

# PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Little People Pre-School  
Playgroup, Newry

Report of an Inspection  
in June 2012



## STATISTICAL INFORMATION

<b>Name of playgroup centre:</b>	Little People Pre-School Playgroup
<b>Address:</b>	Ninemile Road Newtownhamilton NEWRY Co Down BT35 0HN
<b>Management Type:</b>	Voluntary

<b>Date of inspection:</b>	7 June 2012
<b>Date of previous inspection:</b>	11 April 2005

### 1. Details of Children

<b>Total number of children:</b>	<b>am session</b>	<b>pm session</b>
attending the playgroup centre	22	-
in their immediate playgroup 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	*	-
who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	5	-
<b>Attendance:</b>		
attendance** of funded children for the previous school year	78%	-

\* = fewer than five

\*\* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

## 2. Details of Staff

<b>Number of:</b>	<b>Full-time</b>	<b>Part-time</b>
Staff, including leader	*	-
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	*	-
New appointments within previous 12 months	*	-

<b>Number of: ***</b>	
Students	*
Trainees	*

\*\*\* Total placements since September of current year

## 3. Details of Sessions

<b>Duration of morning session</b>	<b>Duration of afternoon session</b>	<b>Number of days open in previous year</b>
2¾ hours	-	188

## 4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	22
Percentage returned	41%
Number of written comments:	*

## **LITTLE PEOPLE PRE-SCHOOL PLAYGROUP, NEWRY, CO DOWN, BT35 0HN (5AB-0192)**

1. The Little People Playgroup is situated on the Ninemile Road in Newtownhamilton, about thirteen miles from Newry, County Down. It is accommodated within a well-maintained mobile unit with an extensive outdoor play area. Since the last inspection in 2005, there have been a number of improvements to the fabric of the building, including the addition of an all-weather canopy which enables the children to play outdoors throughout the year. At the time of the inspection, there were 22 children enrolled in the playgroup; 19 of these children are in their immediate pre-school year. The younger children, who attend the playgroup on two days per week, were not present on the day of the inspection. In the course of this year, five children left the playgroup immediately after their fourth birthday to enrol in pre-school reception classes in two of the local primary schools.

2. In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this pre-school playgroup is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in learning and teaching and leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the learners 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.

### **CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENTS**

3. The children are happy, confident and well motivated to learn. Almost all of them settle quickly to their chosen activities, making full use of all the space available in the playroom and outdoor area. They demonstrate good levels of independence in their personal care and hygiene, in the snack routines and in accessing and replacing their chosen resources. During the inspection there were many examples of sustained purposeful play, particularly at the dough table, at the fruit and vegetable stall and in the craft area. There were a few examples of collaborative play in the outdoor area.

4. All of the children are keen to share their ideas, to make suggestions and to ask and respond to questions; most of them can express their thoughts articulately and can engage in mature levels of conversation with the adults in the room. A very small number of children have been identified as experiencing difficulties with aspects of their language and communication. There is a need for the staff to develop appropriate education plans for these children in order to support further the development of their language and communication skills. All of the children can recognise their name in print and a few of them can write their name independently; they should be encouraged to use these skills further in labelling their artwork and creative models. During the inspection, a number of the children engaged in early mark making at the designated writing table; their interest and skill in this area should be encouraged through more natural integration of 'writing' across the planned learning activities.

### **THE PROVISION FOR LEARNING**

5. The staff have created a bright, well-organised learning environment for the children; they provide an attractive range of natural and man-made resources and make good use of the wall displays to celebrate the children's creativity and achievements. There are good opportunities for learning in most areas of the pre-school curriculum; a key strength of the provision is the focus on topical themes and on the use of the outdoor area to foster the children's sense of enquiry. During the inspection the quality of the adult interactions with the children ranged from satisfactory to outstanding. The most effective interactions were

characterised by the adults' skill in engaging in natural conversation with the children; in building on the children's enquiries and discoveries and in introducing and modelling the use of new vocabulary to extend the children's language. In the less effective practice, the adults were over-directive in their engagement with the children and there were missed opportunities to challenge the children's thinking and to extend their learning.

6. The staff plan conscientiously for a wide range of learning activities. They have, appropriately, begun to review their short-term planning procedures. This work needs to be extended and developed further to ensure that the planning at all levels takes more account of the pre-school curricular guidance. It will also be important for the staff to ensure that the planning provides them with sufficient detail to guide them in their day-to-day interactions and work with the children.

7. The staff complete detailed observations of the children at play; in a few instances, these observations are used effectively to assess the children's stage of development and to identify their needs. The observation and assessment procedures need to be developed further and used more effectively by the staff to inform the planning and to ensure progression in the children's learning across all areas of the pre-school curriculum.

8. There are satisfactory links with the parents and with the primary schools to which the children transfer. Information about the life and work of the playgroup is displayed on the parents' notice board and the parents receive a monthly newsletter which provides them with details about the planned learning themes and how they can support their children's learning at home. It will be important for the staff to develop the newsletter further, for example, through the inclusion of new vocabulary and the words of the rhymes and songs. The parents are kept well-informed about their child's progress through an individual meeting with their child's key worker in term 1, through a meeting and a written report in term 2, and through the end of year transition report. The staff have, appropriately, identified the need to develop further the curricular links with the primary schools to which the children transfer in order to ensure consistent progression in the children's learning.

9. The provision for pastoral care within the playgroup is good. This is evidenced through the bright, well organised learning environment and through the staff's care of the children.

10. The playgroup has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department but there is a need to ensure that the safeguarding policy contains a definition of the various types of child abuse and that it details more specifically the procedures to be followed in responding to concerns about child protection and safeguarding.

11. The playgroup gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, through participation in the Boost Better Breaks programme, through the dental hygiene programme and through the regular opportunities for energetic outdoor play.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

12. The Leader's role has become more administrative in recent times. Whilst she has been instrumental in securing funding for an additional staff member and for the development of the outdoor play area, it will be important for her to maintain her role as leader within the playroom. She is supported willingly and enthusiastically by the effective deputy leader and the committed staff who work well together as a team.

13. The staff engage in regular discussion and review of the activities which they provide for the children. However, the processes for self-evaluation and development planning leading to improvement are at a very early stage of development. This aspect of the provision has appropriately been identified by the early years specialist (EYS) from the Early Years Organisation (EYO) as one of the key priorities for development. The staff have had regular, well-focused support from their EYS; at the time of the inspection they reported that they have not received a written record for each of the support visits.

**14. The key strengths of the playgroup include:**

- the confident, independent children who play together co-operatively;
- the bright, well-organised learning environment and the use of all the time available for learning;
- the good quality of the arrangements for pastoral care;
- the good opportunities for learning in most areas of the pre-school curriculum;
- the good range of natural and man-made resources which support the children's learning across the curriculum; and
- the commitment of the Leader and staff to the continued development of the provision for the children.

**15. The areas for improvement include the need to:**

- develop further the observation, assessment and planning procedures in order to track the children's progress and to provide more challenge in their learning experiences;
- develop and embed a culture of self-evaluation to promote improvement; and
- access appropriate staff development and training which focuses more specifically on the delivery of the pre-school curriculum.

16. 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 in learning and teaching and leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the learners 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.

**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. Nine (41%) of the parents responded to the questionnaire and four made additional written comments. Most of the responses from the parental questionnaire were very positive and indicated a high level of satisfaction with nearly all aspects of the playgroup's work; in particular the parents expressed their appreciation of the caring, approachable staff, and of the safe and friendly learning environment. 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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