

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Ballygowan Community
Playgroup, Co Down

Report of an Inspection
in December 2012



Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

CUSTOMER
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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%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school setting:	Ballygowan Community Playgroup
Address:	Comber Road BALLYGOWAN Co Down BT23 5TN
Management Type:	Voluntary
Date of inspection:	10 December 2012
Date of previous inspection:	

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school setting	24	
in their immediate pre-school year	24	
funded by Department of Education (DE)	24	
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	2	
with a statement of special educational needs	0	
without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	3	
with English as an additional language	0	
who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	0	
Attendance:		
attendance** of funded children for the previous school year	83.5%	

* Special Educational Needs = fewer than five

** Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	2	0
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification	2	
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification	0	
New appointments within previous 12 months	0	

Number of: ***	
Students	
Trainees	

*** Total placements since September of current year

3. Details of Sessions

Duration of morning session	Duration of afternoon session	Number of days open in previous year
2¾ hours	2¾ hours	?

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	24
Percentage returned	25%
Number of written comments:	3

1. Introduction

Ballygowan Community Playgroup is located on the Comber Road, Ballygowan, County Down. The pre-school setting has been in the pre-school expansion programme for approximately twelve years. In 2011, the setting moved to new purpose built accommodation in the grounds of Alexander Dickson Primary School.

At the time of the inspection, due to the resignation of the previous leader, the setting had only two permanent members of staff. As the setting has twenty-four funded places, the setting had acquired the support of a volunteer who is vetted. The setting is awaiting vetting for two other volunteers in order to be able to meet fully the appropriate adult child ratios required for the number of children attending the setting. Currently, an acting leader is responsible for the day-to-day running of the setting. The setting has recently employed the services of an independent early years specialist (EYS).

2. Inspection methods and evidence base

The inspection evaluations are based on evidence gained from in-class observations and from a range of documentation provided by the setting.

The views of the parents and staff were sought through a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Six of the parents (25%) responded to the questionnaire; a significant minority of these parents made additional written comments. All of the responses from the parental questionnaires indicated a high level of satisfaction with the quality of the provision within the setting. In particular, the parents expressed their appreciation of the caring and supportive staff. The responses from the management group and staff were also very positive.

3. Overall finding of the inspection

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

Summary of key findings

Children's Achievements Quality of Provision Leadership and management	Good Satisfactory Satisfactory
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KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

4. Children's achievements

- The children are well-settled and are developing positive attitudes to their learning.

- During the inspection, the majority of the children engaged in sustained and purposeful play; they showed good levels of independence and co-operated well with one another and with the adults. They make good use of the attractive learning environment, choose activities freely and display good self-management skills.
- Many of the children are beginning to produce representational drawings and a small number can recognise and attempt to write their own name.
- Most of the children are able to sort by colour and shape, and many are able to use number appropriately whilst engaging in the various activities on offer.
- On occasions, during the inspection, the noise level became too high; the staff need to use more appropriate strategies to resolve this problem.

5. **Provision for learning**

- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the setting is good. The staff are caring and support the children in their play activities. There are positive working relationships at all levels.
- During the inspection, the quality of the interaction between the staff and the children ranged between satisfactory and good. The staff were observed using appropriate mathematical and positional language as they engaged with the children in their play. On occasions, however, opportunities were missed to develop further the children's language and learning. The volunteer, present on the day of the inspection, contributed significantly to the development of the children's mathematical awareness.
- The staff have created an attractive environment for the children. The children are introduced to script through the captions written on their work and the labelling of resources around the room.
- The promotion of the children's personal, social and emotional development and the development of their early mathematical language and skills are particular strengths of the programme. As the staff continue to develop the educational programme more attention needs to be given to the development of the children's early scientific and technological skills.
- The staff have identified appropriately the need to develop further the written planning for the educational programme and the methods of assessment; greater focus now needs to be placed on the learning expected from the activities provided. The staff also need to make better use of their observations of the children's responses and achievements to both inform their future planning and allow them to build up an accurate profile of each child's progress and development.
- The children are provided with a healthy snack and have regular opportunities for energetic physical play. The staff need to plan more systematically for the energetic physical play provision, particularly when using the school hall. Staff should ensure that there is greater choice of activity and sufficient progression in the planned activities across the year.

6. Leadership and management

- Currently, the setting is in the process of securing a permanent leader. The staff have good working relationships. The acting leader and the assistant demonstrate commitment to the ongoing development of the settings work.
- The staff have developed good links with their parents. They keep them up to date with their child's progress and inform them about aspects of the provision and the work of the setting. Valuable links have also been established with the adjoining primary schools which helps the children to make a smooth transition to the next stage of their education.
- The setting has not yet embarked on the process of self-evaluation or development planning.
- At the time of the inspection, a newly appointed independent early years specialist (EYS) had been providing support for two months. During this time she has developed positive working relationships and has provided good support and guidance for the staff.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection the setting's arrangements for safeguarding children are unsatisfactory and do not adequately reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department. In particular the setting needs to ensure that;
 - the staff and the governor responsible for child protection matters have appropriate training;
 - all parent helpers go through the appropriate vetting procedures; and the ratio of adult to child meets the requirements of 1:8.

The District Inspector will follow-up the issues relating to child protection within six working weeks from the oral report-back.

CONCLUSION

In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this pre-school setting is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in standards, learning 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 for the staff to:

- develop further the methods of planning and assessment to meet the needs of all the children more effectively;
- begin the process of self-evaluation and development planning to help ensure the ongoing improvement and development of the provision;

- develop the provision for the promotion of the children's early scientific and technological skills; and
- ensure that all the areas relating to child protection matters are given urgent attention.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the playgroup's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12-24 month period.

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