

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Nipper's Alley Community
Playgroup, Omagh

Report of an Inspection
in October 2010

eti

*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*

Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Nipper's Alley Community Playgroup
Address:	166 Loughmacrory Road Loughmacrory OMAGH Co Tyrone BT79 9LG
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	14 October 2010
Date of previous inspection:	11 November 2002

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	18	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	16	-
• funded by Department of Education (DE)	16	-
• qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	16	-
• with a statement of special educational needs	0	-
• without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	1	-
• 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	90%	-

* 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	1

Number of: **	
Students	2
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	-	191

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	18
Percentage returned:	44.4%
Number of written comments:	4

NIPPER'S ALLEY COMMUNITY PLAYGROUP, LOUGHMACRORY, OMAGH, CO TYRONE, BT79 9LG (2BB-0454)

1. Nipper's Alley Community Playgroup is accommodated in a purpose-built building in the grounds of St Teresa's Primary School. The children come from the surrounding rural area. Since the last inspection, there have been a number of staffing changes. The management group have recently recruited a new leader who will soon be taking up her post.

2. 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 achievements and standards, learning and teaching, leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children 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 over a 12-24 month period.

CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENTS

3. The children respond well to the staff's expectations and learn within a caring environment. They display good levels of interest in the wide range of activities and interest areas provided in the indoor and outdoor learning environments. The staff effectively place a high priority on the development of the children's personal, social and emotional development. The quality of the play is settled and the well-behaved children appear happy. During the inspection, the children were often observed in turn-taking and displayed self-help skills in play. The children are developing a range of skills such as investigating and making choices.

4. The children's language development is a priority and the staff work hard to develop the children's understanding and to broaden their range of vocabulary. During the inspection, the adults were observed acting as effective role-models in the imaginative play areas; they engaged the children in learning about the world around them. In the best practice the staff extended the children's ideas and interests; however, on occasions, the staff missed opportunities to develop the children's language through, for example, the incidental use of books in the areas of play. Good opportunities are provided for the children to listen to stories told by the staff.

PROVISION FOR LEARNING

5. The learning environment is bright and stimulating with a very good range of resources. Careful consideration is given to the effective use of all the space to create safe and interesting areas of learning. Good use is made of the children's own art work, interest areas related to the theme of autumn and attractive topical displays to enhance the learning environment. The playgroup's curriculum is broad and balanced and offers good opportunities for learning in most the areas of the pre-school curriculum.

6. The quality of the staff interaction is variable and ranges from satisfactory to good. The staff need to develop further their skills in interacting with the children to effectively promote their all-round development and learning. The daily timetable is effectively organised to provide a good balance of free play and activities organised by the staff. The children benefit from sustained periods of uninterrupted play. The daily snack, and other necessary routines, are organised effectively to develop the children's, independence, social and conversational skills. There is a need to develop further the children's opportunities to develop early language and mathematical skills.

7. The staff have made a good start to developing their planning through the use of themes and have begun to identify progression in the use of the resources. The assessment methods are at an early stage; the staff need to develop these and link the outcomes to the planned programme to ensure progression in the children's learning throughout the year.

8. Parents are appropriately involved at the beginning and end of the day; the staff effectively interact with them in an open and welcoming manner about the children's achievements. There are good procedures for communicating with the parents and gathering appropriate information about the children before they begin the pre-school programme. Throughout the year the parents are encouraged to make their views known to the staff about the pre-school provision; they are invited to meetings to share information about their children's progress and development.

9. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the playgroup is very good. The staff treat the children with care and respect and provide a secure, supportive environment which is helping the children to grow in confidence, independence and consideration for others. There are excellent working relationships at all levels.

10. The centre has very good comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department.

11. The playgroup gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, as part of the snack routine the children are encouraged to try a range of 'healthy' foods and they have regular opportunities to engage in physical activity. This provision encourages the children to adopt healthier lifestyles.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

12. Over the past two years, the pre-school has experienced frequent changes in staffing. The acting leader, who was previously a staff member, has been in the post for a few weeks. She is a good role-model in her work with the children and the parents and she has been effective in promoting a strong team-spirit among the hard-working staff.

13. The staff are at an early stage in the process of self-evaluation. The management group, led by the chair who is the Principal of the primary school, have invested significant time and expertise in the development of policies and training, for example, in child protection training which effectively guide the staff in their day-to-day management of the pre-school. Recently, a new early years specialist (EYS) from the Early Years Organisation (EYO) was appointed and she has provided clear identification of areas in need of improvement. There is a need for the management group and the staff to work closely with the EYS to address the areas identified at the time of the inspection.

14. The key strengths in this playgroup include:

- the caring and inclusive learning environment wherein all the children are valued by the staff who have placed the personal, social and emotional development of the children at the centre of their work;
- the bright and attractive playroom, the stimulating range of activities and very good resources;
- the effective procedures for communicating with the parents and gathering appropriate information about the children before they begin the pre-school;

- the satisfactory to good opportunities for the children to learn and develop a range of skills in all areas of the pre-school programme;
- the hard-working staff, very good teamwork and excellent working relationships at all levels; and
- the effective leadership and management of the management group in the development and implementation of clear and coherent policies to guide the work of the staff.

15. The areas for improvement include the need to:

- develop further the assessment methods in order to plan for progression in the children's learning and development;
- improve the quality of the staff interaction to promote more effectively the children's language development arising from the activities and the resources; and
- develop further the self-evaluation processes to sustain improvement in the development of the pre-school programme.

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 achievements and standards, learning and teaching, leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children 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 over a 12-24 month period.

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. Eight of the parents responded to the questionnaire and four made additional written comments. Almost all of the comments were positive and indicate a high level of satisfaction with all aspects of the playgroup's work; in particular the parents praised the work of the staff in the arrangements for welcoming and settling the children and ensuring that they were happy in the playgroup. Comments were also included about the demand on parents for fund-raising and about the limitations for working parents of the part-time pre-school session and lack of childcare facilities in the village area. The responses from the staff and the management group were generally positive and highlight the commitment of all to the development of the playgroup. A summary of the responses has been shared with the staff and management of the playgroup.

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