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*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**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of an Inspection

Groomsport Playgroup Co Down

Inspected: October 2008

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Groomsport Playgroup
Address:	Orange Hall 9 Springwell Road GROOMSPORT Co Down BT19 6LX
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	6 October 2008
Date of previous inspection:	N/A

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	15	11
• in their immediate pre-school year	13	0
• funded by Department of Education (DE)	12	0
• qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	1	0
• with a statement of special educational needs	0	0
• without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	8	4
• with English as an additional language	0	0
• who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	0	0
Attendance:		
• attendance* of funded children for the previous school year	97%	92%

* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	0	4
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	0	3
New appointments within previous 12 months	0	0

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
2¾ hours	2 hours	186

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	13
Percentage returned:	92.3%
Number of written comments:	7

GROOMSPORT PLAYGROUP, CO DOWN, BT19 6LX (4AB-0537)

INTRODUCTION

1. Groomsport Playgroup is accommodated in Groomsport Orange Hall. The children come mainly from the local area.

2. The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents, the management group and the staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Most of the parents responded to the questionnaire and seven made additional written comments. The responses from the parents indicate high levels of satisfaction with the quality of the provision and they appreciate:

- the caring attitude of the staff;
- how quickly their children have settled into the playgroup; and
- the bright and inviting environment.

The responses from the management group and the staff were also very positive and supportive of the work of the pre-school centre. All of the responses have been taken into account as part of the inspection and were shared with the staff and management group.

3. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is very good. The staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the welfare of the children. The relationships at all levels are good and there are close links with the parents.

4. The pre-school centre has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding the children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education (DE) but the following minor areas need to be addressed:

- to update the training in child protection to include all of the staff; and
- to ensure all procedures are clearly displayed for the parents.

5. The pre-school centre gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, and has effective policies and programmes in place to encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

THE QUALITY OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

6. There is a settled, happy atmosphere in the centre; the children's behaviour is very good. There is a positive ethos and the staff promote effectively the children's confidence and self-esteem. The pre-school accommodation is shared with other organisations and the furniture and play equipment are set out and stored on a regular basis. The staff work hard to create an inviting environment; thought has been given to defining areas for play and appropriate use is made of the children's art work, posters and an interest area to create colourful displays around the playroom.

7. The staff work hard to develop positive, friendly relationships with the parents. They organise an open day for parents before their children attend the centre. The staff value the support given by the parents and the useful contributions they make to the life of the pre-school centre. They should continue to strengthen the communication and links with the parents, in order to provide them with more information about curricular matters and to encourage them to play a full role in the education of their children.

8. The staff have made a useful start to developing the written planning. The entire staff now meet together regularly to plan the educational programme. Suitable themes are used to introduce a variety of interesting activities and experiences for the children throughout the year. The staff should now develop the planning further in order to identify clearly the learning to be promoted in all areas, to take more account of the children's differing needs, and outline progression in the use of play resources throughout the year. The staff need to evaluate the programme of activities more effectively in order to inform their future planning.

9. The thoughtful organisation of the daily timetable allows the day to flow smoothly and provides a balance of free play and activities organised by the staff. The necessary routines are managed unobtrusively and used effectively to promote learning.

10. The staff are patient and supportive and clearly enjoy participating with the children in their play. They frequently engage the children in discussion, and praise and encourage the children's efforts. During the inspection, there were many instances when the staff's participation fostered sustained play and promoted effectively the children's learning. At other times, however, their involvement is too narrowly focused on reinforcing knowledge, and limits the development of the children's own ideas. The staff need to develop greater skill in recognising the potential of all the materials, and in using effective strategies to promote fully the children's language and learning.

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

- The children appear happy and secure in their environment. Much of the children's play is settled and purposeful. The staff are alert to those children who need additional support to develop their social skills. The children would benefit from more opportunities to work alone or in small groups with their peers.
- The children are developing their manipulative skills using a range of small tools and equipment. There are regular opportunities for outdoor physical play using a basic range of resources, weather permitting. The staff have, appropriately, identified this aspect of the provision as an area for further development.
- The children have regular opportunities to paint and explore the range of art materials provided. The staff value the work of the children and display it attractively throughout the centre.
- During the inspection, there was strong encouragement for the children to develop an interest in books; they frequently browsed in the book area or explored an information book during their play. The staff make good use of the play opportunities to develop the children's conversational skills. The children are

introduced to text incidentally through captions displayed around the room. Many of the children display an early interest in writing as they explore a variety of writing tools and papers provided in various areas of play. The staff are committed to developing their questioning techniques in order to enhance further the children's language and learning.

- During the inspection, the staff used some appropriate mathematical language when participating in the children's play and necessary routines; they fostered an interest in counting, size, colour and shape.
- Appropriate use is made of seasonal topics, visits to places of interest and visitors to the centre to extend the children's knowledge of, and interest in, the world around them. The thoughtful development of imaginative play in the 'post office' provides opportunities for the children to participate in role-play based on real-life situations. During the inspection, the staff developed scientific ideas through play with sand and water as they encouraged the children to observe changes.

12. The staff operate a key-worker system and they have begun to make some appropriate observations of the children's responses to play. The children's achievements are not yet assessed systematically. Further development is required to provide an appropriate system for monitoring, evaluating and recording the children's progress; the staff need to link the information gained from the observations more effectively to their planning, to meet the children's differing needs.

13. The children transfer to a large number of different primary schools. The pre-school centre has established some useful informal links with some of the primary schools. The staff should continue to develop the links in order to share information about the children's progress and to help ensure that the children make a smooth transition to the foundation stage.

14. The leader, with the support of the other members of staff, has brought about many improvements since joining the pre-school expansion programme; she demonstrates enthusiasm and commitment to improving further the work of the centre. There is an evolving sense of team-spirit among the hard-working and committed staff, who all contribute to the development of the centre's provision. The staff have not yet embarked on developing the process of self-evaluation. The contribution made by the pre-school centre's early years specialist (EYS) has some strengths, including the recent action plans which prioritise some appropriate areas for improvement. A few important areas of the centre's work, however, have been identified for improvement. It will be important that the EYS works closely with the staff in order to address these key areas for improvement.

15. The quality of the accommodation is satisfactory. The centre is well presented and maintained. There is limited space within the playroom for some aspects of the play programme. The centre has a small enclosed outdoor area. Storage space within the centre is limited.

16. There is a basic supply of good quality equipment. Additional resources are needed for all areas of the programme, in order to support the implementation of a more progressive programme which meets the needs of the children throughout the year.

17. The strengths of the centre include:

- the caring, supportive staff and the effort made in creating an attractive and colourful learning environment;
- the good working relationships between the staff and the children, and the children's good behaviour;
- the satisfactory opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum; the promotion of the children's language through the use of books is a particular strength of the programme;
- the smooth organisation of the daily timetable; and
- the hard-working staff and their commitment to improving the pre-school centre's provision.

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

- develop further the methods for planning and evaluating the provision and for assessing the children's progress; and
- improve the range of resources across the curriculum in order to provide a challenging programme that progresses steadily over the year.

19. In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this pre-school centre is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in learning and teaching which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the pre-school centre's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

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