

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Beacon Playgroup, Cookstown

Report of an Inspection
in April 2011

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Beacon Playgroup
Address:	54 Milburn Close COOKSTOWN Co Tyrone BT80 8HF
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	7 April 2011
Date of previous inspection:	11 November 2004

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	32	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	9	-
• funded by Department of Education (DE)	9	-
• qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	1	-
• with a statement of special educational needs	0	-
• without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	0	-
• 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	87%	-

* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	3	0
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	2	0
New appointments within previous 12 months	0	0

Number of: **	
Students	1
Trainees	0

** 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
3 hours	N/A	190

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	32
Number returned:	43.75%
Number of written comments:	3

BEACON PLAYGROUP, COOKSTOWN, CO TYRONE, BT80 8HF (5AB-0505)

1. Beacon Playgroup is located on the upstairs floor of two converted houses in the Oldtown area of Cookstown.

2. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this playgroup is outstanding; the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. The playgroup has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENTS

3. The children display a positive attitude to learning and demonstrate very good progress in their overall development. They are friendly and mannerly and very familiar with the layout of the playgroup and the necessary routines. They often engage in lengthy periods of concentrated, productive and co-operative play and are eager to explore and make full use of the highly stimulating learning environment. During the inspection, almost all of the children were observed exploring various aspects of the well developed fairy tale topic, 'The Three Bears'.

4. The staff has created a language-rich environment which promotes and extends the children's language development. Themed story and reference books, are placed at low-level and are easily accessible to the children; these, together with attractive displays, enhance all areas of play. The children often browse through the books and explore the displays where the adults frequently join them to further promote language and learning. Nearly all of the children talk about their experiences confidently and show a very good interest in mark-making.

THE PROVISION FOR LEARNING

5. The quality of the interaction between the staff and the children is outstanding; the staff use every opportunity to promote the children's learning across all six areas of the curriculum. The adults engage purposefully with the children, listen to them and build effectively on their ideas and interests. They encourage the children to recall, predict and problem-solve and use mathematical language in a very natural and incidental way. The adults carefully exploit the learning potential within the activities and the environment and are very skilful in extending the children's thinking and imagination. The thoughtful organisation of the daily timetable ensures the session flows smoothly and that all of the time is used well for learning.

6. The quality of the written planning is of a high standard and takes account of the children's interests. The children's learning and progress is carefully recorded and assessed and the information is used to inform future planning and is also shared with the parents.

7. The playgroup provides very good support for the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning; their individual needs are identified early and documented appropriately. Effective links have been established with appropriate support agencies, for example, the speech and language therapist who works closely with the staff in addressing the difficulties experienced by some of the children. There is evidence to show that, as a result of the tailored programme of support, the children have made very good progress in this aspect of their development.

8. A comprehensive booklet, regular newsletters and a parents' notice board have been designed to provide the parents with valuable information about the work of the playgroup and highlight ways that they can become actively involved in the education of their child. Very good links have been established with the local feeder primary schools with an appropriate priority on smooth transitions for the children.

9. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the playgroup is outstanding. There is a welcoming and caring atmosphere based on mutual respect at all levels. Among the strengths of the playgroup are the very positive working relationships and the priority given to the children's well-being; the children appear happy and confident and their behaviour is exemplary.

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

11. The playgroup gives outstanding attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. For example, the children have access to healthy daily snacks and they have regular opportunities to play outdoors with a varied and progressive range of energetic physical activities.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

12. The leader of the playgroup provides outstanding leadership and manages the playgroup very effectively. She promotes a strong sense of team-spirit among the staff who share her commitment to innovation and improvement. All of the staff have a clear vision for the strategic development of the playgroup and contribute to the high standards achieved by the children.

13. The process of self-evaluation is at an early stage, however the staff are highly reflective in their work and have appropriately identified this as an area for further development. A three-year development plan ensures that additional priorities and targets for future development are identified. Due to circumstances beyond the control of the playgroup there has been a few changes of early years specialist (EYS) deployed from the Early Years Organisation (EYO) in recent months. The staff report that they have always had good working relationships with their EYS and the EYO.

14. The key strengths of the playgroup include:

- the caring ethos and the exemplary behaviour of the children;
- the high standards achieved, and the excellent progress made, by the children;
- the outstanding quality of the interaction between the adults and the children;
- the breadth, balance, challenge and progression provided in all areas of the pre-school curriculum;
- the effective methods of planning and assessment; and
- the outstanding leadership and the competent and supportive staff who work very well as a team.

15. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this playgroup is outstanding; the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. The playgroup has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

QUESTIONNAIRES

The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents, the staff and the management group to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Fourteen of the parents responded to the questionnaire and three made additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaires were generally very positive and indicated a high level of satisfaction with all aspects of the playgroup's work; in particular, the parents praised the level of care and dedication of the staff, indicated how their children enjoyed the playgroup and recognised the progress they were making. The responses from the management group and the staff questionnaires were also wholly positive. All of the responses have been shared with the staff and management of the playgroup.

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