

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Newcastle Pre-School
Playgroup, Co Down

Report of an Inspection
in March 2011



STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Newcastle Pre-school Playgroup
Address:	Newcastle Leisure Centre 10-14 Central Promenade NEWCASTLE Co Down BT33 0AA
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	14 March 2011
Date of previous inspection:	23 October 2003

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school centre	24	-
in their immediate pre-school year	24	-
funded by Department of Education (DE)	24	-
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	5	-
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	1	-
who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	5	-
Attendance:		
Attendance* of funded children for the previous school year	80%	-

* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	0	4
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	0	3
New appointments within previous 12 months	0	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	-	188

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	24
Percentage returned:	45.83%
Number of written comments:	6

NEWCASTLE PRE-SCHOOL PLAYGROUP, CO DOWN, BT33 0AA (4AB-0181)

1. Newcastle Pre-School Playgroup is accommodated in the Newcastle Leisure Centre, Central Promenade, Newcastle. The playgroup has access to an indoor facility for physical activity and an outdoor play area.

2. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the playgroup is good. The playgroup has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the playgroup has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) will monitor the playgroup's progress on the areas for improvement.

CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENTS

3. During the inspection, almost all of the children engaged in collaborative and imaginative play, especially in the hospital and the construction areas; a small number of children were dependent on the staff for developing an area of play. The children explored and experimented within a good range of creative activities and they produced work of a good standard.

4. The staff create an environment within the playgroup that provides the children with good opportunities for the promotion of language and early literacy skills. Almost all of the children engage in purposeful discussion and personal conversations about their play and home experiences. They enjoy sharing their daily news with their peers, recalling a good range of rhymes and they listen well during story time. The children's learning benefits from good opportunities to explore a wide range of reference books and storybooks relating to the play themes. They identify their own symbols and many engage in early mark-making as an integral part of their play. The children with additional learning needs receive appropriate individualised support and are making good progress.

THE PROVISION FOR LEARNING

5. The adult interactions with the children are of a good quality, with instances of very good quality interaction whereby the staff use appropriate questions to extend the children's thinking skills that develop the children's purposeful play. During the inspection, the staff and children used appropriate mathematical language as an integral part of the play and daily routines. The children are gaining a good understanding of the early mathematical concepts associated with shape, pattern, measurement and number. There are good learning opportunities in all aspects of the pre-school curriculum. The daily session is well organised; all of the time available for learning is used purposefully.

6. The monthly and termly planning provides a useful framework for the development of play across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. Through daily observation, the staff introduce appropriate resources and language that build on the children's evolving interests, and ensures progression in their learning. The staff need to develop further the weekly planning to reflect this practice in the playroom by ensuring a clearer focus on the learning to be promoted.

7. The parents are kept informed about the children's learning and events within the playgroup through the information board and a regular, helpful newsletter. They receive information about their child's progress through informal meetings, one formal interview per year and one written report. It would be beneficial to the parents if the staff would extend the regularity of the interviews to support further the parents with their children's learning. Transition records are completed for all primary schools to which the children transfer.

8. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the playgroup is very good. Among the strengths are the very good working relationships between the staff and the children, the consistent approach applied by all of the staff in promoting positive behaviour, and the welcoming atmosphere that permeates the playgroup.

9. The playgroup has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department.

10. The playgroup gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, through the healthy snack routines and the regular opportunities for indoor and outdoor physical play, which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

11. The leader acts as a good role-model by developing the quality of the staff's interaction with the children and creating a dedicated staff team. The development plan identifies appropriately the extension of the outdoor play provision and resources. During the last year, there has been a break in support from the early years specialist (EYS) from the Early Years Organisation (EYO). It would be beneficial for the staff to have consistent support from the EYS to continue the curricular improvements and to advise the leader of the playgroup on how to apply a more systematic approach to aspects of the management role.

12. The key strengths of the playgroup include:

- the well-settled children who enjoy purposeful play;
- the caring and very good working relationships;
- the good opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum;
- the good quality of the adult interactions with the children; and
- the dedicated staff team.

13. The priority identified for improvement is the need:

- to develop further the short-term planning to ensure a clearer focus on the learning to be promoted.

14. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the playgroup is good. The playgroup has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the playgroup has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Inspectorate will monitor the playgroup's progress on the areas for improvement.

QUESTIONNAIRES

The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents, the staff and the management committee to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Eleven (approximately 46%) of the parents responded to the questionnaires and six made an additional written comment. Almost all of the responses from the parental questionnaire indicated a very good level of satisfaction with almost all aspects of the playgroup's work. A few matters raised through the questionnaires were brought to the attention of the staff and the management of the playgroup. There were no responses from the management and the staff to the questionnaires.

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