

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Belcoo Playgroup,
Co Fermanagh

Report of an Inspection in
March 2014



Providing Inspection Services for

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

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



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

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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	9	7	78%	*
Staff	*	*	*	*

* fewer than 5

The parents and the staff who responded were wholly positive about all aspects of the life and work of the playgroup. They commented on the caring and valuable contribution made to the children's education by the staff.

2. Context

Belcoo Playgroup is located in the village of Belcoo, Co Fermanagh in close proximity to a primary school. Since the original inspection in 2007, the playgroup has extended the accommodation for the children and the staff. The staff are in post since the last inspection and at the time of this inspection, the deputy leader was the acting leader replacing the leader who is returning to work after a period of leave.

3. Focus of the inspection

The inspection focused on:

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

4. Overall finding

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

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- Most of the children are settled in their play and are able to sustain concentrated learning. They are inquisitive and motivated to explore and experiment with a wide range of authentic materials. They respond well to established routines and are developing good levels of independence at the snack table: they can pour their own drinks, and select and prepare their own foods. Generally, the children engage well with one another and turn readily to the staff for assistance in their play or to meet their needs. A small number of the children need support to develop sharing and consideration of the wishes of others. It is appropriate that the staff continue to develop and implement consistent strategies to promote the children's independence, self-help skills and sense of responsibility.
- The children are familiar with books and they have developed very good talking and listening skills in small groups and are very attentive in the large group story session. The children's early writing is developing effectively through mark-making and activities which are improving their fine motor skills. Many of the children are able to express their ideas through representational drawings and paintings and these are mounted in colourful displays around the playgroup. The labelling of resources and captions around the room introduce the children to print in the environment and most of the children are able to read their own name.
- The children's early mathematical skills and understanding of concepts which arise naturally through play are well-developed. Most of the children display very good awareness of time, shape and space, early sorting, counting and measurement.
- The children have a developed a good level of awareness about living things and they are able to discuss the care of dogs through the vets and pets theme.

6. Provision

- The staff have worked diligently to provide an attractive learning environment for the children. The children are comfortable and happy, and the staff take account of their needs and wishes to ensure that they have a wide range of learning opportunities.
- The daily timetable is well organised to provide a good balance of free play and activities organised by the staff. The snack and transitions between the activities are developed effectively to provide very good learning opportunities across the curriculum.

- The quality of the interaction between all of the staff and the children is consistently good to very good. In the best practice, the staff use open-ended questioning to develop the children's language and to enhance their vocabulary. The staff have begun to peer assess their work with the children and it is appropriate to monitor and build on the very good practice.
- 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 safe, secure, stimulating environment that helps the children to grow in confidence.
- The written planning and assessment methods are consistently well-developed to provide a broad and balanced pre-school programme. All areas of the pre-school curriculum are comprehensively planned for and appropriately resourced to ensure variety, progression and challenge in the children's learning throughout the year. The assessment records include relevant settling-in information and clear evidence of the children's progress and development.
- At the time of the inspection, there were no children identified with special educational needs but the staff appropriately maintain an up to date policy. The staff has informal arrangements for reporting to parents on the children's progress and development and it is appropriate to continue to develop these arrangements to share information throughout the pre-school year. The parents receive informative monthly newsletters on the general playgroup provision and curriculum programme.
- The playgroup gives very good attention to healthy eating and physical activity and supports effective opportunities for energetic play and the promotion of good hygiene habits.

7. Leadership and management

- All of the staff are hard-working and committed to the care and well-being of the children and all contribute as a team to the improvement and development of the provision. The staff keep the policies and plans for the improvement of the playgroup under review and development. They have an appropriate three year development plan and an associated action plan to guide the work of the staff.
- The parents are supportive of the life and work of the playgroup. They provide essential funds to support the financial viability of the playgroup. The year-on-year fluctuation in applications for funded places has created major challenges to the management group to financially sustain the playgroup in a rural area.
- There is a need to improve the links with the local primary school and to share relevant information about the children's progress in the pre-school curriculum.
- The independent early years specialist (EYS) sets high expectations for quality early years education. She effectively promotes a culture of self-evaluation and ongoing improvement and as a result the staff are developing as reflective practitioners. The EYS co-ordinates a rural cluster of playgroups as a support network to develop new ideas which is effectively building the capacity of the staff in the playgroup sector to sustain ongoing improvement.

- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the playgroup has very good comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this playgroup is good. The playgroup has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified an area for improvement which the playgroup has demonstrated the capacity to address. The area for improvement is:

- to develop further the strategies used to promote the children's independence, self-help skills and awareness of the needs of others.

The ETI will monitor, through district inspection activity, the playgroups progress in the area of development.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school setting:	Belcoo Playgroup
Address:	Garrison Road BELCOO Co Fermanagh BT93 5DS
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	31 March 2014
Date of previous inspection:	May 2007

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school setting	14	-
In their immediate pre-school year	9	-
funded by Department of Education (DE)	9	-
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	9	-
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	*	-
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	92%	-

* 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	2	1
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification	2	1
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification	0	0
New appointments within previous 12 months	0	0

Number of: ***	
Students	0
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	-	189

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