

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Alphabet Playgroup,
Greenisland

Report of an Inspection in
May 2014

Quantitative terms

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

Performance levels

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels in reports:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

Contents

Section	Page
1. Inspection method and evidence base	1
2. Context	1
3. Focus of inspection	1
4. Overall finding	2
5. Achievements and standards	2
6. Provision	2
7. Leadership and management	3
8. Conclusion	3
Appendix	

1. Inspection method and evidence base

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of pre-school centres, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the ETI's publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self evaluation* at: [Together Towards Improvement Pre-school | Education and Training Inspectorate](#)

Inspectors observed teaching and learning through play, the children's achievements and standards, scrutinised relevant documentation, and held formal and informal discussions with children, and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a discussion with the staff;
- a meeting with those involved with leadership and management; and
- the opportunity for the parents, staff and members of the management group to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents ¹	*	*	*	*
Staff	*	*	*	*

* fewer than 5

Almost all of the returns from the questionnaires indicated high levels of satisfaction with nearly all aspects of the work of the playgroup.

2. Context

Alphabet Playgroup is located within the Community Centre on Glassillan Grove, Greenisland, County Antrim. Since the last inspection the leadership has remained the same and a small enclosed outdoor area for physical activity has been developed. The playgroup operates within a large community hall, which is also used by other groups; as a result the staff have to set up and clear away the furniture and resources on a daily basis.

3. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards;
- the quality of provision; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

¹ The ETI is trialling a new range of methods to collect the views of parents/carers and, as a result, the percentage of questionnaires returned may be low.

4. Overall finding

Overall Performance Level	Very Good
Achievements and Standards	Very Good
Provision	Very Good
Leadership and Management	Very Good

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are very well-settled, highly motivated and happy to talk about their learning. They make creative use of the learning resources; for example, they can access and store the resources independently, and demonstrate a growing sense of responsibility for their learning environment. Most of the children play together co-operatively, taking increasing account of the needs and interests of others. During the inspection, there were many examples of sustained purposeful play.
- There are very good opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum however, the development of the children's personal, social and emotional development, language and communication skills and their understanding of early mathematical concepts are particular strengths. The children use effectively the resource books provided in the areas of play and they listen attentively and join in appropriately during group story time. The availability of an appropriate range of writing tools and materials encourages the children to develop their experimental writing skills; a few children are beginning to write their own names. As a result of the staff using appropriate mathematical language when participating in the children's play, they have promoted the children's understanding of size, shape, weight, capacity and positional language. Many of the children demonstrate a good understanding of early mathematical concepts.

6. Provision

- There is a warm welcoming ethos within the playgroup. The staff work hard on a daily basis to create a bright, clean and stimulating learning environment for the children both indoors and outside. The attractively presented and well organised playroom provides very good opportunities for learning in almost all aspects of the pre-school curriculum. As the staff continue to develop the programme they need to continue to develop the provision for well planned outdoor play.
- During the inspection, there were very good examples of the staff interacting skilfully with the children to extend their language and thinking skills, a particular strength is the emphasis placed on the development of early mathematics concepts. The staff engage meaningfully in the play activities, they value the children's opinions and build effectively on their ideas, and they make very effective use of the small group sessions to consolidate and extend the children's learning.

- A range of appropriate themes and topics are used to develop a good variety of stimulating activities and learning experiences for the children in all areas of the pre-school curriculum throughout the year. The staff are making increasing use of their observations to assess the children's progress, to identify their individual needs and to inform their interactions with them.
- There are very good links with the parents and they are kept well informed about events within the nursery through the parents' information board and an informative newsletter. It is appropriate that the parents receive information about their child's progress regularly throughout the year.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the playgroup is very good. This is evidenced through the staff's ongoing response to the children's interests and needs, the caring atmosphere; the promotion of safe play in the wider environment and the excellent working relationships at all levels.

7. Leadership and management

- A high priority has been given to developing good working relationships, in which all members of the staff feel valued and this is underpinned by good teamwork and the excellent contribution made by all of the staff who work as part of an effective professional team. The leader is well-organised, enthusiastic and committed to the ongoing development of the playgroup in the best interest of the children and the community.
- The staff are developing an effective culture of reflection and self-evaluation to promote improvement as an integral element of the staff's practice. The centre employs an independent early years specialist who provides good support and works effectively with the staff to develop aspects of playgroup the provision.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection the playgroup has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding the children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Departments.
- The playgroup gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity; for example, the children have access to a healthy snack and regular opportunities for physical play.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of the 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 sustained self-improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school setting:	Alphabet Playgroup
Address:	Community Centre 15a Glassillan Grove CARRICKFERGUS Co Antrim BT38 8TE
Management Type:	Committee

Date of inspection:	14 May 2014
Date of previous inspection:	7 March 2007

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school setting	31	-
in their immediate pre-school year	17	-
funded by Department of Education (DE)	17	-
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	17	-
with a statement of special educational needs	*	-
without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	5	-
with English as an additional language	*	-
who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	*	-
Attendance:		
attendance** of funded children for the previous school year	87.67%	-

* Special Educational Needs = fewer than five

** Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader		4
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification		4
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification		
New appointments within previous 12 months		

Number of: ***	
Students	
Trainees	

*** 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	N/A	186

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2014

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the ETI website: www.etini.gov.uk

