

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Benmore Community
Playgroup, Belfast

Report of an Inspection
in October 2011

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Benmore Community Playgroup
Address:	c/o Finaghy Primary Campus 38 Finaghy Road South BELFAST BT10 0DR
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	13 October 2011
Date of previous inspection:	17 November 2004

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	24	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	24	-
• funded by Department of Education (DE)	24	-
• qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	4	-
• 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	1	-
• 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	86.5%	-

* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

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

Number of: **	
Students	0
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	-	181

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	24
Percentage returned:	37.5%
Number of written comments:	1

BENMORE COMMUNITY PLAYGROUP, BELFAST, BT10 0ER (1BB-0024)

1. Benmore Community Playgroup is situated in a new purpose-built mobile unit situated in the grounds of Finaghy Primary School, Belfast. Since the last inspection, the playgroup has relocated to its current site and has had a complete change of staff. In addition, the playgroup has experienced several changes of early years specialist (EYS) support.

2. 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 Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the playgroup's progress on the areas for improvement.

CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENTS

3. Many of the children join the playgroup with well-developed language and communication skills and a curiosity about the world around them. While the staff build very effectively on these skills during the indoor play sessions, they recognise the need to develop the same high level of learning during the outdoor play.

4. Almost all of the children engage in very good levels of concentrated and purposeful play for the whole session. They demonstrate excellent levels of independence and self-management as, for example, they access their own play materials and attend to their own break routine. They co-operate, treat one another and the staff with respect and can play imaginatively and collaboratively. The small number of children who are more solitary in their play appear happy and secure and are making progress.

5. Many of the children show an understanding of shape, colour and number. They investigate concepts such as measures and sequencing as an integral part of their play and routines. The children engage enthusiastically with the good range of creative materials available. They explore colour and pattern and a majority make simple representations in their drawings. The children use their senses as they investigate a range of natural materials.

6. Most of the children speak clearly and can talk about their experiences in the playgroup. They are confident in their use of tools for mark making and a small number are showing an interest in early writing. Most of the children show an interest in information books and listen attentively to group stories.

PROVISION FOR LEARNING

7. The playroom and outdoor areas provide a stimulating and attractive environment which is thoughtfully presented to promote distinct areas for learning.

8. The staff are all sensitive and supportive in their work with the children and promote purposeful play. They value the children's own ideas and often build on them very effectively to extend their language and learning. During the inspection, there were many very good and excellent examples of interaction by all of the staff with the children. These should be built upon further to ensure consistency in the level of interaction to reduce noise levels at times, promote learning more fully during outdoor play, and towards the end of the session as the children prepare for home time.

9. The short-term planning provides detailed guidance for a broad and balanced pre-school curriculum which is implemented effectively by the staff. They make relevant observations of the children's progress and have appropriate systems in place to record and report on their progress to parents. The staff now need to develop their planning to guide the learning and the role of the adults more fully during outdoor play. The assessment procedures should also be developed to identify more specifically the actions to be taken to support individual and groups of children and how the effectiveness of these actions will be monitored and evaluated.

10. There are good links with the parents and the adjoining primary school. The planned web site will enhance further the opportunities to communicate with others.

11. The quality of pastoral care and safeguarding is very good. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. The playgroup has an excellent ethos; there is a happy, relaxed and respectful atmosphere.

12. The playgroup also gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. The children have regular access to the enclosed outdoor area and are provided with a healthy break.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

13. The playgroup leader has effectively managed the relocation of the playgroup to new premises. She is well organised, has a good understanding of pre-school education and is an effective role model in her own work with the children. The staff are all dedicated and take a pride in their work.

14. The quality of EYS support, provided by a range of specialists, has varied from inadequate to very good, since the last inspection. The current EYS from the Early Years Organisation is providing good quality support and guidance which is valued by the staff.

15. The playgroup has a development plan and associated action plans. A culture of reflection and commitment to continuous improvement is evident among the staff team. A more detailed development plan should be drawn up with a clear focus on how any actions taken will enhance the skill and capacity of the staff and improve outcomes for the children.

16. The key strengths in this playgroup include:

- the very positive ethos which supports effectively the children's confidence and self-esteem;
- the very good opportunities to learn in all areas of the pre-school curriculum;
- the very good staff interactions with the children which promote effectively the children's learning and development;
- the attractive and stimulating learning environment and the wide range of interesting experiences provided;
- the high levels of engagement and motivation of the children in their learning; and
- the effective leadership and management of the playgroup leader and the dedicated staff team.

17. The areas for improvement include:

- the further development of the planning to ensure progression in learning across all areas especially outdoor play; and
- the further development of the assessment information to reflect more accurately all aspects of the children's development and to identify more clearly the nature, extent and evaluation of support provided.

18. 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 Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the playgroup's progress on the areas for improvement.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- A risk assessment needs to be undertaken and documented for every outing.
- The children should use a suitable implement to transfer food to their plate at break time.
- The security of the access points to the outside area when the children are using it needs to be reviewed.

QUESTIONNAIRES

The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents, the governors and the staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Nine of the parents responded to the questionnaire. The responses from the parental questionnaire indicated a very high level of satisfaction with all aspects of the provision and noted the caring staff, well maintained environment and the progress being made by the children.

The responses from the management group and the staff all indicated confidence in the quality of the provision and the work of the staff.

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

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