

EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSPECTORATE

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION

Peatlands Playgroup, Portadown, County Armagh

Voluntary Pre-school Playgroup, DE Ref No 5AB-0396

Report of a Follow-up Inspection in December 2022



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Follow-up to the inspection of Peatlands Playgroup, Portadown, BT62 1LR (5AB-0396)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a follow-up inspection of Peatlands Playgroup in February 2020¹, which concluded that the playgroup needed to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners, namely to:

- develop further the cycle of observation and assessment to inform planning for progression and curricular connections across the six areas of learning in the pre-school curriculum in order to ensure consistently high quality staff interaction;
- develop further, with the support and guidance of the early years specialist, a higher capacity for leadership and management at all levels; and
- to address the unsatisfactory safeguarding.

The playgroup's action plans were adjusted in response to the feedback given by the ETI. The playgroup's development plan was adjusted in light of the inspection findings.

ETI evaluated the progress in addressing the unsatisfactory arrangements for safeguarding in March 2020. On the basis of this evaluation, the unsatisfactory safeguarding had been addressed and that the safeguarding provision reflected broadly the guidance issued by the relevant departments.

The ETI carried out a monitoring visit in November 2021 and a second follow-up inspection in December 2022.

In the interval since the last follow-up inspection, the playgroup has received external support from an independent early years specialist (IEYS) in relation to planning, observations, self-evaluation, leadership and management.

Over the same period, the key actions or changes which have affected the work of the playgroup include the:

- appointment of a new chairperson of the management committee;
- appointment of two new members of staff;
- development and implementation of additional safeguarding policies;
- employment of a curriculum planning, observation and assessment digital application;

¹ [Pre-School Inspection – Peatlands Playgroup, Portadown, County Armagh](#)

- development of the indoor and outdoor learning environment;
- attendance by all staff at training in early childhood development; and
- implementation of the Department of Education's Getting Ready to Learn programme.

Key findings

The outcomes for learners remain good.

The children are happy and well settled; the majority engage in productive play for sustained periods of time. The children make choices about their play and access independently the resources to support their learning. Most of the children can put on their own coats and their self-help skills are developed appropriately for the time of year. The children are beginning to develop an awareness of early mathematical concepts and a small number are recognising numerals and shape in the environment. They have a good interest in books, listening attentively and responding to the story. The majority of the children understand and follow well the routines of the pre-school. A small number of children require support to tidy away toys and transition from indoor to outdoor play.

The quality of provision is now an important area for improvement.

The current curriculum planning for both indoor and outdoor play does not offer sufficiently a coherent and broadly balanced programme of learning across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The short-term planning does not identify explicitly enough the learning potential and the adult role within the activities, in order to provide learners with clear progression opportunities. While the staff make regular observations of the children's learning, the written observations and assessments are not used meaningfully enough to inform the future planning. The quality of staff interactions with the children is too variable. There are missed opportunities to build on the children's interests, extend their learning and enhance their oral language. All staff have a very good relationship with the children and use praise, encouragement and positive behaviour strategies when engaging with the children.

The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and action to promote improvement remains an important area for improvement.

The leadership and staff do not demonstrate a clear enough understanding of the development planning process and self-evaluation. While the staff have identified high-level priorities which are outlined within the three-year development plan, there are no supporting action plans to guide the quality improvement work, and enable the leadership and staff to monitor and evaluate the impact of the actions taken on the quality of the provision and the outcomes of the children. It will be important that the leadership and staff work closely with the IEYS to effect the necessary improvements in planning at all levels, including the development of the outdoor provision and the role of the adult.

Overall effectiveness

Peatland Playgroup needs to continue to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the playgroup's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

The areas for improvement are to:

- develop further the cycle of observation and assessment to inform planning for progression across the six areas of the curriculum;
- develop the action planning processes to effect improvement in the quality of provision and outcomes of the children; and
- strengthen leadership and management at all levels, with the support and guidance of the early years specialist.

The ETI will monitor and report on the pre-school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection in 12-18 months.

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