

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Jiminy Crickets Pre-School
Playgroup, Comber

Report of an Inspection
in November 2012



Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



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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:	Jiminy Crickets Pre-School Playgroup
Address:	c/o Andrews Memorial Primary School 4 Ballygowan Road Comber NEWTOWNARDS Co Down BT23 5PG
Management Type:	Private

Date of inspection:	14 November 2012
Date of previous inspection:	N/A

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school setting	16	-
in their immediate pre-school year	16	-
funded by Department of Education (DE)	16	-
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	0	-
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	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	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	1	3
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification	4	0
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification	1	0
New appointments within previous 12 months	1	3

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
2½ hours	-	156

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	16
Percentage returned	31%
Number of written comments:	*

* = fewer than five

1. Introduction

Jiminy Crickets Pre School Playgroup opened in 2011 and operates in Andrews Memorial Hall in Comber, County Down. At the time of the inspection there was a temporary acting-leader, who was appointed in September 2012, and three other members of staff who work on a part- time rota basis.

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 and staff were sought through a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Out of sixteen questionnaires issued to the parents, 31% were returned. Almost all of the responses indicated a high level of satisfaction with the work of the playgroup. Of the questionnaires issued to the staff and proprietor, 40% were returned. The reporting inspector discussed any issues raised through the questionnaires with the acting leader and the proprietor of the playgroup who attended the oral report back.

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 which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the playgroup's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

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 inspection, the children settled quickly and enthusiastically into their play activities and displayed a positive attitude to their learning. Their behaviour is very good and they treat one another with kindness and respect.
- For the stage of the year, almost all of the children demonstrate good levels of confidence in many aspects of their free play, including the selection and use of a variety of play resources, tools and natural and man-made materials. They are familiar with, and respond well to, their regular routines such as snack and tidy up time. Many of the children are now ready to take on more challenging elements of their self-management, such as putting on and fastening their own outdoor wear and dressing up clothes and labelling their own artwork, in order to keep building on important aspects of their personal and social development.

- Most of the children are keen to share their thoughts and suggestions with one another and the adults. They express themselves articulately, and for the time of year, their listening skills and levels of attentiveness, for example, during story-telling sessions and in their play conversations, are excellent.
- Most of the children engage with good levels of interest in extended periods of concentrated and purposeful play, for example, in the sand, water and craft areas. They express their creative ideas freely and imaginatively using a good assortment of two and three dimensional craft materials and a varied range of suitable tools.

5. Provision for Learning

The quality of the provision for learning is satisfactory.

- The staff's interactions with the children were always satisfactory or better; during the inspection, the adults took time to listen carefully to the children and responded with positive praise to their achievements. On occasions, in the best examples observed, the adults developed the children's reasoning skills and understanding through interesting and open-ended questions which encouraged their curiosity and prompted them to think. In these instances, where the interactions were very good, the children gave more thoughtful and extended responses.
- Under the guidance of the acting leader, the staff and children are now making good use of the increased space in the new playroom which has been adapted thoughtfully into a bright and stimulating learning environment. The adults value the children's artistic efforts and take time and care to display samples of their work attractively around the playroom.
- The staff have recently put in place a new system for monitoring and recording the children's development and progress; this does not yet link closely enough to the planning nor highlight sufficiently what further actions the adults need to take in order to best meet the needs of all of the children. The staff now need to formalise their planning and assessment time to enable them to develop their understanding of the programme, to monitor and evaluate the children's progress, and to focus more consistently on how the learning potential within the planned activities will be developed. For example, the adults need to consider how to promote a wider range of early mathematical learning and language through the various activities and routines in order to build further the children's interest in and understanding of early mathematics.
- The quality of the pastoral care is good. The adults are very caring and engage well with the children in their free play activities. There are positive relationships on all levels within the warm, child-centred ethos. The children are happy and relaxed with the adults and turn to them easily for help and support.
- The children are provided with a healthy snack and regular physical activity. More needs to be done by the staff to plan and provide a wider range of energetic and skills-based physical activities both in the outdoor environment and indoors throughout the year.

6. Leadership and Management

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory.

- A temporary acting leader has been in place for three months. In this time, she has worked conscientiously and methodically to lead and support the newly formed staff team in implementing a range of appropriate actions to assess and plan for the children's needs. The staff are currently allocated one hour per week to plan the programme and record the children's observations. The time available needs to be reviewed to provide increased opportunities for the staff to meet together to discuss and develop the programme and deepen their understanding of the learning potential of the activities provided.
- The staff are at a very early stage of developing their approaches to self-evaluation. They have begun to work together to evaluate some aspects of the programme each week. It will be important that this work is continued in a formalised way in order for the staff to make more reflective use of all the available information and to inform their future actions for improving key areas of the provision.
- The staff have developed good working relationships with the parents who are welcomed into the playgroup. They now need to develop further the pastoral and learning links with the staff, the parents and the local community in order to ensure there are open channels of communication relating to the continued improvement of the provision.
- Currently, the staff receive the support of an independent early years specialist. Since her appointment in September 2011, she has made regular visits and provided ongoing guidance in relation to the development of the learning environment and provided cluster training focusing on the curriculum area of the world around us. The whole staff, the early years specialist and the playgroup's proprietor now need to work more collaboratively to develop further the areas for improvement identified during the inspection.
- 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: to update and review the training in safeguarding for the designated persons, and to ensure that suitable risk assessment procedures are put in place.

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 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:

- continue to develop the staff's understanding of the pre-school curriculum;

- continue to develop the methods of planning and assessment to provide a broad and balanced programme of activities that progress throughout the year and meet all the children' s differing needs; and
- develop the effectiveness of the leadership and management arrangements at all levels and build further on the recently established shared team approach in order to ensure the continuous development of the provision.

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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