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Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-Up Inspection

**The Country Playgroup
Ballymena**

May 2008

REPORT OF A FOLLOW-UP INSPECTION IN THE COUNTRY PLAYGROUP, BALLYMENA, CO ANTRIM, BT42 3DW (3AA-0273)

The inspection in March 2006 highlighted strengths in the ethos of the pre-school centre and the organisation of the session and identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- the methods of planning and assessment, to ensure the children's progress is identified and that this information is linked effectively to the planning.

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

- the outdoor play area has been redesigned and extended to provide a much broader range of activity across the curriculum;
- new resources have been purchased to extend the children's construction play and their physical development;
- the stock of books has been improved and a wide range is available to the children in many areas of play;
- the staff have accessed training in special educational needs (SEN) and the manager has developed a very comprehensive and useful SEN file containing advice on a range of syndromes and guidance on developing individual educational plans;
- the centre has taken part in a pilot of new transition arrangements developed by the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment; and
- the centre has achieved an ECO Schools award.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) carried out a series of inspection visits to the pre-school centre as part of the follow-up process. This report was compiled following the inspection visit on 29 May 2008 and also takes account of the findings of the visit in March 2008.

The pre-school centre has a development plan which was adjusted in light of the inspection findings.

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

- the monthly planning has been adapted to include in more detail the learning potential within each area of play. The plans are now displayed throughout the playroom and provide useful guidance for the staff. These plans are evaluated regularly and modified to take account of the children's responses to the activities;

- the system for monitoring the children's progress has been reviewed and modified. The staff are now making more effective assessments and are using this information to inform their planning; and
- the children have more opportunities for physical and creative play and the staff interactions are more consistent in developing the children's language and thinking skills.

Since the inspection, the pre-school has evaluated the progress made in the areas for improvement 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 the areas for improvement identified during the original inspection. The educational and pastoral needs of the children are well met. The parents and broader community can have confidence in the effectiveness of the pre-school's response to the findings of the inspection and its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

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