

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Humpty Dumpty Playgroup,
Banbridge

Report of an Inspection
in March 2011

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Humpty Dumpty Playgroup
Address:	Holy Trinity Parish Church Hall Lurgan Road BANBRIDGE Co Down BT32 4AA
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	14 March 2011
Date of previous inspection:	11 February 2003

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	1	-
• with English as an additional language	0	-
• who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	0	-
Attendance:		
• percentage attendance* of funded children for the previous school year	88%	-

* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

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

Number of: **	
Students	2
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	-	188

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	24
Percentage returned:	75%
Number of written comments:	8

HUMPTY DUMPTY PLAYGROUP, BANBRIDGE, CO DOWN, BT32 4AA (5AB-0466)

1. Humpty Dumpty Playgroup is accommodated within Holy Trinity Church Hall which is situated on the Lurgan Road in Banbridge. The playgroup shares the accommodation with a range of other community organisations and the staff are required to set up and clear the playroom most days. The staffing has reduced from four to three over the past three years and the Leader is the only remaining member of staff since the last inspection in 2003. At the time of the inspection the staff reported that they had had no support from the Early Years Organisation (EYO) for more than six months and that, consequently, they had terminated their contract with the EYO and engaged the support of an independent early years specialist (IEYS).

2. 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 learning and teaching and leadership 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 over a 12-24 month period.

CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENTS

3. The children are happy and confident in their surroundings; they generally settle quickly to their learning activities, make full use of all the space available in the playroom and demonstrate independence in their personal care and hygiene. A majority of the children respond positively to the playroom routines and to the adults' instructions and expectations in relation to good behaviour. However, a small number of the children display challenging behaviours for which they require consistent, strategic support. During the inspection there were a few examples of sustained purposeful play, particularly in the construction, home and water areas.

4. There is an interesting range of fact and fiction books in the playroom. The children enjoy the book area, they 'read' enthusiastically to the adults and to each other, demonstrating care and confidence in their handling of books. The staff respond effectively to the children's interest in reading by engaging in incidental story telling with individuals and small groups. A majority of the children are beginning to develop an awareness and understanding of symbols and print around the room; they are beginning to label their own paintings and models and a few of them are integrating early mark making into their role-play activities. A majority of the children express themselves clearly and listen attentively during the large group story time. Approximately one quarter of the children have been identified as experiencing speech and language difficulties; the staff maintain records of concern or individual education plans (IEPs) for these children. There is a need for the staff to use their knowledge of the children, together with the information gained from their observations of them at play, to ensure that they are all provided with appropriate support to help develop further their language and communication skills. Good links have been established with the parents and with the local speech and language therapist. Individual children's records indicate that, where a structured language programme has been developed for them, they have made appropriate progress.

THE PROVISION FOR LEARNING

5. The staff work very hard to create a bright, welcoming environment which celebrates the children's creativity and achievements. They make effective use of photographs to record the children's experiences and provide a broad range of interesting activities for them. There are satisfactory to good opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school

curriculum; a key strength of the provision is the use of large group time in the adjacent hall to promote the children's understanding of early mathematical language. There is a good balance between free play and adult-led activities; there is a need, however, for the staff to review the daily routines in order to provide an extended period of energetic play and to ensure that all of the time available is used for learning. During the inspection, the quality of the adult interactions with the children was inconsistent; although there were a few examples of very good interactions when the adults engaged purposefully in the children's play and where they changed activities to meet the children's interests, there were many missed opportunities to build on the children's ideas, to challenge their thinking and to extend their learning.

6. The staff plan conscientiously for a wide range of learning activities and complete comprehensive evaluations of the children's levels of engagement and interest in them. They carry out extensive observations which, in some instances, are used effectively to assess the children's stage of development and to identify their needs. The observations and evaluations need to be used more effectively by the staff to inform the planning and to ensure progression in the children's learning across all areas of the pre-school curriculum.

7. The staff have developed good links with the children's parents. The parents are kept well-informed about the life and work of the centre through the parents' notice board and through the monthly newsletter which details the planned learning themes, rhymes and songs to be introduced. They are kept informed about their child's progress through the range of models and art work which the children take home and through two progress meetings and a written report at the end of the year. The playgroup has good pastoral links with most of the schools to which the children transfer.

8. The provision for pastoral care within the playgroup is good. This is evidenced through the staff's knowledge of the children and through their commitment to providing a bright, well organised learning environment.

9. The playgroup has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department but there is a need to ensure that all members of staff have a clear understanding of the playgroup's procedures for reporting and recording concerns about child protection and safeguarding.

10. The playgroup gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, through the provision of healthy breaks and the promotion of personal hygiene routines.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

11. The Leader manages the daily routines and programmes effectively. She is enthusiastic, well motivated and is committed to ensuring the ongoing professional development of all the staff. She is well supported by the dedicated and hard-working staff team who share her vision for the continued development of the centre's provision.

12. The staff engage in regular discussion and review of the activities which they provide for the children. A recent review of the layout of the reading area and the development of a book lending service for parents has led to improvement in the quality of learning for the children. The staff have appropriately identified the need to develop further the procedures

for self-evaluation leading to improvement and have highlighted this in their discussions with the newly appointed IEYS. During the inspection, the staff and Management Committee reported their dissatisfaction with the support and training provided by the EYO and that, consequently, they had terminated their contract with the EYO and engaged the support of an IEYS.

13. The key strengths of the centre include:

- the happy, confident children;
- the bright, well-organised learning environment;
- the good use of large group time in the hall to promote the children's understanding of early mathematical language;
- the effective promotion of the children's interest in reading;
- the good communication with parents to help them support their children's learning; and
- the hard-working leader and staff.

14. The areas for improvement include the need:

- to ensure consistently high quality adult interactions with the children; and
- to use the observations and evaluations more effectively to inform the planning and to ensure progression in the children's learning.

15. 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 learning and teaching and leadership 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 over a 12-24 month period.

QUESTIONNAIRES

The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents, the staff and the management committee to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Eighteen (75%) of the parents responded to the questionnaire and eight made additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaire were very positive and indicated a high level of satisfaction with all aspects of the centre's work; in particular the parents appreciated the caring, professional staff, and the broad range of learning activities provided for their children. The responses from the management committee and the staff questionnaires were also very positive. All of the responses have been shared with the staff and management of the pre-school centre.

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