

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Great Oaks Playgroup,
Ballykinler

Report of an Inspection
in January 2013

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In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school setting:	Great Oaks Playgroup
Address:	Ballymartin Road BALLYKINLER Co Down BT30 8EA
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	14 January 2013
Date of previous inspection:	20 April 2005

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school setting	17	-
in their immediate pre-school year	10	-
funded by Department of Education (DE)	10	-
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2		-
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	3	-
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		-

* Special Educational Needs = fewer than five

** Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader		3
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification		3
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification		0
New appointments within previous 12 months		1

Number of: ***	
Students	
Trainees	

*** 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	-	

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	17
Percentage returned	*%
Number of written comments:	*

1. Introduction

Great Oaks Playgroup is located on the Ballymartin Road, Ballykinlar, County Down. Since the last inspection in 2005 there have been a number of changes in staffing.

2. Inspection methods and evidence base

The inspection evaluations are based on evidence gained from in-class observations and from a range of documentation provided by the playgroup.

The views of the parents, staff, and management group were sought through a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Seventeen questionnaires were issued to the parents and a small number were returned with a written comment. None of the staff or members of the management group returned the questionnaires. On the day of the inspection, a member of the management group spoke with the reporting inspector and highlighted the need for training for members of the newly formed management group.

3. Overall finding of the inspection

In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this playgroup is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in standards and learning and teaching which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively.

Summary of key findings

Children's Achievements Quality of Provision Leadership and management	Satisfactory Satisfactory Satisfactory
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KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

4. Children's Achievements

The quality of the children's achievements is satisfactory.

- During the early part of the session, the majority of the children engaged purposefully in the activities organised by the staff.
- A few of the children are able to sustain their interest in their chosen activity, however too many of the children are not yet settled enough or able to make independent choice of activities.
- On occasions a small number of the children displayed challenging behaviour, were over dependent on the adults and had difficulty sharing with one another. The staff should review the setting's settling-in policy and procedures to provide more time for the staff to work with smaller groups of children and to establish more acceptable behaviour. The adults need to develop and implement their own behaviour management strategies.

5. Provision for Learning

The quality of the provision for learning is satisfactory.

- During the inspection, there were occasions, during the early part of the session, when the staff engaged purposefully with the children and helped them to sustain their interest in their chosen activities.
- The staff have worked hard to create a bright and stimulating learning environment for the children; their work is valued and presented around the playroom. The use of the two rooms within the setting should be reviewed to make more effective use of the space.
- On the day of the inspection, the promotion of the children's observation and exploration skills was emphasised by the staff. The children's personal, social and emotional development and the development of their language skills, however, remain a priority for improvement. A significant number of the children had difficulty settling during the group story session.
- The playgroup's educational programme needs to reflect more fully the curriculum outlined in the Pre-school Curricular Guidance document. More attention also needs to be given to ensuring the children's progression in their learning through the use of resources across a two years cycle.
- The staff need to develop a more appropriate and systematic method for observing the children at play and recording their responses. As they develop further their understanding and approaches to planning and assessment, more attention will need to be given to meeting the differing needs of the children.
- The children are provided with a healthy snack and they have regular opportunities to engage in outdoor play. The staff have recently secured funding to develop further the outdoor play area.

6. Leadership and Management

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory

- The staff are hard-working and dedicated. They are caring and kind to the children who are at ease with them.
- Self evaluation is at a very early stage of development. The staff have begun to develop the written planning for the educational programme they provide; the planning will require considerable development to reflect more fully the needs and stage of development of all the children. It will be important for all of the staff to be involved in the process of developing the written planning if they are to fully understand their role in bringing about progression in the children's learning.
- The support provided to the staff by the current early years specialist from the Early Years Organisation is good; she has identified appropriate areas of the playgroups work for further development. Overall however, the pace of change and improvement has been too slow; it will be important that the staff work with the EYS to address and improve the areas for improvement identified in the report.

- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the playgroup has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department but the following minor areas need to be addressed:
 - the designated and deputy designated persons with responsibility for child protection matters need to be named within the settings child protection policy;
 - written permission should be obtained from the parents for the staff to change their children; and
 - all information relating to child protection should be shared with the parents.

CONCLUSION

In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this playgroup is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in standards and learning and teaching which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively.

The areas for improvement include the need to:

- improve the staff's understanding of the preschool curriculum to enable them to provide a broad and balanced programme of activities that progress over two years, that meet the children's differing needs and supports all of the staff more effectively in their day-to-day work with the children;
- review the setting's settling-in policy and procedures to provide more time for the staff to work with smaller groups of children to establish the ground rules and to establish more acceptable behaviour; and
- continue to develop the playgroup's methods of planning, assessment and evaluation.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the playgroup's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12-24 month period.

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