

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Button Moon Pre-School
Playgroup, Tandragee

Report of an Inspection
in October 2011

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of playgroup centre:	Button Moon Pre-School Playgroup
Address:	Tandragee Recreation Centre 24 Madden Road TANDRAGEE Co Armagh BT62 2DG
Management Type:	Voluntary
Date of inspection:	20 October 2011
Date of previous inspection:	11 November 2004

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the playgroup centre	27	-
in their immediate playgroup year	25	-
funded by Department of Education (DE)	26	-
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	0	-
with a statement of special educational needs	*	-
without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	*	-
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	89%	-

* 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	4	0
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	4	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
3½ hours	N/A	184

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	26
Percentage returned	42%
Number of written comments:	5

BUTTON MOON PRE-SCHOOL PLAYGROUP, TANDRAGEE, Co ARMAGH BT62 2DG (5AB-0200)

1. Button Moon Pre-School Playgroup operates in Tandragee Recreation Centre, Madden Road, Tandragee in County Armagh. The same staff team was in place at the time of the last inspection in November 2004. The playgroup operates one part-time session for pre-school age children who come from the surrounding local area.

2. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this playgroup is very good. The playgroup is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENTS

3. The children are relaxed and happy; they settle quickly and enthusiastically to their chosen activities, make independent choices and have a positive attitude to their learning activities. Most of the children demonstrate very good progress in their development in relation to their age and the time of the year. Their behaviour is very good; the children respond very well to their daily routines, move freely between the various learning areas and engage with high levels of interest in extended periods of concentrated play.

4. The planned programme is broad and balanced and provides very good opportunities to stimulate the children's interest and extend their learning. There is very good promotion of the children's early language skills through the provision of a wide range of stimulating print-based resources, including clear labels and fiction and fact books presented in context in the various learning areas and displays. The adults encourage the children to explore print and books and the children demonstrate very good levels of sustained attention during stories and rhymes. Many of the children show an interest in mark making and understand that print carries meaning. The staff use appropriate mathematical language skilfully when participating in the children's free play and more structured activities; as a result, many of the children show an interest and early proficiency in counting, sorting and talking about size and shape and use a good range of appropriate mathematical language. The children engage very well in imaginative play and are confident in selecting and using a wide range of resources. They express their creative ideas well using a range of 2- and 3-dimensional materials; their art work and models are displayed attractively around the playgroup. The children participate enthusiastically in action songs and physical activity; they explore and investigate a wide range of natural and man-made materials and objects and demonstrate a keen interest in their environment.

THE PROVISION FOR LEARNING

5. The dedicated staff team work hard to secure the best outcomes for all of the children. They create a carefully planned and stimulating learning environment, and through their good quality interactions with the children, promote the children's self-esteem and support and extend their language, thinking skills and independence. In relation to the time of year, the children understand and respond very positively to their routines and transitions throughout the session. These routines such as snack and tidying up promote the children's self-management and decision-making skills.

6. The written planning outlines an appropriately broad and balanced curriculum for the children. The staff know the children well and they observe, record and assess carefully each child's learning and progress; this ongoing assessment is used to inform future planning, meet the individual needs of the children and is shared with the parents. The adults also take into consideration the children's interests and suggestions when reviewing their plans to extend the quality of the children's learning experiences, through for example, making good use of spontaneous opportunities.

7. The communication and links with the parents are very effective. In addition to the informal meetings which occur at the beginning and end of the day, the parents receive information regularly about all aspects of their children's learning experiences and progress during the year and their views are sought and valued through regular questionnaires. The playgroup also maintains very good links with the local primary schools as well as a range of individuals and agencies from the wider community.

8. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the playgroup is outstanding. The strengths include, for example: the high priority given to the care, emotional well-being and development of the children, the excellent relationships between the staff and the children and the operation of a wide range of appropriate policies and procedures which are kept under regular review by the staff and management committee. One health and safety concern is recorded in Appendix 1 to this report.

9. The playgroup has very good, comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

10. The playgroup gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and developing early understanding about healthy lifestyles and physical activity. Some examples of this are, the provision of healthy and varied snacks, the encouragement of the children's personal hygiene routines including teeth brushing, and the regular opportunities for the development of the children's physical skills in the recreation centre's sports hall.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

11. The dedicated and enthusiastic leader provides very effective leadership and management. She is innovative in her approaches and has worked diligently over many years towards achieving her vision for the playgroup. She is supported skilfully by the rest of the well-established and hard-working staff team. The staff and members of the management committee work closely and effectively; they are all fully committed to ensuring high quality outcomes for all the children and their families.

12. There is good evidence of the increasing use of self-evaluation leading to continuous improvement in various aspects of the playgroup's provision. The development plan identifies a range of priorities and actions for future development. It will be important that the development planning process is refined further so that, through regular and rigorous self-evaluation, the key improvement areas can be identified more clearly and prioritised and planned for more effectively. The staff receive support from an early years specialist (EYS) employed by the Early Years Organisation; they report very good working relationships with and helpful support from the EYS.

13. The key strengths of the playgroup include:

- the very good behaviour of the children, who respond very well to their daily routines and engage with high levels of interest in extended periods of concentrated play;

- the broad and balanced programme for learning which stimulates the children's interest and meets well their individual learning needs;
- the good quality of the staff interaction in promoting and developing the children's self-esteem, language development, thinking skills and independence;
- the outstanding quality of the pastoral care, including the high priority given to the care, emotional well-being and development of the children;
- the effective range of links established with the parents and the wider community; and
- the very effective leadership supported ably by the dedicated, skilful and hard-working staff team.

14. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this playgroup is very good. The playgroup is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- The hall used for physical play sessions is situated at a lower level than the playroom and access to it is by a steep set of stairs. These present a hazard for the young children and require careful supervision by the members of staff of the playgroup.

QUESTIONNAIRES

The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents, the members of the management committee and the staff to complete confidential questionnaires prior to the inspection. Approximately 42% of the parents responded to the questionnaire; they indicated that they are very pleased with the quality of the overall provision within the playgroup. Written responses from the parents show that they appreciate the high levels of care and dedication shown by the staff to meeting their children's needs. The responses from the playgroup staff also fully endorse the work of the playgroup. All of the responses have been shared with the staff and management of the playgroup.

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