

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Cranmore Integrated Primary
School Playgroup, Belfast

Report of an Inspection
in December 2011

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Cranmore Integrated Primary School Playgroup
Address:	47 Finaghy Road North BELFAST BT10 0JB
Management Type:	Board of Governors

Date of inspection:	7 December 2011
Date of previous inspection:	2 December 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	23	-
• funded by Department of Education (DE)	23	-
• qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	2	-
• with a statement of special educational needs	0	-
• without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	4	-
• with English as an additional language	5	-
• 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	93.3%	-

* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	2	2
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	2	2
New appointments within previous 12 months	1	1

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
3¼ hours	-	

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	24
Percentage returned:	16%
Number of written comments:	3

CRANMORE INTEGRATED PRIMARY SCHOOL PLAYGROUP, BELFAST, BT10 0JB (1BB-0507)

CONTEXT

1. Cranmore Integrated Primary School Playgroup is located within the grounds of Cranmore Integrated Primary School, which is situated on Finaghy Road North, Belfast. The Board of Governors for the Primary School also serve as the Management Committee for the playgroup and the Principal of the Primary School shares responsibility for aspects of the leadership of the playgroup. There are no remaining staff members since the last inspection in 2004, and, in that same period of time, the leader has changed twice. At the time of the inspection, there were 24 children enrolled in the playgroup. Twenty-three of the children are in their immediate pre-school year and five are newcomer children for whom English is their second language.

2. In most of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided in this pre-school playgroup is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh the areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in standards, learning and teaching and in leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all of 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. Most of the children are well-settled; they can follow the playroom routines, can choose their resources and learning activities independently and engage in appropriate periods of sustained, purposeful play. They are developing appropriate self-management skills, for example, in their personal care, and demonstrate good turn-taking skills. During the inspection, there was a small number of children who were less well settled, particularly as the session progressed; whose play was disruptive for the other children and who required repeated reminders about the playroom routines and need for good behaviour.

4. Most of the children express themselves articulately; they are confident in asking and responding to questions, listen well during story time and can join in a wide range of songs and rhymes. There is a need for the staff to focus on developing further the children's listening skills. The children can identify their own symbol and a significant number of them can recognise their name in print; they should be encouraged to use these skills further in labelling their artwork and creative models and in following the snack-break routines. There is an attractive range of books displayed within the playroom, in the quiet room and in the outdoor play area; however, during the inspection, the children made limited use of these books. They would benefit from having access to the quiet room throughout the morning to enable them to browse through the books and to engage in incidental story 'reading'. A few of the children are beginning to engage in early mark-making at the designated writing stations. Their interest and skill in this area should be encouraged through more natural integration of 'writing' across the planned learning activities. The staff have developed well-focused learning plans for the newcomer children for whom English is a second language and for those children experiencing difficulties with aspects of their language development. The playgroup's records indicate that there is good liaison between the staff and the parents and that the children are making appropriate progress.

PROVISION FOR LEARNING

5. There is a warm, respectful and encouraging ethos within the playgroup; the staff know the children well and are attentive to their personal needs; they provide a wide range of stimulating learning activities and use the environment effectively to display and celebrate the children's achievements. The routines are planned carefully to ensure the children's safety and to make optimum use of all the indoor and outdoor space available; there are, however, some aspects of the daily routines, including the snack routine, which need to be reviewed in order to ensure that all of the children avail of the healthy snack- break and to make more effective use of all the time available for learning.

6. There are good opportunities for learning in most areas of the pre-school curriculum. The development of early mathematical concepts and language and the opportunities for the children to express their creativity using a range of media are particular strengths of the provision. During the inspection, the quality of the adult interactions with the children during play was consistently good; they listened to the children's ideas, built on their interests and used skilful questioning to challenge them to think creatively. There is a need, however, for the staff to develop further the range of behaviour-management strategies which they use with the children in order to maintain good levels of behaviour throughout the session.

7. The staff have developed very good links with the parents through, for example, the induction programme and a range of formal and informal progress meetings during the year. The parents are kept well-informed about the planned learning programme and about how they can support their children's learning at home through a detailed monthly newsletter. The staff have also developed very good links with local speech and language therapists and with a range of appropriate medical professionals to assist them in supporting those children who have been identified as having special educational needs; they develop well-focused learning plans for these children, consult appropriately with the children's parents and carry out regular reviews of the children's progress. The playgroup's records indicate that these children make appropriate progress in their learning.

8. The playgroup enjoys very good links with the main primary school to which the children transfer. They have regular access to the school's indoor hall for physical play and the playgroup staff have been able to join the primary school for relevant development and training. It will be important for the playgroup to extend their links, where possible, to include the other primary schools to which the children transfer.

9. The staff plan consciously for all aspects of indoor and outdoor play. The planning identifies clearly the planned learning for each area of the pre-school curriculum and is amended regularly to take account of the children's interests and their responses to the planned activities. The staff make extensive anecdotal observations of the children at play. They have identified, appropriately, the need to develop the observation and assessment procedures to better inform the planning for individual children.

10. The provision for pastoral care within the playgroup is good. This is evidenced through the calm, caring learning environment, through the very good working relationships and through the adults' attention to the children's personal needs.

11. The playgroup has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding the children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department. There is a need for the management committee to identify a named person within the playgroup to whom parents can address any safeguarding concerns and for the safeguarding flow-chart, to be clearly displayed for the parents.

12. The playgroup gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity through the provision of a healthy break and the regular opportunities for the children to engage in energetic play. There is a need for the children to be provided with appropriate cutlery during the snack-break to encourage further the good hygiene practices.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

13. The leadership and management arrangements for the playgroup are complex and require review as soon as is practicable. The playgroup leader has been in post for one year and has responsibility for managing the day-to-day running of the playgroup; she currently works in the playgroup three days per week and in the primary school on the remaining two days. The Principal of the primary school is the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) for the children in the playgroup and also assumes responsibility for leading development within the playgroup. Whilst there are adequate structures in place to ensure effective communication between key personnel within the playgroup about the children's learning, there is an urgent need to clarify the leadership roles and responsibilities, particularly in relation to monitoring and evaluating the overall quality of provision.

14. The leader and staff are hard-working; they work well together as a team and are committed to meeting the needs of all of the children. They reflect daily on the children's responses to the planned activities and amend the provision appropriately to take account of the children's changing interests and needs.

15. The playgroup's procedures for self-evaluation to promote strategic improvement in the quality of provision are at an early stage of development. The playgroup's development plan and associated action plans identify a few appropriate areas for development but need to detail more specifically the actions which will lead to the required improvement.

16. The leader is also the early years specialist (EYS) for the playgroup; the committee need to provide her with appropriate, well-focused early years training to enable her to fulfil this role more effectively.

17. The key strengths of the playgroup include:

- the good quality of the medium and short-term planning and the good opportunities for learning in most areas of the pre-school curriculum;
- the good provision for those children who have been identified as having additional needs and the progress they make; and
- the hard-working staff team who respond well to the children's changing interests and who link well with the parents and the main school to which the children transfer.

18. The priorities identified for improvement are the need to:

- develop further the range of behaviour management strategies for use with the children who display challenging behaviour;
- review aspects of the daily routines to ensure that all of the time is used effectively for learning; and

- develop further the observation and assessment procedures to better inform the planning for individual children.

19. In most of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided in this pre-school playgroup is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh the areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in standards, learning and teaching and in leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all of 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 of the playgroup children, the staff and the committee members to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. A small number of the parents (16%) responded to the questionnaire and made additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaire indicated good levels of satisfaction with the provision in the playgroup. The management committee and staff were wholly supportive of the work of the playgroup. The responses have been shared with the staff and the management committee.

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