

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Kidzone Playgroup, Bessbrook,
Newry

Report of an Inspection
in November 2011

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Name of playgroup centre: | Kidzone Playgroup |
| Address: | 20B Millvale Road Bessbrook NEWRY Co Down BT35 7NH |
| Management Type: | Voluntary |

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| Date of inspection: | 23 November 2011 |
| Date of previous inspection: | 11 October 2004 |

1. Details of Children

| Total number of children: | am session | pm session |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| attending the playgroup centre | 24 | |
| in their immediate playgroup year | 24 | |
| funded by Department of Education (DE) | 24 | |
| 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 | ** | |
| 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 | 77% | |

* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

** Fewer than five

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 | 0 |
| Trainees | 0 |

3. Details of Sessions

| Duration of morning session | Duration of afternoon session | Number of days open in previous year |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| 3¼ hours | N/A | 186 |

4. Parental Questionnaires

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| Number issued to parents: | 23 |
| Percentage returned | 52% |
| Number of written comments: | ** |

** Fewer than five

KIDZONE PLAYGROUP, BESSBROOK, NEWRY, CO DOWN, BT35 7NH (5AB-0497)

1. Kidzone Playgroup operates in purpose built premises in Millvale Road, Bessbrook, Newry, County Down. The same staff team was in place at the time of the last inspection in November 2004. The playgroup operates one part-time session for pre-school age children who come from the surrounding local area.

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 are confident and relaxed; most are very well behaved and settle enthusiastically and promptly to their chosen activities. The adults support the children effectively to make independent choices well and they engage with interest in their learning activities. Most of the children demonstrate very good progress in their development in relation to their age and the time of the year; they move freely between the various learning areas, both indoors and outdoors, respond very well to their daily routines, and most engage with high levels of interest in extended periods of concentrated play.

4. The planned programme, which operates in accordance with the HighScope methodology, is broad and balanced and provides a good blend of activities to promote the children's curiosity and extend their learning. There is good promotion of the children's early language skills through the provision of a good range of fiction and fact books, and clear labels in the various learning areas and displays, including the thoughtful annotation of the children's drawings and artwork. The adults encourage the children to explore print and books and many of the children demonstrate good levels of sustained attention during stories and rhymes. Many of the children show a developing interest in experimental writing and know that print carries the meaning of what they wish to express. The staff uses a good range of appropriate mathematical language when participating in the children's free play and more structured activities; for example, in the art-based creative activities and during the buffet break. As a result, many of the children show a good early awareness of counting, sorting and talking about size and shape. When given the opportunity, the children engage very well in extended imaginative play and are confident in selecting and using a wide range of resources. They express their creative ideas well using a good assortment of materials and equipment; their art work and models are valued and displayed throughout the playgroup. The children participate very enthusiastically in all aspects of outdoor play, which is a strength of the playgroup; they explore and demonstrate high levels of interest in a wide range of natural and man-made objects in their learning environment.

THE PROVISION FOR LEARNING

5. The committed staff team work hard to create a carefully considered learning environment, and it is a feature of the planned HighScope programme to foster and extend the children's decision-making skills and self-management. The regular routines such as tidying up and buffet snack promote effectively the children's early independence and in relation to the time of year, most of the children respond well to their routines and transitions throughout the session. Through their good to very good quality interactions with the children, the adults promote the children's self-esteem and support and extend their language, thinking skills and independence.

6. The written planning outlines a broad and well-balanced curriculum for the children. The adults make and record regular observations of each child's learning and progress within a structured framework; this systematic assessment is used to inform future planning and is shared fully with the parents. The staff take good account of the children's interests and suggestions when reviewing their plans to improve further the quality of the children's learning experiences, through for example, making good use of spontaneous opportunities for connecting learning and ensuring that the children's individual needs are being met effectively.

7. The playgroup maintains very good links with the local primary schools as well as a range of individuals and agencies from the wider community. The communication and links with the parents are also good. In addition to informal opportunities, the parents receive detailed information regularly about all aspects of their children's learning experiences and progress during the year.

8. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the playgroup is outstanding. The strengths include, for example: the high priority given to the care and emotional development of the children, the very good relationships at all levels, the operation of a comprehensive range of appropriate policies and procedures which are kept under regular review, and the processes in place to identify and meet the needs of children who require additional support with aspects of their learning and development.

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

10. The playgroup gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and developing early understanding about healthy lifestyles and physical activity. Some examples of this are; the provision of healthy and varied snacks, the development of the children's personal hygiene routines including teeth brushing and hand washing, and the good opportunities for energetic play outdoors.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

11. The dedicated and enthusiastic leader provides good leadership and management of the playgroup. She has worked hard over many years towards the continuous improvement of all aspects of the playgroup's provision. She has developed a strong collegial spirit amongst the skilful staff team who work together effectively to ensure the best possible outcomes for all the children.

12. The leader and the staff operate well a systematic approach to self-evaluation leading to continuous improvement in various aspects of the playgroup's provision. Working together, they identify appropriate areas for review and the current development plan includes a relevant range of priorities and actions for future development. The staff report very good working relationships with and very good support from the early years specialist (EYS) employed by the Early Years Organisation.

13. The key strengths of the playgroup include:

- the warm, welcoming and inclusive learning environment which supports well the needs of all the children;
- the outstanding quality and provision of the pastoral care, including the high priority given to the care and emotional development of the children;

- the broad and balanced range of learning experiences, particularly in outdoor play;
- the good or better quality staff interactions in promoting and developing the children's care, learning and development;
- the systematic team approach to the regular evaluation of all aspects of the playgroup's provision; and
- the good leadership provided by the playgroup leader, ably supported by the dedicated and hard-working staff team.

14. 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, the members of the management committee and the staff to complete confidential questionnaires prior to the inspection. Approximately 52% of the parents responded to the questionnaire including a significant minority who also submitted written comments; almost all indicated high levels of satisfaction with the quality of the overall provision within the playgroup. Written responses from the parents show that they appreciate the high levels of care and attention shown by the staff in meeting their children's needs. The responses from the playgroup staff and management group also supported fully the work of the playgroup. All of the responses have been shared with the staff and management of the playgroup.

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