

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Chirpy Chicks Playgroup,
Greyabbey

Report of an Inspection
in February 2012

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Name of pre-school centre: | Chirpy Chicks Playgroup |
| Address: | Village Hall 62 Newtownards Road Greyabbey NEWTOWNARDS Co Down BT22 2QH |
| Management Type: | Voluntary |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Date of inspection: | 6 February 2012 |
| Date of previous inspection: | 15 January 2007 |

1. Details of Children

| Total number of children: | am session | pm session |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|
| • attending the pre-school centre | 31 | - |
| • in their immediate pre-school year | 15 | - |
| • funded by Department of Education (DE) | 15 | - |
| • qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2 | 10 | - |
| • 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 | 97% | - |

* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

| Number of: | Full-time | Part-time |
|---|------------------|------------------|
| Staff, including leader | 0 | 4 |
| Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications | 0 | 3 |
| New appointments within previous 12 months | 0 | 1 |

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| 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 | N/A | 188 |

4. Parental Questionnaires

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| Number issued to parents: | 15 |
| Percentage returned: | 33.3% |
| Number of written comments: | 3 |

CHIRPY CHICKS PLAYGROUP, GREYABBEY, CO DOWN, BT22 2QH (4AB-0283)

1. Chirpy Chicks Playgroup is accommodated in the village hall in Greyabbey, Newtownards. Almost all of the children come from the surrounding rural area. Since the last inspection, there have been a number of changes in staffing; the leader was absent for a period during which time two temporary leaders were employed. The leader has now returned to work and a new assistant has recently taken up post.

2. In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this playgroup is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh the areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in learning and teaching, and leadership and management, which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively. The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) will monitor and report on the playgroup's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENTS

3. The children are well-settled and, during the inspection, there were many instances when they engaged in purposeful and productive play. They are at ease with the staff and turn to them readily for their support and to join in their play. The children are developing good levels of independence and many can sustain interest in their chosen activities. Many of the children are gaining a good understanding of the early mathematical ideas and concepts; they cooperate readily with their peers and join in group discussions.

PROVISION FOR LEARNING

4. There is a friendly, happy atmosphere in the playgroup; the attractively presented playroom provides satisfactory or good opportunities for learning in almost all aspects of the pre-school curriculum. During the inspection, the staff participated sensitively in many of the activities and often engaged the children in valuable discussion about their play and experiences.

5. During the free play session, at the start of the day, the timetable is organised to provide an appropriate balance of free play and activities organised by the staff. This lengthy period of free play ensures that the children benefit from sustained periods of uninterrupted activities.

6. During the inspection, the children clearly enjoyed browsing in the book area; appropriate books are incorporated into many of the areas for play. Opportunities are provided for the children to experiment with mark making and early writing; the provision of writing materials throughout the playroom and activities would encourage more of the children to experiment with early mark making. During the inspection, a significant minority of the children were observed making good use of the range of resources available in the imaginative role play areas.

7. There are limited opportunities for the children to develop their gross motor skills through planned and well-resourced energetic physical play sessions; the development of the physical play programme requires urgent attention. The staff should also review the layout of the playroom to provide adequate space for the development of the physical play programme.

8. The staff meet regularly to plan the programme and have developed some useful long and medium-term plans. As the staff continue to develop their planning, they need to focus further on identifying the learning expected from each activity; they also need to use their observations of the children's subsequent achievements to inform future planning.

9. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the playgroup is good. There are very good working relationships between the staff and the children. The staff treat the children with care and respect and provide a secure, supportive environment which is helping them to grow in confidence and independence. The staff encourage the children to respect the needs and wishes of others and their environment.

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

11. The playgroup gives good attention to promoting healthy eating through a range of healthy options provided for the children's snack. The lack of an energetic physical play programme, however, results in the staff being unable to fully promote the children's development of a healthier lifestyle.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

12. All of the staff demonstrate a caring approach to their work. As the venue is used for other activities, the staff have to prepare and clear the room each day; they work hard at providing a clean and stimulating learning environment for the children. In order to try and ensure a smooth transition for all of the children into the primary schools to which they will transfer, the staff have established effective links with one local primary school and have the arrangements in place to further develop the links with other schools in the area.

13. The staff are at an early stage in developing the process of self-evaluation; they will need support and guidance from their Early Years Specialist (EYS) to develop their understanding of the process.

14. Over the past two years, the support provided by the playgroup's EYS from the Early Years Organisation (EYO), has been fragmented. The playgroup has recently had a new permanent EYS from the EYO appointed to support them in their work; the staff and the EYS are developing positive working relationships. It will be important for the EYS to now provide focused and targeted continuous support to the staff of the playgroup to develop further the areas for improvement identified in this report.

15. **The key strengths in this playgroup include:**

- the well-settled children who display good levels of independence and their good behaviour;
- the many instances of good quality interaction between the staff and the children;
- the satisfactory or good opportunities for learning in almost all areas of the pre-school curriculum;
- the good links established with the parents and the local primary school;
- the well-established routines and the attractively presented areas for play; and
- the good working relationships at all levels developed by the hard-working and dedicated staff.

16. The areas for improvement include the need to:

- develop further the methods for planning and assessing to demonstrate progression in the children's learning through an appropriately challenging programme of activities; and
- provide an appropriate programme for energetic physical play which shows progression in the children's development.

17. In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this playgroup is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh the areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in learning and teaching, and leadership and management, which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively. The Inspectorate will monitor and report on the playgroup's progress in addressing the areas for 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 confidential questionnaires prior to the inspection. Almost all of the responses were very positive about the quality of the playgroups provision. Key messages from the responses, and the very few concerns raised, have been shared with the staff and management of the playgroup.

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