

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Crossgar Community
Playgroup, Co Down

Report of an Inspection
in April 2012

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Crossgar Community Playgroup
Address:	Crossgar Primary School 6 John Street Crossgar DOWNPATRICK Co Down BT30 9EG
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	26 April 2012
Date of previous inspection:	21 January 2005

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	25	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	25	-
• funded by Department of Education	25	-
• qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	3	-
• with a statement of SEN*	0	-
• without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for SEN	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	80.5%	-

* Special Educational Needs

** Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	2	3
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	3	0
New appointments within previous 12 months	0	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
2¾ hours	N/A	184

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	25
Number returned:	8
Number of written comments:	3

CROSSGAR PLAYGROUP, CROSSGAR, CO DOWN, BT30 9EG (4BB-0185)

1. Crossgar Playgroup is located in purpose built premises in the grounds of Crossgar Primary school in the village of Crossgar. Almost all of the children come from the surrounding area.

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

CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENTS

3. The children are very well settled and almost all engage in sustained and purposeful play for the duration of the session. They have a positive attitude to their learning, make independent choices and co-operate readily with the staff. Most of the children demonstrate very good progress in their development for the time of year, for example, they display good levels of concentration, consideration towards others and care for their environment.

4. The planned programme is varied and provides good opportunities to stimulate the children's interest and extend their learning. Appropriate books and photographs are incorporated into areas of play and, on occasions during the inspection, the staff and children made reference to these. The children demonstrate good listening skills and have opportunities to listen to group stories, join in a varied repertoire of rhymes and songs and to listen to recorded stories using head phones in the quiet room. Good opportunities are provided for the children to experiment with mark making and early writing. There are samples of the children's work displayed around the room; the staff should now include more of the children's representational work in these displays

PROVISION FOR LEARNING

5. The well organised playroom and attractive outdoor area provides good opportunities for learning in all aspects of the pre-school curriculum. The adult interactions with the children are consistently of good quality; the staff ask open-ended questions, promote the children's self-esteem and support and extend their thinking skills and independence. During the inspection, the staff participated sensitively in many of the activities to guide and support learning.

6. The thoughtful organisation of the daily timetable ensures a good balance between free play and activities organised by the staff. During the inspection the children had a short, enjoyable visit from two of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) community officers who discussed child safety matters with them. The transitions between planned activities and routines are managed very well and as a result the session flows smoothly and all the time is used effectively for learning.

7. The staff plan an interesting and broad programme for the children based on themes and topics. They have appropriately identified the need to identify more clearly the learning to be promoted in the planned activities. The inspection would endorse this and recommend that this information is made available to the parents in order to help them support their child more fully in their education. The children's learning and progress is carefully recorded by the staff and shared with the parents throughout the year. Very good links have been established with the neighbouring primary school to help broaden the children's experiences and to support well their transition to the next stage of their education.

8. The playgroup provides very good support for those children identified with special educational needs (SEN). The children's needs are identified early and documented appropriately. Individual education plans have been developed to support the children and effective links established with the parents and health and support agencies.

9. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the playgroup is very good. The atmosphere is friendly and welcoming and is based on an ethos of mutual respect. Among the strengths of the playgroup are the positive working relationships between the staff, the children and their parents and the exemplary behaviour of the children.

10. On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection the playgroup's arrangements for safeguarding children are unsatisfactory and do not adequately reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department. In particular the playgroup needs to ensure:

- there is a comprehensive and up to date policy in place;
- that the staff are fully aware of the procedures and arrangements for safeguarding the children; and
- the information is shared with the parents.

11. The playgroup gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, the children have access to a healthy snack and they have regular opportunities to engage in physical activity. This provision promotes a good measure of independence and encourages the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

12. The leader promotes a team spirit among the staff and has a clear vision for the development of the playgroup. A development plan which outlines appropriate targets has been drawn up to support the work. All of the staff are equally hard-working and demonstrate a caring approach to their work. A good start has been made in developing the process of self-evaluation.

13. The management committee are supportive of the staff in their work but have identified a lack of clarity regarding their roles and responsibilities; they also highlighted the difficulties they face accessing appropriate training to help them to carry out their roles in the best interest of the playgroup. The inspection would endorse this as a key area for improvement.

14. The staff reports that the support they have received from their allocated early years specialist (EYS) from the Early Years Organisation (EYO) over the past number of years has been variable. Within the last two years, the EYO has provided four different early years specialists to support the staff and management in their work and, as a result, the quality of support has been satisfactory. There is an urgent need for the EYS to focus on the areas identified in this report as a priority.

15. The key strengths of the playgroup include:

- the very positive ethos in the playgroup that promotes a settled and caring ethos;
- the good quality of the interaction between the staff and the children;

- the very good support provided for the children identified with special educational needs;
- the thoughtful organisation of the daily timetable;
- the good opportunities for learning in all areas of the preschool curriculum; and
- the good vision demonstrated by the leader and the hard-working staff who work well as a team.

16. The areas for improvement include:

- ensure there are appropriate policies and procedures in place for safeguarding the children;
- ensure the information shared with the parents is accurate and sufficiently detailed to inform them about important aspects of the playgroup's provision and help them engage fully in their child's education; and
- the need to source appropriate guidance and support for the management committee to enable them to carry out their roles and duties in a well informed and effective manner.

17. In the areas inspected the quality of education provided by this playgroup is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the learners are to be met more effectively. The Education and Training 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 and the staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. A small number of parents who responded to the questionnaire made additional written comments; most of the returns indicate a high level of satisfaction with all aspects of the centre's work. The responses from the management group and the staff were mostly positive; a significant minority of the responses indicated that more training opportunities would be beneficial. All of the responses have been shared with the staff and management of the playgroup.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- The door leading from the playroom into the kitchen needs to be secured to ensure the children cannot gain access to this area.

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