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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
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CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

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**Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of an Inspection

**Coagh Playgroup
Cookstown**

Inspected: October 2007

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Coagh Playgroup
Address:	22 Ballinderry Bridge Road Coagh COOKSTOWN Co Tyrone BT80 0BR
Management Type:	Private

Date of inspection:	24 October 2007
Date of previous inspection:	N/A

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	16	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	10	-
• funded by Department of Education	9	-
• qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	0	-
• with a statement of SEN*	0	-
• without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for SEN	0	-
• with English as an additional language	0	-
• who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	2	-
Attendance:		
• attendance** of funded children for the previous school year	94%	-

* Special Educational Needs

** Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	0	3
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	0	3
New appointments within previous 12 months	0	2

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	N/A	188

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	9
Percentage returned:	88.9%
Number of written comments:	3

COAGH PLAYGROUP, CO TYRONE, BT80 0BR (5AA-0359)

INTRODUCTION

1. Coagh Playgroup is a privately owned centre, situated in converted accommodation within the grounds of the proprietor's home. The children have access to a recently developed, secure outdoor play area. Since entering the Pre-School Education Expansion Programme (PSEEP) in 2006, there have been some staffing changes; two new assistants were appointed and took up post in April 2007. Since January 2007, the centre has had a change in early years specialist support.

2. The parents and staff were given opportunities to express their views about the centre through the inspection questionnaires. The responses have been taken into account as part of the inspection and any issues raised have been shared with the staff. Those who responded expressed a high level of satisfaction with the centre's provision.

3. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection has some strengths. The pre-school centre has some appropriate policies and procedures for child protection. Some additions are needed to ensure they are sufficiently detailed; the staff should:

- develop a personal care policy for the children and share the information and procedures with the parents; and
- develop further the procedures used to record allegations and concerns.

The inspection evidence indicates that some further action is needed to ensure that all the staff receive the necessary training in child protection.

4. The centre's programme for the promotion of health and well-being has strengths, with a developing commitment to encourage the children to eat healthily and be physically active.

THE QUALITY OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

5. The centre has a happy, relaxed and caring atmosphere. Relationships at all levels are very good. The staff provide a secure, supportive environment which helps the children grow in confidence and independence. The children are settled and well-behaved; they are encouraged to play amicably and to help one another.

6. The space within the playroom is limited. The staff work hard to provide an attractive learning environment with clearly identified areas of play. Some of the children's work is displayed and most resources are easily accessible. The staff should continue to review the layout of the room to ensure that all available space is used more effectively to promote purposeful, productive play.

7. The daily timetable provides a suitable balance between freely chosen play and activities led by the adults. The children's snack time is organised informally and provides opportunities for the children to develop independence and to acquire important social skills. The children have regular opportunities for outdoor play, rhymes and songs and a group story session.

8. The staff's interactions with the children help to promote settled play and a sense of fun and enjoyment. They talk to the children about their play and occasionally add ideas to promote the children's interest. The staff need to be more aware of the learning potential within the materials and the planned activities, and to use more effective strategies to extend the children's thinking.

9. The planning outlines a broad, balanced programme for the children, designed to foster their all-round development. A range of suitable themes and topics helps to develop a variety of learning experiences for the children. The short-term planning is detailed and identifies aspects of learning which the staff intend to promote through the various play activities. The staff should ensure that they make more effective use of the planning in their day-to-day work with the children and that it provides sufficient progression and challenge to meet the needs of the older children.

10. The centre's educational programme offers satisfactory opportunities for learning in all the areas of the pre-school curriculum. The points which follow illustrate specific aspects of the programme:

- Careful attention is given to promoting the children's personal, social and emotional development. The children are able to make independent choices and to take responsibility for their personal belongings. They are confident and well-motivated; they show an appropriate understanding of the necessary rules and routines.
- The staff are beginning to make effective use of the outdoor play area to ensure that the children have regular opportunities for some energetic play. Many of the children are acquiring appropriate manipulative skills using small tools such as scissors and pencils.
- The range of creative activities provided encourages the children to experiment with different materials. There are frequent opportunities for informal singing and music-making; the children are acquiring a suitable repertoire of rhymes and songs which they clearly enjoy.
- The staff make good use of the play opportunities to develop the children's conversational skills. Many of the children show an interest in early writing; the staff should make better use of books throughout the playroom and promote more opportunities for sharing stories with individuals and small groups.

- Early mathematical ideas are promoted in many areas of play. The staff use seasonal and environmental topics to promote the children's knowledge of, and interest in, the world around them. More opportunities should be provided, both indoors and in the outdoor play area, to encourage exploration and investigation of the natural world, and to enrich the children's experiences in early science and technology.

11. The staff operate a key-worker system and observe regularly the children's responses to play. These observations build into individual records which are used to inform the parents of their children's progress. The staff should now ensure that the information on the children's progress is shared with the primary schools to which they will transfer.

12. The staff have compiled a basic special educational needs policy to guide their work with children who require additional support with their learning. The staff are aware of and appropriately address the specific physical needs of some children in an inclusive and caring environment. There is a need for the staff to access training in order to develop their expertise in supporting children with specific learning difficulties.

13. There are effective informal and formal links with the parents. Information about the curriculum is available on the parents' noticeboard and in the centre's induction booklet. Information on the children's progress is shared with the parents bi-annually; the staff report that they intend to develop a regular newsletter to help keep parents informed about the life and work of the centre.

14. The leader, who is also the proprietor, has worked in the centre for many years. She manages the centre effectively and brings a high level of skill and enthusiasm to her work. There is a strong sense of team-work among the staff and they take a reflective approach to their work. In the short time that the centre has been funded through the PSEEP, the staff have reviewed many aspects of the centre's provision and have identified relevant areas for development. The staff should begin to take a structured approach to self-evaluation and to gather evidence of improvement in provision and practice.

15. The centre has received support from two different early years specialists (EYS) within the last 12 months. The contribution made by the centre's EYS has some strengths, including the progress made in updating the centre's policies, developing the written planning and establishing appropriate methods of recording the children's learning. The staff, with the focused support of the centre's EYS, are well placed to deepen their understanding of aspects of the pre-school curriculum and continue the developmental work required.

16. The strengths of the centre include:

- the very positive ethos which is based on good relationships at all levels, and which promotes the children's confidence and independence;
- the efforts made to create an attractive learning environment and the smooth organisation of the session;
- the many instances of settled, co-operative play;

- the satisfactory opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum;
- the progress made by the staff in developing the written planning and the methods of assessing the children's progress; and
- the effective leadership and the dedication and enthusiasm of the team.

17. The inspection has identified areas for improvement. In addressing the most important of these areas, the centre needs to:

- ensure that the staff interactions are more effective in extending the children's thinking and learning; and
- develop opportunities, particularly in the outdoor area, to enrich the children's experiences of the world around them.

18. The pre-school centre has strengths in many aspects of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified a few areas for improvement in important areas which need to be addressed to meet effectively the needs of all the children.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the pre-school centre's progress in addressing these areas for improvement.

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