The children climb, run, balance and pedal wheeled toys with confidence.

#### PROVISION FOR LEARNING

10. The staff have worked hard to create a stimulating and attractive learning environment with distinct areas for play.

11. The very good quality and consistency of the staff's interaction with the children is a key strength of the playgroup. The staff show enjoyment as they work with the children and promote their language, thinking and learning through the range of activities and experiences. Group sessions are managed very effectively.

12. The staff, working closely with their independent early years specialist (EYS), are making steady progress in developing their short term written planning which is implemented by all of the staff. They have identified the need to continue to plan for learning in outdoor play and to ensure sufficient differentiation in the planning to reflect the diverse range of needs within the two sessions.

13. The staff show increasing confidence in making relevant observations and assessments of the children's progress. They are at the early stages of linking this information to planning. The records are used effectively for early identification of concerns and subsequent referrals. The staff recognise the need for additional advice and guidance from their EYS on how best to plan for and support children with additional needs on a daily basis.

14. There are good relationships with the parents who are very supportive of the work in the playgroup. They are kept informed about the work of the playgroup and their child's progress through a range of relevant meetings and information sheets. These links should be extended by the staff to encourage all of the parents to become involved in their child's learning and development.

15. There are good pastoral links to the main receiving primary schools and useful links have been made with other pre-schools in the local area. Very good links have been established with other agencies to support the early identification of children with additional needs. Good use is made of visitors from the wider community to enhance the children's learning experiences.

16. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the playgroup is very good. The staff provide a safe, secure and happy environment for the children based on caring and supportive relationships.

17. The playgroup has very good comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department.

18. The playgroup gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, through a healthy break and regular outdoor play, which encourages the children to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

#### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

19. The playgroup leader is effective in her role; she is well organised and committed to providing good quality provision in the best interest of the children. The staff are all fully aware of their roles and responsibilities and work very well as a team. They have worked very hard with the good support and guidance of their EYS, to develop the work of the

playgroup in line with the curricular guidance since entering the pre-school programme. The staff are well supported by their management committee who have worked tirelessly to develop facilities for families in the local area.

20. The development planning process and action planning are in the early stages of development. The current action plans should be more sharply focused on key priorities and updated in line with the inspection findings.

**21. The key strengths in this playgroup are:**

- the attractive and stimulating learning environment;
- the caring and inclusive ethos based on very good working relationships at all levels;
- the broad range of interesting activities and experiences which provide good opportunities for the children to learn in most of the areas of the pre-school curriculum;
- the very good quality of staff interactions with the children which promote effectively the children's care, learning and development;
- the children's sustained and concentrated play and their good levels of motivation and engagement in their learning; and
- the effective leadership and management of the playgroup leader and the dedicated staff team.

**22. The inspection identified areas for improvement. The following are the most important areas that need attention: the staff need to**

- continue to improve the planning process to ensure all areas of the curriculum are resourced and developed fully both indoors and outdoors; and
- use the assessment information to ensure the planned programme and adult support is tailored closely to the full range of children's needs and abilities.

23. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this playgroup is good. The playgroup has strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the playgroup has the capacity to address. The Inspectorate will monitor the playgroup's progress on the areas for improvement.

**QUESTIONNAIRES**

The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents, the management group and the staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. The 25 responses from the parents all indicated a very high level of satisfaction with the educational and pastoral provision. In particular, they reported their appreciation of the progress made by their children, the happy, caring environment and the approachable and professional staff.

The seven responses from the management group indicated a high level of confidence in the staff and the work of the playgroup. The five staff returns indicated a strong sense of team work among the staff in implementing a programme which meets the all round development of each child.

All of the key messages from the responses have been shared with the staff and management of the playgroup.

**HEALTH AND SAFETY**

- The location of the moveable climbing and balancing play equipment and trampette need to be reviewed to minimise the risk of injury to the children.



© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2012

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the ETI website: [www.etini.gov.uk](http://www.etini.gov.uk)

