

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Carebears Community
Playgroup, Newtownstewart,
Omagh

Report of an Inspection
in February 2011

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Carebears Community Playgroup
Address:	c/o Newtownstewart Centre 17 Moyle Road Newtownstewart OMAGH Co Tyrone BT78 4AP
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	9 February 2011
Date of previous inspection:	25 March 2004

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school centre	20	-
in their immediate pre-school year	20	-
funded by Department of Education (DE)	20	-
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	7	-
with a statement of special educational needs	0	-
without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	1	-
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	88%	-

* 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	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
2½ hours	-	188

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	20
Percentage returned:	100%
Number of written comments:	13

CAREBEARS COMMUNITY PLAYGROUP NEWTOWNSTEWART, OMAGH, CO TYRONE, BT78 4AP (2AB-0066)

1. Carebears Community Playgroup operates within the premises of Newtownstewart Centre 2000 on the Moyle Road in Newtownstewart. Since the last inspection, the deputy leader has been appointed as the leader. The outdoor play area has been developed to include a covered awning, a garden area and a space for physical play.

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 demonstrate very good progress in their overall development in relation to their age and the time of the year. They are well settled and very familiar with the daily routines. They engage in lengthy periods of concentrated, productive and co-operative play; they are eager to explore and make full use of the highly stimulating indoor and outdoor learning environment. During the inspection, almost all of the children were observed playing imaginatively and productively in the forest camping area, the group baking activity, creating and designing models and mixing colours to paint their transport models. The children are keen to draw, retell favourite stories and recall on previous learning. They are interested in the wide range of natural materials displayed throughout the play areas, which entice the children's sensory awareness; the children handle tools and equipment competently.

4. The staff have created a language-rich environment which promotes and extends the children's language development. Themed books, along with those designed and created by the staff and the children to celebrate visits and recent events, enhance all areas of play; the children frequently browse through these books and ask the adults to read stories to them. Nearly all of the children talk about their experiences confidently and show a very good interest in mark-making. The staff have attended training in the Elklan Speech, Language and Communication Programme and it is clear that this training has been implemented consistently by all of the adults.

THE PROVISION FOR LEARNING

5. The quality of the interaction between the staff and the children is outstanding; every opportunity is used by the adults to promote the children's learning across all six areas of the curriculum. The adults engage purposefully with the children, listening to them and building effectively on their ideas. They encourage the children to recall, predict and problem-solve and they use mathematical language in a very natural, appropriate 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 children are developing a sense of fun, excitement and wonder. The thoughtful organisation of the daily timetable provides a good balance of lengthy periods of free play and activities organised by the staff. The necessary routines, such as snack and physical play promote the children's independence. Transitions between the different routines and activities are managed very effectively; as a consequence, the session flows smoothly and all of the time is used well for learning.

6. The quality of all the written planning is of a very high standard. The long-, medium- and short-term planning is detailed but flexible, allowing the staff to take account of the children's interests as they arise. The children's learning and progress is carefully assessed and recorded, using a combination of photographs and perceptive observations; this is used to inform future planning and is shared with the parents.

7. The playgroup provides very good support for those children with special educational needs, children's needs are identified early and documented appropriately. A member of staff has been designated as special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO). Individual educational and care plans in partnership with the parents, have been developed to support children with special educational needs and effective links have been established with other health professionals. The playgroup has recently refurbished a storeroom in order to create a sensory room to provide more focused support to meet the needs of individual and groups of children.

8. The parents are each encouraged to become involved in the education of their child and the life of the playgroup through a variety of ways, such as, the provision of a comprehensive induction pack, regular meetings, monthly newsletters related to themes which provide the parents with the learning opportunities to compliment and continue the work of the playgroup at home. Very good links have been established with the local SureStart centre and the 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. The atmosphere is warm and welcoming and the pervading ethos is one of caring support and respect for the children and their families. Among the strengths of the playgroup are the very positive working relationships at all levels and the priority given to the children's well-being; the children appear happy, 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, some of which they prepare independently and they have excellent opportunities to play outdoors. The opportunities to play in a highly stimulating outdoor environment with a varied and progressive range of energetic physical activities also encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

12. The leader of the playgroup provides outstanding leadership and manages the playgroup very effectively. Through her creativity, enthusiasm and energy, she has inspired a strong sense of team-spirit among the staff; and they share her commitment to innovation and improvement. All of the staff have a clear vision for the strategic development of the playgroup.

13. The process of self-evaluation is well embedded and there is clear evidence that it has led to continuous improvements in the quality of the provision over recent years. A comprehensive and thoughtful three-year development plan which includes appropriate action plans ensures that priorities and targets for future development are identified, discussed with the parents and then evaluated. There has recently been a change of early years specialist (EYS) deployed from the Early Years Organisation. The staff report that they have good working relationships with their EYS.

14. The key strengths of the playgroup include:

- the high standards achieved, and the excellent progress being made, by the children in relation to their age and stage of development;
- 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 highly effective methods of planning and assessment;
- the excellent links established with the parents, other centres, schools and agencies within and beyond the community; and
- the outstanding leadership provided and the competent and supportive staff who work well as a team to promote continuous improvement.

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 committee to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Twenty of the parents responded to the questionnaire and 13 made additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaire were highly positive and indicated a high level of satisfaction with all aspects of the centre's work; in particular the parents praised the level of care and dedication of the staff and how their children enjoyed the playgroup and the progress they were making. They appreciated the methods used by the staff in encouraging them to become actively involved in various activities throughout the year and in suggesting ways through the monthly theme of how they could compliment the children's learning opportunities at home. The responses from the management committee and the staff questionnaires were also wholly positive. All of the responses have been shared with the staff and management of the pre-school centre.

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