

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Little Acorns Playgroup,
Derrynoose

Report of an Inspection
in October 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:	Little Acorns Playgroup
Address:	38 Fergort Road Derrynoose ARMAGH BT60 3DN
Management Type:	Voluntary
Date of inspection:	22 October 2012
Date of previous inspection:	N/A

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school setting	21	-
in their immediate pre-school year	21	-
funded by Department of Education (DE)	21	-
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	0	-
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	1	-
Attendance:		
attendance** of funded children for the previous school year	90%	-

* 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	3	0
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification	3	0
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification	0	0
New appointments within previous 12 months	1	0

Number of: ***	
Students	1
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	-	190

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	21
Percentage returned	66%
Number of written comments:	6

1. Introduction

The Little Acorns playgroup is located within the grounds of Derrynoose Community Centre. It is accommodated within a purpose-built mobile unit with access to a secure outdoor play area.

At the time of the inspection, the leader had been in post for six weeks.

2. Inspection methods and evidence base

The inspection evaluations are based on evidence gained from observations of the children at play and from a range of documentation provided by the playgroup.

The views of the parents and staff were sought through a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Fourteen of the parents (66%) responded to the questionnaire and six made additional written comments. Most of the responses from the parental questionnaire were positive about the provision within the setting. In particular, the parents expressed their appreciation of the welcoming, attentive staff and of the arrangements to help the children settle-in to their new environment. The responses from the management group were all positive and supportive of the work of the staff. All of the responses have been shared with the leader of the playgroup.

3. Overall finding of the inspection

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

Summary of key findings

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

4. Children's Achievements

The quality of the children's achievements is good.

- The children are very well-settled for this early stage in the year. Almost all of them have adapted well to their new learning environment and are familiar with the playroom and with the daily routines. They demonstrate good levels of independence in their personal care and in choosing their preferred activities.

- During the inspection, most of the children engaged in sustained purposeful play, particularly in the construction and home corner; they played co-operatively together and showed a developing sense of responsibility for the playroom environment. Most of the children listen well to the adults and to their peers and, when encouraged to do so, can express their thoughts articulately.

5. Provision for Learning

The quality of the provision for learning is satisfactory.

- During the inspection, the quality of the adult interactions with the children ranged from satisfactory to very good. In the most effective practice, the adults listened to the children, took account of their interests and built on their ideas through meaningful engagement with them.
- The atmosphere in the playroom is welcoming and relaxed. There is a good balance between free play and adult-led activities which are suited to the children's age and stage of development. There is a need for the staff to review the daily routines in order to provide a group story time and the opportunity for a more extended period of outdoor play. There are satisfactory to good opportunities for learning in most areas of the pre-school curriculum.
- The quality of the adult observations and assessments of the children's needs is inconsistent. The staff needs to identify and share the best practice in this area of the provision, to develop it further and to use the outcomes from their observations to inform their planning for individuals and small groups. The staff has identified a very small number of children who are experiencing speech and language difficulties and has, appropriately, identified the need to keep more comprehensive records of the action taken to support these children.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the setting is good. This is characterised by the welcoming environment and by the very good relationships between the adults and the children.
- The playgroup gives satisfactory attention to promoting healthy lifestyles, for example through the provision of a healthy break and through the dental hygiene programme. An area for improvement identified is the need to provide a longer period of time for energetic play each day.

6. Leadership and Management

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory.

- The playgroup leader has been in post for six weeks and is developing her understanding of the pre-school curriculum. It will be important for the management committee to ensure that she is provided with a comprehensive training programme, including the opportunity to observe best practice in a range of pre-school settings.

- Professional discussion and reflection on the children's responses to the planned learning activities form an integral part of the staff's day-to-day practice. There are also well-established routines for consulting with parents and for recording developments within the provision. It will be important for the staff to continue to build on this good practice, to identify key areas for improvement and to use this information to inform the development planning process.
- The staff has developed good links with the parents. Previous records indicate that the parents receive very useful information about their children's learning through the settling-in reports in term 1 and the annual progress reports in terms 2 and 3. The staff has identified the need to provide the parents with more detailed information about how to support their children's learning at home. There are good pastoral links with the primary schools to which the children transfer.
- The early years specialist (EYS) from the Early Years Organisation (EYO) has provided very good support for the setting over a sustained period of time. Most recently this support has focused, appropriately, on accessing training for the newly appointed leader.
- The setting has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department. There is a need for the staff and the committee to review their whistle blowing policy and to develop the risk assessment procedures for educational outings.

CONCLUSION

In most of the areas inspected the quality of the education provided in this pre-school setting is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in provision and in leadership which need to be addressed if the needs of all of the learners are to be met more effectively. The areas for improvement include the need to:

- provide a comprehensive training programme for the new leader, including the opportunity to observe best practice in a range of pre-school settings.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the setting's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

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