

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Jack and Jill Playgroup,
Cookstown

Report of an Inspection
in November 2010

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Jack and Jill Playgroup
Address:	21 Loy Street COOKSTOWN Co Tyrone BT80 8PZ
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	18 November 2010
Date of previous inspection:	26 May 2005

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	2	-
• 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	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	98%	-

* 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	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	-	186

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	24
Percentage returned:	62%
Number of written comments:	3

JACK AND JILL COMMUNITY PLAYGROUP, COOKSTOWN, CO TYRONE BT80 8PZ (5AB-0201)

1. The Jack and Jill Playgroup is situated in the grounds of Holy Trinity Parish Church, Cookstown. It is accommodated within a spacious mobile building with access to a small outdoor play area which is shared with a neighbouring playgroup. Since the last inspection, one new member of staff has been appointed and a volunteer helper works in the centre two days per week. There have been four different early years specialist (EYS) appointed by the Early Years Organisation (EYO) in the last five years.

2. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this playgroup is very good. The playgroup is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENTS

3. The children settle quickly to the planned learning activities. They are highly motivated, respond positively to the adults' high expectations of behaviour, and engage confidently and enthusiastically in discussion about their play. The majority of the children are beginning to make connections in their learning, as evidenced through their transfer of resources from one area of play to another. They can all access and store resources independently, demonstrating a maturing sense of responsibility for their learning environment. During the inspection, there were many examples of collaborative and purposeful play.

4. The staff place a high importance on the development of the children's language and communication skills and on supporting those children who have speech and language difficulties. Two of the staff, trained in the Hanen language programme, apply effectively the strategies to promote the children's early language skills in their day-to-day work. They identify early those children who have speech and language difficulties and liaise closely with the local SureStart speech and language therapist to provide an appropriate support programme for them. There is effective consultation and communication with the parents about their child's programme and progress through the "Talk Time Home Booklet." The children's records indicate that they are benefiting well from the support programmes. The children talk confidently about their play and engage enthusiastically in the small and large group sessions, making choices and suggestions about their preferred stories, songs and rhymes. They use fiction and non-fiction books, experiment with early mark-making very naturally throughout their play, and make extensive use of the library area for reading for enjoyment.

THE PROVISION FOR LEARNING

5. There is a welcoming, purposeful ethos in the centre. The playroom is presented attractively in the defined areas of play; the resources and activities are skilfully planned to stimulate the children's interest and to ensure progression in their learning. The children's creative achievements are celebrated, displayed and used effectively as a stimulus for discussion. The daily session is well-organised with the purposeful use of all of the time available for learning. The adult interactions with the children are consistently of a very good quality. The staff respond effectively to the children's interests, suggestions and needs; they model desired learning behaviours and language very effectively. They use skilful questioning to promote the children's thinking, to encourage them to provide extended

responses and to promote their levels of independence. Where appropriate, they provide guidance to help the children develop specific fine motor skills, for example, in working with jigsaws. There are very good opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum; the development of the children's personal and social skills and their language and communication skills are particular strengths of the provision.

6. There is comprehensive planning in place that identifies clearly the intended learning and guides the staff in their day-to-day work with the children; it is informed effectively by the staff's perceptive observations and evaluations of the children's progress. The children's parents and receiving primary schools are provided with concise, well-focused written information about the children's progress and stage of development.

7. The induction programme for the parents provides them with practical and purposeful guidance on how to help their children settle into the centre. They are kept informed about the learning programmes and the work of the centre, through monthly newsletters and a very informative update sheet which enables them to repeat activities and to reinforce the children's learning at home. The parents are encouraged to express their opinions and suggestions for the centre's development as part of the settling-in interview with the staff and through the centre's 'Praises and Grumbles' book. The parents have been supportive of the playgroup in their efforts to improve the quality and appearance of the outdoor environment. The staff are pro-active in developing links with the primary schools to which the children transfer and have identified this as a priority in their development plan.

8. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the playgroup is outstanding. This is evidenced through the support for parents and children with English as an additional language, through the provision for those children with speech and language difficulties and through the staff's spontaneous response to the children's interests and needs.

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

10. The playgroup gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, through the healthy snack routines and the regular opportunities for outdoor play, which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

11. The leader is an excellent role-model in all aspects of the centre's provision; she has a very good understanding of the pre-school curriculum, sets high standards for herself, the staff and the management group and is ambitious for the continued development of the centre. She is effectively supported by the highly motivated and skilled staff team of assistants and a voluntary helper, who have a shared understanding of the aims of the centre.

12. Professional discussion, reflection on the appropriateness and quality of the planned learning activities and regular review of the children's progress, form key elements of the staff's practice. A recent review of the physical layout of the playroom and the continuing review of the outdoor play environment have led to improvement in the quality of the children's opportunities for learning. The staff have appropriately identified the need to develop further the procedures for self-evaluation leading to improvement and have secured training from the EYO to assist them in addressing this priority.

13. The playgroup has had regular, well-focused support from the EYO's EYS during the past year. However, the frequent changes in the EYS have led to inconsistency in the quality of support over the past five-year period.

14. The key strengths of the centre include:

- the independent and highly motivated children;
- the very good opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum;
- the very effective observation, assessment and planning cycle;
- the very good quality of the adult interactions with the children;
- the reflective culture of the centre leading to improvement; and
- the very effective leader and the highly skilled staff team.

15. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this playgroup is very good. The playgroup is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-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. Fifteen (62%) of the parents responded to the questionnaires and three made an additional written comment. The responses from the parental questionnaire indicated a high level of satisfaction with all aspects of the playgroup's work. The responses from the management group 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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