

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Glenn and Barr Playgroup,
Newry

Report of an Inspection
in December 2011



STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Glenn and Barr Playgroup
Address:	School Road Jerrettspass NEWRY Co Down BT34 1SX
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	8 December 2011
Date of previous inspection:	17 November 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	24	-
• funded by Department of Education (DE)	24	-
• qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	1	-
• with a statement of special educational needs	0	-
• without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	2	-
• 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	80.7%	-

* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

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

Number of: **	
Students	0
Trainees	1

** 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:	24
Percentage returned:	37.5%
Number of written comments:	2

GLENN AND BARR PLAYGROUP, NEWRY, CO DOWN, BT34 1SX (5AB-0212)

1. Glenn and Barr Playgroup is accommodated in purpose built premises in Jerrettspass on the outskirts of Newry. Since the last inspection, there have been changes in staffing including a new leader and an assistant. Almost all of the children come from the surrounding rural area.

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 generally well settled and most engage in sustained and purposeful play co-operating readily with the staff. The staff are aware of, and support, the small number of the children who have difficulty sharing and taking turns. The staff need to review and develop the centre's behaviour management policy and procedures to ensure that they all have appropriate expectations of the children's behaviour and that they adhere consistently to the agreed strategies.

4. The adult interactions with the children are consistently of a good quality; they ask open-ended questions extending the children language and learning and often provide them with new vocabulary and ideas. Appropriate books are incorporated into areas of play; the children make frequent use of the book area, or exploring an information book linked to the current topic. Good opportunities are provided for the children to experiment with mark making and early writing.

PROVISION FOR LEARNING

5. The attractively presented playroom provides good opportunities for learning in all aspects of the pre-school curriculum. The children can access resources independently which encourages them to develop their play. During the inspection, the staff often engaged the children in valuable discussion about their play and experiences, and participated sensitively in many of the activities. 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. The lengthy period of free play ensures that the children benefit from sustained periods of uninterrupted activities.

6. The routines in the latter part of the day do not support fully the differing needs of the children; for example, some of the children were restless and not fully engaged during story-time. The children have daily access to a small enclosed outdoor space for physical play; careful planning is required to maximise the use of the limited space available to ensure progression in the children's physical development and safe play. The story sessions at the end of the day need to be reviewed to ensure that the children's differing needs are met.

7. The staff meet regularly to plan the programme and have developed some useful long- and medium-term plans. As the staff continues to develop their planning, they need to focus on and identify the learning expected from the activities and to use the children's subsequent achievements to inform future planning.

8. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the playgroup is very 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 and to develop consideration for the needs and wishes of others.

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

10. The playgroup gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, as part of the snack routine the children are encouraged to try a range 'healthy' foods and they have regular opportunities to engage in physical activity. This provision encourages the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

11. The leader has been in post for three years; during this time she has developed aspects of the playgroup's provision; she is supported well by all of the staff who demonstrate a caring approach to their work. Since the last inspection, the staff have attended a wide range of training and development courses to help guide them in their work. The leader has a clear vision for the development of the playgroup and has drawn up a development plan which outlines some useful targets. The staff and management committee need to work closely together to build on this initial work and continue to raise the standards achieved by the children. The staff are at an early stage in developing the process of self-evaluation.

12. Over the past two years, the support provided by the centre's Early Years Specialist (EYS) from the Early Years Organisation (EYO), has been fragmented. The EYS records indicate that appropriate areas for further development have been identified but the staff require more focused support to bring about the necessary improvements. At the time of the inspection the centre's EYS was not available; a substitute EYS from the EYO attended the report back.

13. The key strengths in this playgroup include:

- the purpose built accommodation and the good range and quality of the resources that are made accessible to the children to encourage their independence;
- the welcoming atmosphere and the care and respect shown to the children by the staff;
- the lengthy period of free play which allows the children to sustain good levels of concentration;
- the good quality of the interaction between the staff and the children;
- the satisfactory opportunities for learning in all areas of the preschool curriculum; and
- the good links with the parents and the local primary schools to which the children transfer.

14. The areas for improvement include the need to:

- review and develop further the centre's policy and procedures for managing the children's behaviour and ensure that all of the staff implement the agreed procedures consistently;
- develop further the methods for planning and assessing the children's progress; and evaluating the provision, and
- review the latter part of the day to ensure that the group story sessions meet more effectively the children's differing needs and that the outdoor play sessions are carefully planned to maximise the use of the limited space available.

15. 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 and the staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Nine of the parents responded to the questionnaire and two made additional written comments; all 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 also very positive; all of the staff indicated that they would benefit from more training on managing children's behaviour; the findings from the inspection would endorse this as a priority. All of the responses have been shared with the staff and management of the playgroup.

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