

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Little Hands Pre-school,
Antrim

Report of an Inspection in
November 2013

Quantitative terms

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%

Performance levels

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels in reports:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

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1. Inspection method and evidence base

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of pre-school centres, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the Education and Training Inspectorate's (ETI) publication *Together Towards Improvement pre-school/Education and Training Inspectorate: a process for self evaluation* at: <http://www.eti.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-primary.htm>.

Inspectors observed teaching and learning through play, the children's achievements and standards, scrutinised relevant documentation, and held formal and informal discussions with children, and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a discussion with the staff;
- a meeting with those involved with leadership and management; and
- the opportunity for the parents, staff and members of the management group to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	19	*	5 ¹	-
Staff	-	-	-	-

* fewer than 5

Due to some difficulties in accessing the on-line questionnaire, a small number of parents took the opportunity to meet with the Reporting Inspector. Almost all of the parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire or met with the Reporting Inspector are happy with almost all aspects of the pre-school.

The Reporting Inspector also met with representatives of the Management Committee who spoke highly of the pre-school and in particular, the hard working staff and the wide range of interesting activities provided for the children.

2. Context

Little Hands Pre-school is situated in the Parkhall Complex in Antrim and provides part-time education for 19 children in their immediate pre-school year. The pre-school, formerly known as Greystone Community Playgroup, was renamed Little Hands Pre-school in 2009 and moved to its present accommodation in 2010. There have been no staffing changes in the playgroup since the last inspection in 2006.

¹ The ETI is trialling a new range of methods to collect the views of parents/carers and, as a result, the percentage of questionnaires returned may be low.

3. Focus of the inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards;
- the quality of provision in the nursery school; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

4. Overall finding

Overall Performance Level	Good
Achievements and Standards	Good
Provision	Good
Leadership and Management	Good

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are well-settled and almost all of them engage in sustained, purposeful play throughout the session. They have good levels of independence and can access the resources they require, including pouring their own paint and labelling their own work with name stickers. Almost all of the children are confident in the routines of the pre-school and co-operate well with the adults and each other. A small number of children still require adult support and encouragement to engage fully in the wide range of activities on offer in the playroom.
- Most of the children communicate confidently both with the adults and with each other. A small number of them are showing an interest in pre-writing activities and the good range of books available around the playroom. The children enjoy listening to stories in small groups during the session, however, there is a need for staff to ensure that all children can benefit from a whole-class story and rhyme session daily.
- During the inspection the children were observed counting and using accurately some early mathematical language for shape, size and capacity. While the daily routines in the pre-school offer some opportunities for the children to use their early mathematical skills, there is a need for the staff to ensure that they exploit more fully the inherent mathematical learning potential in the daily routines, to ensure that the children develop further their understanding and use of early mathematical language.

6. Provision

- The staff work hard and are successful in creating a stimulating, well-resourced learning environment. They make good use of the available indoor space to create distinct areas of play and promote a sense of fun and enjoyment in learning. The adult interactions with the children are consistently good. They use appropriate questioning and a problem-solving approach to encourage the children to be independent and to develop their thinking skills.
- Overall the children's educational programme is well-balanced with good opportunities for learning in most of the areas of the pre-school curriculum. The staff plan regularly and respond very effectively to the interests and ideas of the children in their themes and topics. The staff now need to review their approaches to the medium and short-term planning, as they currently focus on the activities provided and do not take sufficient account of the children's learning needs and stage of development. The staff make regular observations of the children's learning across all areas of the pre-school curriculum, however they need to make more effective use of these observations to assess the children's progress and to inform future planning, to better meet the needs of all of the children.
- The staff have benefitted from their participation in the North Eastern Education and Library Board Special Educational Needs Capacity Building Project. They implement effectively a range of strategies to support the children identified as having additional learning needs.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the pre-school is good. There is a welcoming, friendly ethos, which is commented upon favourably by the parents. The adults engage with the children in a caring, respectful way and the children are secure and relaxed in the pre-school and turn to the adults readily for support or help.
- The pre-school gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity with the provision of a healthy snack and positive encouragement to the children to try a wide range of fruits. The children have daily opportunities to engage in energetic physical play. The staff need to review and evaluate the current physical play provision and programme to provide the children with a more effective physical development programme with appropriate progression and challenge across the year.

7. Leadership and management

- The leader and staff work well collegiately to promote improvements within the pre-school. They have made effective use of a self-evaluative tool to identify the areas for development and a culture of self-evaluation is becoming embedded. There is a development plan in place with appropriate areas for improvement identified. The pre-school has had good support from their Independent Early Years Specialist in developing their understanding of self-evaluation and development planning processes.
- The pre-school has good links with a local primary school to ensure a smooth transition for the children. Through the Special Educational Needs Capacity Building Project, the staff are developing links with a wide range of outside agencies to access support and advice in providing for children with additional

learning needs. The staff provide the parents with a useful monthly newsletter which contains information on events in the pre-school and some curricular information. There is a need for the staff to provide the parents with additional information on how they can support their child's learning at home.

- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection the pre-school 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:
 - ensure staff attend up-coming Child Protection training and the Designated Person attends the appropriate level of training;
 - revise and update the policy for Child Protection;
 - a Personal Care Policy and a Risk Assessment Policy need to be developed by the staff, ratified by the Management Committee and shared with the parents.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the pre-school is good. The pre-school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified an area for improvement which the pre-school has demonstrated the capacity to address.

The area for improvement is:

- to develop further the planning and assessment methods, in order to focus more sharply on the learning potential and use more effectively the observations of the children's responses and provide a programme which meets the needs of all of the children.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the pre-school's progress on the areas for improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school setting:	Little Hands Pre-school
Address:	Unit 5, Queen's Road, Parkhall, Antrim
Management Type:	Committee

Date of inspection:	20/11/2013
Date of previous inspection:	

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school setting	20	-
in their immediate pre-school year	19	-
funded by Department of Education (DE)	19	-
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2		-
with a statement of special educational needs	-	-
without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	-	-
with English as an additional language	2	-
who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	-	-
Attendance:		
attendance** of funded children for the previous school year	%	-

* 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	3	
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification	3	
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification	0	
New appointments within previous 12 months	0	

Number of: ***	
Students	1
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	-	

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