

# PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Springhill Playgroup, Belfast

Report of an Inspection  
in December 2010

## STATISTICAL INFORMATION

<b>Name of pre-school centre:</b>	Springhill Playgroup
<b>Address:</b>	Springhill Primary School 247 Ballygomartin Road BELFAST BT13 3NH
<b>Management Type:</b>	Voluntary

<b>Date of inspection:</b>	1 December 2010
<b>Date of previous inspection:</b>	6 October 2004

### 1. Details of Children

<b>Total number of children:</b>	<b>am session</b>	<b>pm session</b>
• attending the pre-school centre	21	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	21	-
• funded by Department of Education (DE)	21	-
• 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	0	-
• who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	0	-
<b>Attendance:</b>		
• attendance* of funded children for the previous school year	81%	-

\* 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	5	0
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	3	0
New appointments within previous 12 months	1	0

<b>Number of: **</b>	
Students	1
Trainees	0

\*\* 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>
3 hours	-	183

## 4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	21
Percentage returned:	38%
Number of written comments:	2

## **SPRINGHILL PLAYGROUP, BELFAST, BT13 3NH (1BB-0018)**

1. Springhill Playgroup (formerly known as St Columba's Playgroup) occupies two adjoining classrooms within Springhill Primary School which is situated on the Ballygomartin Road in Belfast. Since the last inspection in October 2004, there have been several changes to the staffing, including the appointment of a new leader, assistant, and early years specialist (EYS) and several new members to the management group.

2. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this playgroup is very good. The playgroup is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children; and has demonstrated its capacity for self-improvement.

### **CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENTS**

3. In the sessions observed, the children were contented, and were well engaged in their learning. They show respect for the staff, one another and their environment; their behaviour is excellent. Most of the children show good levels of independence and concentration during play activities; a majority can play collaboratively and with imagination. A small number of children still require adult support to concentrate and participate fully during larger group sessions. In their art work, the children explore a wide range of different materials and use these to express their ideas; a few are beginning to make simple representations. A small number of children use mathematical language, for example, as they count and talk about shapes during play activities.

4. Most of the children are confident to express their ideas orally and talk about their own experiences to one another and with the staff. A significant minority of the children have speech immaturities or delays in their speech. The language-rich environment has encouraged some of the children to take an interest in mark making and print. The staff should refer more frequently to the good quality books displayed around the playroom and read more regularly to individuals and smaller groups of children. The children enjoy participating in a wide range of songs and rhymes during group sessions and as a part of the daily routines.

### **THE PROVISION FOR LEARNING**

5. The playroom is organised effectively into richly resourced and stimulating areas for play which encourage the children to make independent choices. It is enhanced with very attractive displays of the children's own art work, interest areas that incorporate a selection of natural and authentic every day items.

6. A key strength of the provision is the very good skill of the staff in promoting a wide range of language and learning through the play activities and daily routines in which they engage with the children. The programme is broad and balanced offering good to outstanding opportunities to learn in all areas of the pre-school curriculum; the promotion of early mathematical ideas and language in the session observed was excellent.

7. The staff plan together and demonstrate a shared understanding of the learning to be promoted through the planned activities. They record the children's progress and share this information with the parents; they are aware of those children who require additional support and liaise appropriately with the parents and other agencies.

8. The provision for pastoral care within the playgroup is very good; especially notable are the very caring and supportive working relationships between the children and the hard-working staff who provide high quality experiences for all of the children.

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

10. The playgroup gives good attention to promoting healthy eating through, for example, the provision of a healthy break and also the inclusion of for example, real vegetables in the role-play area. There are regular opportunities for the children to engage in physical play activities in the assembly hall belonging to the primary school. The planned development of an outdoor area will enhance these experiences further.

11. The playgroup leader, who took up post in 2009, provides effective leadership and management of the playgroup. She has a clear vision for the work of the playgroup, is well-organised and fosters a strong sense of teamwork among the hard-working and dedicated staff team.

12. The quality of the EYS support provided by the Early Years Organisation is satisfactory; the current EYS took up post in 2009 following a period when the support lacked continuity. The management committee is supportive of the playgroup and fosters strong links between the playgroup and primary school; the committee aims to strengthen these links through further staff training and the establishment of more formal lines of communication. The three-year development plan identifies appropriate priorities for development; the leader should now work closely with the EYS and management group to identify the actions required to achieve the planned developments. There is increasing evidence of a culture of reflection and commitment towards self-evaluation among the staff.

**13. The key strengths in this pre-school centre include:**

- the very positive ethos based on caring and respectful working relationships between the staff and the children;
- the attractive and stimulating learning environment within the playroom;
- the skill of the staff team in promoting the children's oral language and learning through the play and daily routines;
- the children's high levels of engagement and enjoyment in their learning;
- the good to excellent opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum; and
- the effective leadership and management of the playgroup leader supported by her capable staff team.

14. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this playgroup is very good. The playgroup is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children; and has demonstrated its capacity for self-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. Eight of the parents responded to the questionnaire. The responses from all of the questionnaires were wholly positive about the provision and the work of the staff. All of the responses have been shared with the staff and management of the pre-school centre.

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