

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Busy Bees Playgroup,
Burren, Warrenpoint

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 |

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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 Education and Training Inspectorate's (ETI) publication *Together Towards Improvement pre-school/Education and Training Inspectorate: a process for self-evaluation* at: <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-primary.htm>.

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

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 and the staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

The responses from the parents indicate a very high level of satisfaction with the work of the staff, the high quality of the educational and pastoral provision and the progress their children make. The staff responses indicate a strong team approach and a commitment to ongoing improvement and development in the playgroup.

| Questionnaire | Number issued | Number returned | Percentage returned | Number with comments |
|---------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Parents | 24 | 13 | 54% ¹ | 11 |
| Staff | * | * | 100% | * |

* fewer than 5

2. Context

Busy Bees playgroup is accommodated in St Mary's Community Hall in Burren village, near Warrenpoint. The playgroup operates one part-time morning session. All of the children who attend are in their pre-school year and come mainly from the local area. Since the last inspection a new leader has been appointed and took up post in April 2013.

3. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards;
- the quality of provision in the playgroup; 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 | Outstanding |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| Achievements and Standards | Outstanding |
| Provision | Very good |
| Leadership and Management | Outstanding |

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are all very well settled and clearly enjoy their learning. They spend sustained periods throughout the session, playing imaginatively and with very good concentration and perseverance. They make their own choices of activity, use the full range of materials available, help prepare the snack area and help tidy away equipment with excellent levels of confidence and independence.
- The children's creativity is valued and their own art work is well developed using a wide range of materials to paint, draw and make models. The children take on roles and collaborate together very well in the home play and large construction site area.
- Most of the children are confident and articulate as they ask questions, negotiate and express their ideas to each other and to the staff. Many of them are interested in print and early mark making and a few are beginning to develop emergent writing skills. They refer to books during their play, listen attentively to larger group stories and participate well in songs and rhymes.
- Many of the children have a good awareness and understanding of early mathematical language and concepts such as shape, sequence and number. They draw patterns, make comparisons of size and count during their play and the daily routines.
- The children are curious and interested in exploring the properties of the natural materials incorporated into the play areas. They make close observations and many use a wide vocabulary to describe and talk about the world around them.
- The children's fine motor skills are well developed; and most are developing well their confidence and competence to use a wide range of tools including knives, brushes and pencils. They are also developing their balance and spatial awareness through their experience and use of the hall area and larger equipment.

6. Provision

- The quality of the indoor learning environment is excellent. The staff have recently reviewed and improved the layout and organisation of the play areas to ensure that all of the space is fully utilised to promote learning. The playrooms are richly resourced and enhanced by attractive displays of the children's own work, natural and authentic items of interest and meaningful text and captions of

the children's conversations. The staff minimise the negative impact of limited access to outdoor space through their effective use of the hall area and by supplementing the children's experiences through the use of a local park and inviting visitors such as a vet into the group.

- The staff has a very good shared understanding of the learning to be promoted through the play and the daily routines. They promote purposeful play, listen carefully to the children and build effectively on their ideas to extend their language and thinking.
- The programme is well planned, takes into account the children's interests and provides very good to excellent opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum. Assessments are used well to track the children's individual progress, identify children who require additional support and keep parents informed. The staff has appropriately identified this as an area they wish to continue to develop and build on further.
- The pastoral care is excellent. The playgroup has a very caring, friendly and supportive ethos which values each child and fosters mutual respect between the staff the children and the parents.

7. Leadership and management

- The leader is highly skilled and motivated in her work and has led many improvements within the relatively short period of time since her appointment. There is a strong sense of team work among all of the staff; they are well deployed, know their roles and responsibilities and support each other effectively in their work.
- The staff values the positive affirmation and advice from their current early years specialists from the Early Years Organisation. It is a concern however, that the high turnover of early years specialists in recent years has limited the sustained effectiveness of their support.
- The whole staff team are reflective in their practice and a culture of self-evaluation and review is embedded in the work. Parents and children are consulted in a meaningful way and their ideas and views are taken into account when identifying relevant priorities and action planning for improvement.
- There are excellent links with the local primary school to which most of the children transfer and also the local post-primary school. These links have included joint training sessions for additional needs and post-primary pupils designing a mural and books for the pre-school children.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection the playgroup has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Departments.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the playgroup is outstanding; the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. The playgroup has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Name of pre-school setting: | Busy Bees Playgroup |
| Address: | St Mary's Community Hall Bridge Road Burren WARRENPOINT BT34 3QT |
| Management Type: | Voluntary |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|------------|
| Date of inspection: | 8 May 2014 |
| Date of previous inspection: | April 2007 |

1. Details of Children

| Total number of children: | am session | pm session |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|
| attending the pre-school setting | 24 | - |
| in their immediate pre-school year | 24 | - |
| funded by Department of Education (DE) | 24 | - |
| qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2 | 24 | - |
| 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 | 0 | - |
| 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 | 90% | - |

* 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 | | 4 |
| New appointments within previous 12 months | | |

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| 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 |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| 3½ hours | - | 189 |

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