

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Happitots Playgroup,
Cullybackey

Report of an Inspection in
November 2013

Quantitative terms

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%

Performance levels

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels in reports:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

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1. Inspection method and evidence base

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of pre-school centres, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the Education and Training Inspectorate's (ETI) publication *Together Towards Improvement pre-school/Education and Training Inspectorate: a process for self evaluation* at: <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-primary.htm>.

Inspectors observed teaching and learning through play, the children's achievements and standards, scrutinised relevant documentation, and held formal and informal discussions with children, and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a discussion with the staff;
- a meeting with those involved with leadership and management; and
- the opportunity for the parents and the staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	14	9	64% ¹	*
Staff	*	*	*	*

* fewer than 5

The parents who responded were positive about all aspects of the life and work of the playgroup. The parents commented positively about the caring environment and good progress made by their children. The staff and management were positive about the strong teamwork among the staff and the chair and the improvements made since the last inspection.

2. Context

Happitots pre-school centre is accommodated in a large hall within a local community centre. The playgroup operates one part time morning session. The children who attend are all in their pre-school year; almost all come from the immediate locality.

3. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards;
- the quality of provision in the nursery school; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

¹ The ETI is trialling a new range of methods to collect the views of parents/carers and, as a result, the percentage of questionnaires returned may be low.

4. Overall finding

Overall Performance Level	Good
Achievements and Standards	Good
Provision	Good
Leadership and Management	Good

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- The children appear happy and secure in the playgroup environment. Most of the children choose and settle to activities independently, co-operate confidently with the daily routines and are developing good social skills. A minority of the children still require adult support to remain at activities for a sustained period and to clear away equipment when they have completed a task.
- Many of the children are interested in looking at books, enjoy informal stories through the session and participate well with the daily rhymes and songs. The group story session needs to be developed further to include a daily story time matched to the needs of the children. While a majority of the children are developing well their language and communication skills, a significant minority are still at early stage of development and require more support to develop their oral skills.
- A majority of children are developing effectively their fine and gross motor skills as they paint, cut and build. The minority of children whose skills are less well developed need suitable equipment and experiences to help them progress in this important area.
- The children enjoy using a wide range of construction materials to make models and use the materials at the creative area to paint and make simple collage pictures. A significant minority show an interest in and early understanding of colour, shape, number and capacity.

6. Provision

- The staff team are responsible for setting out all of the playgroup equipment on a daily basis. They divide the hall into well resourced and attractive areas for different types of play. The children's work and information for parents is displayed with care around the hall and entrance area. The playgroup makes use of a small enclosed outdoor area when the weather permits and has recently received a grant to develop this area further.
- The staff are all caring and supportive in their approach with the children, they value the children's own ideas and all have a good level of skill in their interactions with them. In the best practice the staff extend the children's language, thinking and learning consistently as they work alongside them in their play. To improve further, the staff need to maintain the best quality of interaction throughout the whole session and ensure that all of the children are fully engaged in learning.

- The planned programme is broad and balanced providing good opportunities for learning in most areas of the pre-school curriculum. The staff are developing effectively their assessment methods to record relevant observations of the children's progress and to incorporate their interests into the planned programme. The planning identifies a range of interesting activities and some relevant learning outcomes. It now requires further development to ensure suitable progression across all areas of learning, to guide the day-to-day interactions of the staff and to meet the wide variation in the children's stages of development.
- The playgroup provides the children with good quality pastoral care and support. There is a warm, friendly and inclusive ethos built on very good working relationships at all levels.
- Good attention is given to promoting healthy eating and physical activity through the provision of a healthy snack and daily opportunities for energetic physical play indoors or outdoors.

7. Leadership and management

- The leader, who has returned after a period of extended leave, promotes a strong sense of teamwork. She is well organised and manages the playgroup effectively with the support of the committee, the early years specialist and the dedicated staff team. There is a good level of consultation with parents and good progress in embedding self-evaluation into the development planning process to ensure continuous improvement. While the development plan identifies a number of relevant priorities for improvement more focus needs to be given to developing the core curriculum and the standards the children attain; in particular, the children's language and communication skills. The independent early years specialist gives good support and guidance which is valued and acted upon by the staff.
- The staff have made significant improvements in developing effective links with the parents and the local schools to which the children will transfer. The playgroup has strong support from the parents and the local community.
- 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 leader and member of the management committee need to complete their designated training.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the playgroup is good. The playgroup has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the playgroup has demonstrated the capacity to address.

The key area for improvement:

- develop further the children's oral language and communication skills; and
- develop further the planning to guide the day to day work of the staff and ensure progression and challenge in all areas of the curriculum.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the playgroup's progress on the areas for improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school setting:	Happitots Playgroup
Address:	Cullybackey Community Centre 22 Kllmakevit Drive Cullybackey BALLYMENA Co Antrim BT42 1NQ
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	13 November 2013
Date of previous inspection:	24 May 2007

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school setting	26	-
in their immediate pre-school year	26	-
funded by Department of Education (DE)	26	-
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2		-
with a statement of special educational needs		-
without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs		-
with English as an additional language		-
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	91%	-

* 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	4	0
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification	4	0
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification	0	0
New appointments within previous 12 months	1	0

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	-	188

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