

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Little Smarties Pre-School,
Garrison, Co Fermanagh

Report of an Inspection in
March 2014

eti

*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*

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	13	11	85%	5
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. A very small number commented that the teaching of writing should be provided by the playgroup and this is addressed in the body of the report.

2. Context

Little Smarties Playgroup is located in the village of Garrison, County Fermanagh. Since the last inspection in 2006, the playgroup has extended the accommodation for the children and the staff. The leader has remained in post and the remainder of the staff are newly 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.

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

- The children are confident and sustain concentrated play, persevering with and completing activities freely chosen during play. They are curious and motivated to explore and experiment with a wide range of authentic materials and show good imagination and creativity in their play. Their play is both collaborative and independent. The children take pride in their work and show responsibility for the care of the environment. They have acquired good social skills and are forming friendships.
- The children readily turn to books and are able to engage in conversations during play and at the snack table. The children's early writing is developing at an appropriate pace. They have a keen interest in drawing and mark-making. 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. They listen attentively and are able to turn-take, and to ask questions or to seek assistance from the adults to meet their needs.
- Very good opportunities are provided to develop the children's physical skills and, as a result, almost all of the children display good hand-eye co-ordination and good manipulative skills. They demonstrate an appropriate range of balancing, throwing and catching skills.
- The children have developed a high level of awareness about their local environment and the children are able to name animals, birds and fish.

6. Provision

- The staff have worked diligently to create a happy, caring family ethos in the playgroup based on good relationships at all levels. The children turn readily to the staff for support.
- 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 of a very high standard. During the inspection, the staff readily joined in play with the children and used every opportunity to promote and sustain language and learning.

- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the playgroup is outstanding. The staff treat the children with care and respect and provide a safe, secure, stimulating environment that helps the children to grow in confidence and to develop their consideration for the needs and wishes of others.
- The written planning and assessment methods are consistently well-developed to meet the needs and interests of the children. 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, termly reports to parents and clear evidence of the children's progress and development.
- Very good provision is made for the newcomer children. There is an individualised programme to support the development of language; the friendly inclusive atmosphere and peer interaction results in good progress in acquiring effective communication skills. The respecting difference programme is used effectively to promote positive attitudes to one another.
- 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

- The leader brings a high level of experience and expertise to the leadership role and sets a positive tone for the management of the playgroup. Staff development is a priority and the leader ensures that all the staff work consistently and effectively as a team. All of the staff are hard-working and committed to the care and well-being of the children and all contribute to the high quality of the provision.
- The parents are fully involved in the life and work of the playgroup. The children transfer to a number of different primary schools and relevant information about the children's progress is provided.
- 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 reflective practitioners. The effective development plan and action plan are evaluated using a range of relevant criteria. The playgroup staff have begun peer assessment to enhance the quality of the pre-school programme. 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 outstanding; the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. 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:	Little Smarties Pre-School
Address:	Gilaroo Centre 3a Gilaroo Court GARRISON Co Fermanagh BT93 4ER
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	18 March 2014
Date of previous inspection:	21 March 2006

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school setting	16	-
In their immediate pre-school year	13	-
funded by Department of Education (DE)	13	-
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	*	-
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	98%	-

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

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
3 hours	-	189

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