

# PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

St Louis Playgroup,  
Ballymena

Report of an Inspection  
in November 2011



## STATISTICAL INFORMATION

<b>Name of pre-school centre:</b>	St Louis Playgroup
<b>Address:</b>	St Joseph's Early Years Centre 90 Doury Road BALLYMENA Co Antrim BT43 6JE
<b>Management Type:</b>	Voluntary
<b>Date of inspection:</b>	22 November 2011
<b>Date of previous inspection:</b>	29 November 2004

### 1. Details of Children

<b>Total number of children:</b>	<b>am session</b>	<b>pm session</b>
attending the pre-school centre	23	-
in their immediate pre-school year	23	-
funded by Department of Education (DE)	23	-
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	0	-
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	8	-
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	89.5%	-

\* 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	0	4
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	0	4
New appointments within previous 12 months	0	0

<b>Number of: **</b>	
Students	0
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>
2 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub> hours	-	188

## 4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	23
Percentage returned:	34.78%
Number of written comments:	6

**ST LOUIS COMMUNITY PLAYGROUP, BALLYMENA, CO ANTRIM, BT43 6JE  
(3AB-0089)**

1. St Louis Community Playgroup is accommodated in the St Joseph's Early Years Centre, Ballymena; the interior has been refurbished to provide appropriate pre-school facilities. Most of the children who attend the playgroup come from the surrounding 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. Most of the children engage in good imaginative role-play, especially in the post-office and home areas; a few children are dependent on the staff for support in developing their play. The children are well settled and they often engage in sustained and purposeful activities. They are developing a good understanding of the properties of materials through well-planned play with sand, water and scrap materials. The staff use appropriate mathematical language when participating in the children's play and the children are developing a good understanding of the early mathematical concepts, such as, size, shape, weight, capacity and positional language. Most of the children access the resources independently and they demonstrate a good sense of responsibility for their learning environment.

4. Overall, the children make good progress in the acquisition of their language skills. There is good encouragement for the children to develop an interest in books; most of the children pay close attention during the very good story session, they often explore information books during their play, and talk about their preferred songs and rhymes. Most of the children can discuss, using suitable vocabulary, their ideas and experiences with the staff and with one another. The children who require additional support with their development of the English language receive sensitive and relevant assistance from the staff. A majority of the children show a good interest in early mark making as they explore materials and tools provided in the different areas of play. The staff introduce appropriately the children to text through the writing of captions on the children's drawings and paintings that reflect their thoughts about their artwork.

**THE PROVISION FOR LEARNING**

5. There are good learning opportunities in all aspects of the pre-school curriculum; of significant note are the development of the children's personal, social and emotional well-being and their understanding of early mathematical concepts. The daily session is well-organised; purposeful use is made of all the time available for learning. The adult interactions with the children are consistently of good quality; the staff extend the children's imaginative responses and decision-making skills through skilful discussions about their play.

6. The planning format is evolving; the planning takes increasing account of, and is informed by, the children's responses to the activities. The assessment records are used well as a basis to report the children's progress to parents. The staff have identified appropriately the need to continue the development of the weekly evaluations to ensure progression in the children's learning.

7. The staff report that a useful programme of liaison has been established with the local primary schools. Transition records are completed for all the primary schools to which the children transfer. The parents are kept well informed about the children's learning and events within the playgroup through the regular newsletter. They receive appropriate information about the progress of their children through formal meetings and their child's transition report.

8. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is very good; there are very good working relationships at all levels. The staff are alert to those children who need additional support to develop their social skills and they offer appropriate guidance.

9. The playgroup has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department. The management committee need to update their safeguarding training.

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

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

11. The playgroup leader manages and leads the centre's work effectively. The staff, as an established team, are committed to the continuous improvement of the pre-school programme. They have identified appropriately, through the action plans, the need to develop the outdoor physical play and to refine aspects of their planning. The staff development programme has benefitted from the recent well-informed support and advice given by the Early Years Specialist from the Early Years Organisation.

### **12. The key strengths of the playgroup include:**

- the caring ethos and the very good working relationships between the children and the staff;
- the well-settled children who demonstrate good levels of independence and engage in purposeful play;
- the good opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum; and
- the good quality of the interaction between the staff and the children.

### **13. The priority identified for development includes the need**

- to develop further the planning to ensure that the children's individual needs are met throughout the year.

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.

**THE VIEWS OF THE PARENTS, STAFF AND MANAGEMENT**

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. Approximately 35% of the parents responded to the questionnaires and six made an additional written comment. All of the responses indicated a very good level of satisfaction with all aspects of the playgroup's work; in particular, they appreciated the approachable and dedicated staff and they valued the high level of care given to the children. There were no responses from the management group or the staff to the questionnaires. All of the parental responses have been shared with the staff and the management group of the playgroup.

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