



*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**



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Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection

**Mount St Nicholas Playgroup
Carrickfergus**

October 2008

FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF MOUNT ST NICHOLAS PLAYGROUP, CARRICKFERGUS, CO ANTRIM (3BB-0087)

The inspection in November 2004 highlighted strengths in the caring and supportive atmosphere for learning, the children's good behaviour, the examples of purposeful, productive and concentrated play and the range of interesting and varied activities throughout the year. It identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- the further development of the planning, particularly for physical play;
- the effectiveness of the staff interaction; and
- to improve aspects of the organisation of the daily routine.

In the interval since the inspection, the following action which affects the work of the pre-school centre has taken place:

- there have been a number of staff changes and a member of staff is in her final year of completing a childcare degree;
- the special educational needs (SEN) policy has been updated and additional procedures put in place which have been shared with the parents;
- additional materials and resources have been added to improve storage within the playroom and to provide a greater choice of physical play opportunities for the children both indoors and outdoors;
- the staff have attended some relevant training in SEN, and development planning; they have worked appropriately with the early years specialist on improving the quality of their involvement with the children;
- the staff have incorporated the mathematical learning opportunities more clearly in their plans; and
- the staff has changed more effectively the organisation of the group story session, the home-time arrangements, and have introduced an informal snack routine.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) carried out an inspection visit to the centre as part of the follow-up process. This report was compiled following the inspection visit on 1 October 2008 and also takes account of the findings of the monitoring visit in September 2008.

The centre has a development plan. It has been adjusted in light of the inspection findings. The leader and the centre's early years specialist have identified appropriate areas for continued development.

The following are the most important improvements brought about by the staff and the management group:

- the monthly planning has been adapted to include more detail and now highlights the learning potential within each area of play. The plans are now displayed throughout the playroom and provide useful guidance for the staff. They are evaluated regularly and modified to take account of the children's responses to the activities;
- the staff have reviewed and improved the organisation of the session. The children are greeted on arrival and settle quickly to play. The routines of the day effectively support the children's sense of responsibility and care and create a purposeful flow of activity throughout the session;
- the staff demonstrate more understanding and skill in promoting the children's language and learning through close involvement with the children in their play and they regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the programme;
- the centre's early years specialist has provided regular and valuable advice and support for the staff despite the ongoing staffing changes; and
- the staff are developing more productive links with the primary school and value the opportunities to share their accommodation and some resources.

Since the inspection, the centre evaluated the progress made in the area of staff interaction as identified in the original inspection. The Inspectorate recommends that the processes for self-evaluation are developed to focus more strongly on self-evaluation as a means to bring about improvement.

Good progress has been made in most of the areas for improvement identified during the original inspection but some minor areas such as the physical play programme and the organisation of the story session still require improvement. The organisation is developing a rigorous process of self-evaluation which leads to improvement.

The centre's progress in the minor areas for improvement will be monitored by the District Inspector.

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