

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Killough Playgroup, Co Down

Report of an inspection in
January 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	16	*	6% ¹	*
Staff	*	*	*	*

* fewer than 5

The very small number of parents who responded to the questionnaire were positive about all aspects of the life and work of the playgroup. The staff, and the member of the management committee who met with the inspection team, were positive about almost all aspects of the playgroup. The staff noted in particular the fact that they were encouraged, by the leader and management committee, to engage in continuous professional development.

2. Context

Killough Playgroup is situated in the village of Killough, County Down. At the time of the inspection, the playgroup had moved into temporary accommodation to facilitate the completion of maintenance works in their permanent building. Since the last inspection in 2007, there has been a complete change in staff and a new leader has been appointed.

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	Satisfactory
Achievements and Standards	Good
Provision	Satisfactory
Leadership and Management	Satisfactory

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- The children currently attending the playgroup have a significant range in their stages of development; those children who are in their penultimate pre-school year have integrated very well into the group. All of the children settle well, engage in sustained and purposeful play and most of them are both inquisitive and enthusiastic learners.
- Almost all of the children have good language and communication skills. They are confident in their social interactions with each other and in engaging with the adults or approaching them for help and support when necessary. The children enjoy listening to stories in small groups and whole group sessions; however, there is a need for the staff to ensure that the children have a greater access to books across the playroom. During the inspection, a small group of children engaged very purposefully in retelling fairy stories using glove puppets. The children respond well to the staff's open-ended questions and use a wide range of vocabulary. The children use early mathematical language naturally during their play and were observed taking part in counting, weighing and capacity measuring activities. A significant minority of the children have good pencil skills and show a keen interest in early writing activities. The staff need to ensure that there are appropriate opportunities for the children to develop further their interest in writing and drawing through labelling their own work and by providing a wider range of writing and painting resources.

6. Provision

- The staff work very hard to create a welcoming and stimulating learning environment within the limits of the current temporary accommodation. They have created distinct areas of play and manage the time and space well to ensure that play can flow freely around the room. The limitations of the temporary accommodation do have a negative impact on the opportunities for the children to develop their independence; this is particularly evident during the restricted snack routine. The toileting arrangements have also had to be adjusted and interrupt play due to the requirement for staffs to fulfil their child protection role. The staff need to develop further the organisation of the snack routine in order to maximise the children's learning opportunities and experiences.

- The quality of the adult interactions with the children is consistently good. The staff develop well the children's ideas and use open-ended questioning effectively to further engage the children's interests and to develop their learning. A particular strength is the development of the children's early mathematical vocabulary and understanding.
- There are good opportunities for learning across the majority of the areas of the pre-school curriculum. The staff need to widen the opportunities for the children to develop further their individual creativity, and their interest and understanding of the world around us. The temporary accommodation has had a significant impact on the programme for physical play, particularly outdoors.
- The staff have recently reviewed their planning processes and format. The current planning does outline the learning to be promoted, however the staff need to ensure that the weekly planning also provides appropriate progression opportunities for all of the children. The staff make regular observations of the children's learning across all areas of the curriculum and are beginning to use these to assess the children's stage of learning. The staff evaluate their weekly planning and now need to focus on making better use of their observations of the children's learning to inform future planning, in order to meet the individual needs of each of the children.
- The playgroup provides good quality pastoral care for the children with a warm, welcoming, family ethos. The children are happy and well-behaved and the staff encourage sharing and turn-taking by implementing consistently an effective range of positive behaviour strategies.
- The playgroup gives satisfactory attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity with the provision of a healthy break; however, in the current setting, there are very limited opportunities for energetic physical play.

7. Leadership and management

- The staff, leader and management committee work effectively to minimise the impact of the temporary accommodation on the children's learning. The staff work well as a team to plan the curriculum and reflect informally on their practice.
- The development planning and self-evaluation processes are at a very early stage of development. There is a need for the leaders and staff, with the support of the management committee and early years specialist, to develop further their understanding and use of the process of self-evaluation, to ensure continued improvements within the playgroup.
- The playgroup have good links with the parents who have been very supportive of the fund raising activities. The parents are kept informed about the life and work of the playgroup through a monthly newsletter. The staff now need to ensure that they use the newsletter to include information for the parents on how they can support their children's learning at home. The playgroup has good links with the local primary schools to ensure that the children have a smooth transition into year 1.

- Since the last inspection, there have been a number of different early years specialists from the Early Years Organisation providing support for the playgroup and this continuous change has impacted negatively on the progress made by the group. The current early years specialist has been with the group for less than a year and in that time has given good, appropriately focused support on managing the playgroup's move to the current temporary accommodation.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the playgroup has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department but the following areas need to be addressed:
 - all staff and relevant management committee members should attend and complete the appropriate child protection training; and
 - the recently updated policies including those for child protection and intimate care should be shared with the parents and written permission sought from them with regard to the changing of children.

8. Conclusion

In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this playgroup is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in learning and teaching, and leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively.

The areas for improvement include the need:

- to use the observations of the children's learning to better inform future planning and ensure progression and challenge throughout the year for all of the children; and
- for the staff and leader, with the support of the management committee and the early years specialist, to develop further their understanding and use of the process of self-evaluation, in order to ensure sustained continuous improvement within the playgroup.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the playgroup's progress in addressing the areas for improvement, over a 12 -24 month period.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school setting:	Killough Playgroup
Address:	c/o St Joseph's Primary School 64 Main Street KILLOUGH BT30 7QD
Management Type:	Committee

Date of inspection:	21 January 2014
Date of previous inspection:	January 2007

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school setting	16	
in their immediate pre-school year	8	
funded by Department of Education (DE)	8	
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	8	
with a statement of special educational needs	0	
without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	*	
with English as an additional language	0	
who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	1	
Attendance:		
attendance** of funded children for the previous school year	88.2%	

* 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	0	3
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification	0	3
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
3 hours		

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