

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Parkside Playgroup, Belfast

Report of an Inspection
in May 2011

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Parkside Playgroup
Address:	8 Park Road BELFAST BT7 2 FX
Management Type:	Private

Date of inspection:	19 May 2011
Date of previous inspection:	N/A

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school centre	24	-
in their immediate pre-school year	12	-
funded by Department of Education (DE)	12	-
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	1	-
with a statement of special educational needs	0	-
without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	0	-
with English as an additional language	2	-
who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	N/A	-
Attendance:		
attendance* of funded children for the previous school year	N/A	-

* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	4	0
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	4	0
New appointments within previous 12 months	1	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
4 hours	-	N/A

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	20
Percentage	55%
Number of written comments:	7

PARKSIDE PLAYGROUP, BELFAST, BT7 2FX (1AA-0430)

1. Parkside Playgroup is accommodated in a small council-owned building within the grounds of Ormeau Park. The playgroup withdrew from the pre-school programme in 2002 and then re-entered in September 2010. Most of the children who attend come from the immediate area; approximately 50% of the children attending are in their penultimate pre-school year and do not receive funding from the Department.

2. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this playgroup is inadequate; the areas for improvement outweigh the strengths in the provision. The inspection has identified major areas for improvement in standards, learning and teaching, leadership and management, which need to be addressed urgently if the playgroup is to meet effectively the needs of all of the children.

CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENTS

3. The children all appear happy and generally well settled. Most can co-operate with the staff and one another and they can participate confidently in the daily routines. While, at times, a small number of children play collaboratively and there were examples of concentrated play by individual children, most children engage in solitary or parallel play or are overly dependent on the adults to help them to sustain purposeful play.

4. The children enjoy using the art materials provided. Most of the children are at the early exploratory and experimental stage; the staff should encourage the more able children to develop and progress their art work to the representational stage. A few of the children show an awareness of mathematics as they count, compare and sort during play. The children showed an interest in the natural resources which had been added to the home area and the small world activities. However, the sand, water and construction play lacked sufficient interest and challenge for many of the children and, consequently, their play was not sustained in these areas.

5. A majority of the children demonstrate good language skills and can talk confidently to the staff about their experiences; they enjoy songs and rhymes. A significant minority of the children, however, showed limited oral engagement throughout the session and there was only partial interest in books or mark making.

THE PROVISION FOR LEARNING

6. The staff have worked hard to enhance the quality of the learning environment in recent months. They make good use of relevant posters, photographs and displays of the children's work to present an attractive and well maintained playroom. This should be developed further to ensure there is a better range of stimulating resources in each area of play to extend and challenge the learning of the pre-school children.

7. The staff are all warm, caring and supportive in their approach to the children and, at times, promote appropriate aspects of learning as they engage with the children during play and in the daily routines. However, overall, the staff do not demonstrate sufficient skill in promoting consistently the children's language and learning.

8. The playgroup's planning and assessment methods are at a very early stage of development. Parents are kept informed about their children's progress through informal interactions and an appropriate written report on their children's progress at the end of the final term.

9. The staff maintain good relationships with the parents and have developed useful links with those who manage the local amenities such as the park and the library.

10. The quality of pastoral care within this playgroup is good. The strengths include the caring and inclusive ethos and the good relationships with the parents.

11. The playgroup has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department; however, there is a need to update immediately the policies and procedures for: changing children; anti-bullying; the use of mobile phones by staff and the reporting of concerns and complaints to the playgroup.

12. The playgroup gives good attention to promoting the children's health and well being, including the provision of a healthy break. The staff make good use of a small enclosed area and the park to enhance the space available for the children's learning and to provide regular opportunities for outdoor physical play.

13. The leader and deputy leader have worked closely to establish a pre-school setting which focuses on providing a safe and caring environment for young children. The playgroup is privately run and has no management group. There has been insufficient professional development of the skill and expertise of the staff in promoting the children's overall learning and development. The playgroup does not have a development plan and there has been insufficient self-evaluation to guide improvement in the quality of the provision and the outcomes. The early years specialist (EYS) from the Early Years Organisation (EYO) has provided good support to the staff during her visits and has provided clear action points and relevant advice.

14. The building affords the staff insufficient space for administrative tasks and has very limited provision for storage.

15. The key strengths in this playgroup include:

- the good levels of care and the warm relationships between the staff and the children;
- the friendly, well-behaved children;
- the good relationships established with the parents; and
- the recent improvements to the overall learning environment.

16. The areas for improvement include the need for:

- the staff to improve their level of understanding and expertise in how to promote effectively the children's language and learning through their interactions with them;
- the planning and assessment methods to be developed to guide the work of the staff in providing a rich and challenging pre-school curriculum which is tailored to the needs of individual children; and
- the leadership to focus more clearly on providing and evaluating quality learning experiences.

17. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this playgroup is inadequate; the areas for improvement outweigh the strengths in the provision. The inspection has identified major areas for improvement in standards, learning and teaching, leadership and management, which need to be addressed urgently if the playgroup is to meet effectively the needs of all of the children.

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. Fifty-five percent (55%) of the parents responded to the questionnaire and seven wrote additional comments. The responses from the parents indicated a very high level of satisfaction with the work of the playgroup. In particular, they appreciated the care and support of the staff in ensuring their children's enjoyment of the playgroup and their progress in developing confidence and social skills. The small number of issues raised have been discussed with the leaders.

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