

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Kilcoo Playgroup, Newry

Report of an Inspection
in November 2012

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In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school setting:	Kilcoo Playgroup
Address:	115 Dublin Road Kilcoo NEWRY Co Down BT34 5HT
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	21 November 2012
Date of previous inspection:	N/A

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school setting	24	-
in their immediate pre-school year	23	-
funded by Department of Education (DE)	22	-
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	22	-
with a statement of special educational needs	0	-
without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	0	-
with English as an additional language	0	-
who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	0	-
Attendance:		
attendance** of funded children for the previous school year	98%	-

* Special Educational Needs = fewer than five

** Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	0	3
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification	0	3
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification	0	0
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	-	220

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	23
Percentage returned	39%
Number of written comments:	6

1. Introduction

Kilcoo Playgroup is operates in purpose-built facilities accommodation on the Dublin Road in Kilcoo, Co Down. The Playgroup was last inspected in 2003 and had a follow-up inspection in 2004. Since the last inspection the leadership has remained the same; two new assistants have been appointed.

2. Inspection methods and evidence base

The inspection evaluations are based on evidence gained from in-class observations and from a range of documentation provided by the playgroup.

The views of the parents, staff, and management group were sought through a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Twenty-two questionnaires were issued to the parents and 9 were returned with six written comments; all of the staff and members of the management group returned the questionnaires which contained a small number of written comments. Almost all of the returns from the questionnaires indicated high levels of satisfaction with nearly all aspects of the work of the playgroup.

The reporting inspector discussed any issues raised through the questionnaires with the leaders and the members of the management group who attended the oral report back.

3. Overall finding of the inspection

In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this playgroup is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in standards and learning and teaching which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively.

Summary of key findings

Children's Achievements Quality of Provision Leadership and management	Satisfactory Satisfactory Inadequate
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KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

4. Children's Achievements

The quality of the children's achievements is satisfactory.

- The phased intake of children, introduced this year, has had a positive impact on the children's ability to settle into the playgroup; it has also allowed the staff to implement appropriate behaviour management strategies which has resulted in the children's good behaviour and their awareness of the necessary rules and routines. As a result the children are very well settled for the time of year and most co-operate readily with the staff and with one another. The staff are aware of the few children who have difficulty sharing; when required to do so, they intervene appropriately to support them.

- During the inspection, the majority of the children showed sustained interest in their chosen activities, many were able to attend to their own needs. Nearly, all of the children co-operate well with the staff and most were attentive during the group story session, which they clearly enjoyed. The staff provide opportunities for the children to access activities that support their learning in most areas of the pre-school programme, as a result, a few children can recognise their own names, are making representational drawings, can sort and match, and show an interest in early mark-making.
- A small number of the children are not yet ready to join in whole group activities; the staff need to address this by offering the children a greater choice of activities, particularly during the outdoor play sessions.

5. Provision for Learning

The quality of the provision for learning is satisfactory

- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care within the setting is good. This is evidenced through the staff's care for the children and through the mutually respectful relationships at all levels.
- Although the playgroup has been in the preschool expansion programme for over ten years, and has had the same Leader during that time, the planning, observation, assessment and evaluation processes, including those for children with additional needs, still remain at a very early stage of development.
- The staff require dedicated time to plan the programme collaboratively in order to help all of them understand the learning potential of every activity provided for the children. The staff will also need extensive support from their independent early years specialist (IEYS) in order to develop more coherent methods to observe and record the children's progress and to plan for their individual needs.
- The quality of adult interactions with the children is satisfactory. During the inspection there were occasions when the adults engaged meaningfully with the children to extend their concentration. There were, however, too many missed opportunities to build on the children's interests and to develop further their learning.
- The playgroup staff give satisfactory attention to developing aspects of healthy eating for example through the provision of a healthy snack. However, the playgroup does not have an appropriate outdoor play area; a small area of a community car park is used to provide limited outdoor play opportunities for the children. As a result, the programme for energetic physical activity is inadequate and needs to be developed urgently, if the playgroup is to offer the full programme for preschool children as outlined in the Preschool Curricular Guidance Document.

6. Leadership and Management

The quality of leadership and management is inadequate.

The playgroup's independent early years specialist (IEYS) has been with the group for just over a year and is providing good advice and guidance. Overall, however, the pace of change has been too slow. The staff need to act more effectively on the advice of their new IEYS and implement the changes more quickly. They need to evaluate the impact of the changes on the provision provision and modify the changes, if required.

The group's independent early year's specialist is providing support for the new management group as they develop their roles and responsibilities. It will be important for the members of the management group to oversee the improvements required in the playgroup's provision. The management group also needs to ensure that the playgroup leader is provided with appropriate opportunities to improve her leadership skills.

On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection the playgroup has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department.

CONCLUSION

In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this playgroup is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in standards and learning and teaching which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively.

The areas for improvement include the need:

- to continue to develop the methods of planning, assessment and evaluation to provide a broad and balanced programme of activities that progress throughout the year, that meet the children's differing needs, and which supports all of the staff more effectively in their day-to-day work with the children;
- to improve the provision for outdoor energetic physical play;
- to ensure that all the staff have a full understanding of child development and the learning potential of the activities provided, in order to ensure that they are able to interact more effectively with the children to develop their language and learning; and
- for the staff, especially the Leader, to work collaboratively to in order to bring about the necessary improvement and development within the playgroup's provision.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the playgroup's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12-24 month period.

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