

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Dromara Pre-School and
Playgroup, Co Down

Report 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 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	32	10	31% ¹	7
Staff	5	5	100%	*

* fewer than 5

The parents who responded were wholly positive about all aspects of the life and work of the playgroup. In particular, they commented on the hard working and dedicated staff and the wide range of activities provided for the children.

2. Context

The cross-community playgroup is accommodated in recently refurbished mobile accommodation within the grounds of Dromara Primary School. A new leader and assistant leader were appointed in September 2013. The children come mainly from the village and the surrounding area.

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 range of methods to collect the views of parents/carers and, as a result, the response rate may be low.

4. Overall finding

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

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- All of the children settle very quickly to sustained concentrated play. They are confident in engaging with adults and visitors and display high levels of independence. The children respect each other's views and ideas and are able to take turns and share resources.
- The development of early language and mathematical skills is given a high priority leading to the children demonstrating a very good understanding of key mathematical concepts. For example, most children are able to sort and have an early understanding of number, shape, capacity, measure and time. The children's listening skills are developing well and they are attentive during story time. They demonstrate a keen interest in books; many of the boys were observed browsing books in the attractive reading corner. Most of the children talk about their experiences confidently and are developing early mark making skills and emergent writing naturally through the well planned activities.
- The children enjoy investigating their environment and share responsibility for planting and harvesting seasonal vegetables. Their representational paintings and drawings of minibeasts show a developing awareness of detail.

6. Provision

- The staff have created a stimulating, welcoming and inclusive environment where routines are well established. All of the time available is used well to maximise the children's learning across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. Snack time is used effectively to promote children's conversational and social skills.
- The quality of all of the staff interactions is of a consistently high standard. The staff model language effectively, are skilled in asking questions to promote the children's thinking and develop early mathematical language through investigative activities.
- The planning is developing well and is differentiated to meet the wide range of abilities in both sessions. The staff have appropriately identified the need to further refine their planning for the newly developed outdoor play area. The comprehensive assessment methods are highly effective in tracking the children's progress and are used well to inform future planning. Children with special educational needs are identified early and appropriate interventions are adopted.

- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is outstanding. The playgroup staff work closely with the children and their families; the staff know the children very well and actively encourage parents to become partners in the children's learning experience. There is a child centred approach where the children are treated with care and respect.
- The playgroup actively promotes healthy eating and physical activity through the provision of healthy snacks and regular opportunities to engage in energetic play outdoors and in the school hall.

7. Leadership and management

- The recently appointed leader brings a high level of experience and expertise to the leadership role and has a clear vision for the future development of the playgroup. She is well supported by the very skilled staff. A strong sense of collegiality permeates throughout the playgroup evidenced by excellent relationships at all levels.
- The process of self-evaluation is guiding well improvements in the playgroup's provision. There is a clear focus on staff development, including peer assessment, which is promoting improvement. The recently appointed early years specialist from the Early Years Organisation sets high expectations and provides effective and relevant guidance to the playgroup which is used well by the staff team to promote improvement.
- The playgroup is developing valuable links with a range of local feeder primary schools and is active in supporting the local community, for example, visiting the post office and having lunch in the local cafe.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection the centre has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Departments.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this 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:	Dromara Pre-School and Playgroup
Address:	36 Hillsborough Road DROMARA Co Down BT25 2BL
Management Type:	Private

Date of inspection:	29 May 2014
Date of previous inspection:	18 October 2005

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school setting	18	14
in their immediate pre-school year	18	14
funded by Department of Education (DE)	18	14
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	18	14
with a statement of special educational needs	0	0
without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	*	6
with English as an additional language	0	1
who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	0	0
Attendance:		
attendance** of funded children for the previous school year	%	

* 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	1	4
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification	1	4
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification	1	0
New appointments within previous 12 months	2	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	2½ hours	190

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