

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Little Friends Playgroup,
Omagh

Report of an Inspection
in March 2012

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Little Friends Playgroup
Address:	Strathroy Community Centre Strathroy OMAGH Co Tyrone BT79 7XE
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	14 March 2012
Date of previous inspection:	26 January 2005

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	18	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	9	-
• funded by Department of Education (DE)	9	-
• 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	2	-
• 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	92%	-

* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	0	3
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	0	3
New appointments within previous 12 months	0	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
2¾ hours	-	188

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	9
Number returned:	6
Number of written comments:	5

LITTLE FRIENDS PLAYGROUP, OMAGH, CO TYRONE, BT79 7XE (2AB-0295)

1. Little Friends Playgroup is accommodated in purpose-built rooms within Strathroy Community Centre, Omagh. Since the last inspection, in January 2005, a new leader has been appointed and an outdoor play area has been developed.

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 very well settled and all engaged in sustained, purposeful and productive play throughout the session observed. They are eager to explore and make full use of the attractively presented learning environment and co-operate readily with the staff. All of the children demonstrate very good progress in their development, for example, they display very good levels of independence, and play collaboratively.

4. The staff have created a language rich environment which promotes and extends the children's language development. Almost all of the children can talk confidently about their work and their achievements. The children make good use of the attractive book area and enjoy group story sessions where they demonstrate good listening skills and ask appropriate questions during the discussion. Appropriate books and photographs are also incorporated into areas of play; on occasions during the inspection, the staff and children made very good use of these. The staff provide very good opportunities for the children to experiment with mark making and early writing and much of the art work produced by the children is representational and of a high quality.

PROVISION FOR LEARNING

5. The attractively presented and well organised playroom provides excellent opportunities for learning in all aspects of the pre-school curriculum. The adult interactions with the children are consistently of a very high quality; the staff frequently ask open-ended questions and extend the children's language and learning by providing them with new vocabulary and ideas. During the inspection, the staff often engaged the children in valuable discussion about their play and experiences, and participated sensitively in many of the activities. The children's ideas are listened to and acted upon in order to extend and develop their learning.

6. The thoughtful organisation of the daily timetable ensures a good balance between free play and activities organised by the staff. Transitions between activities and routines are managed very well and, as a result, the session flows smoothly and all the time is used effectively for learning.

7. The children have daily access to a small enclosed outdoor space for physical play. The staff have given much thought to the planning of this area to ensure maximum use of the limited space, progression in the children's physical development and the promotion of safe play.

8. The staff have developed a very effective method of planning which outlines variety, challenge and progression in the programme. Reflective evaluations are based on the children's responses during activities and are used to inform future learning. The staff work very effectively as a team to ensure that the individual needs of all the children are met.

9. The playgroup has very good procedures in place for supporting those children identified with special educational needs. The children's needs are identified early and documented appropriately. Individual education plans have been developed to support the children and effective links established with the parents and other health professionals.

10. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the playgroup is outstanding. The atmosphere is friendly and welcoming and is based on an ethos of mutual respect. Among the strengths of the playgroup are the very positive working relationships at all levels and the priority given to the children's needs and interests. The children appear happy confident and very well behaved.

11. The playgroup has very good comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding the children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department. The staff training for child protection needs to be updated.

12. The playgroup gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, the children have access to a healthy snack and they have regular opportunities to engage in physical activity. This provision encourages the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

13. The leader has a clear vision for the development of the playgroup and has drawn up a development plan which outlines appropriate targets. She is a very good role model for the staff who demonstrate a caring and skilful approach to their work. A good start has been made in developing the process of self-evaluation.

14. The early years specialist, from the Early Years Organisation, has made a very good contribution to the overall development of the provision in the playgroup.

15. The key strengths of the playgroup include:

- the very positive, inclusive ethos in the playgroup that contributes to the high quality care provided for the children;
- the well-settled children who display exemplary behaviour and high levels of independence;
- the very high quality of the interaction between the staff and the children;
- the excellent opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum;
- the appropriate observation, assessment and planning cycle developed by the staff; and
- the very effective leader and the skilful and dedicated staff.

16. 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. Six of the parents responded to the questionnaire and a small number made additional written comments; all of the returns indicate a high level of satisfaction with all aspects of the playgroup's work. The responses from the management group and the staff were also very positive. All of the responses have been shared with the staff and the management of the playgroup.

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