



*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

Little Wombles Cross-Community Playgroup Magherafelt

Inspected: February 2008

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Little Wombles Cross-Community Playgroup
Address:	High Street (above library) Draperstown MAGHERAFELT Co Londonderry BT45 7AA
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	19 February 2008
Date of previous inspection:	N/A

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	24	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	20	-
• funded by Department of Education (DE)	20	-
• 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	2	-
• with English as an additional language	0	-
• who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	5	-
Attendance:		
• attendance* of funded children for the previous school year	97%	-

* 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	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
3 hours	2½ hours	188

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	24
Percentage returned:	87.5%
Number of written comments:	12

LITTLE WOMBLES CROSS-COMMUNITY PLAYGROUP, DRAPERSTOWN, MAGHERAFELT, CO LONDONDERRY, BT45 7AA (3AB-0534)

INTRODUCTION

1. The centre is situated on the top floor of the local library on the high street in Draperstown. The children do not have access to a secure outdoor play area. Since entering the Pre-School Education Expansion programme in 2005, it is inappropriate that the centre has had three changes in early years specialist (EYS) support.

2. The parents, staff and management group were given opportunities to express their views about the centre through the inspection questionnaires. Those who responded indicated a high level of satisfaction with the overall provision of the centre. A majority of parents included written comments praising the work of the staff and the quality of the experiences for the children. The responses have been taken into account as part of the inspection and any issues raised have been shared with the staff.

3. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection has important strengths. The pre-school centre has some appropriate policies and procedures for child protection. Some minor additions are needed to ensure they are comprehensive. These include the need to:

- formalise the procedures for the personal care arrangements for the children and to share the information and procedures with the parents; and
- consult more fully with the parents during the review and development of child protection procedures.

The inspection evidence indicates that some further action is needed to ensure that members of the management committee receive necessary training in child protection.

4. The centre gives very 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

5. There is a very warm, happy and caring atmosphere within the playroom. The children respond well to the staff's approach to promoting good behaviour and are well-settled and purposeful in their play. Relationships are very good at all levels.

6. The staff provide a very attractive and stimulating learning environment within the playroom which encourages the children to observe, investigate and explore. The children's individual work is displayed attractively around the playroom; a wide range of natural and authentic materials enhance the activities and the areas of interest.

7. The daily timetable and necessary routines are organised to ensure smooth transitions and make the most effective use of all of the time available to promote learning. The children's snack time is organised informally and provides good opportunities for the children to develop independence and to acquire important social skills.

8. The staff demonstrate a skilful approach in promoting learning naturally through the play activities and various routines. They engage the children in valuable discussion about their play and experiences, and participate sensitively in many of the activities to initiate interest and to extend the play.

9. The staff have made a valuable start in developing the written planning. It identifies relevant themes and topics and highlights aspects of the learning to be promoted. The staff need to continue to ensure that the activities progress appropriately throughout the year and that the information gathered through the observations of the children's play is used to inform future plans.

10. The centre's educational programme offers good opportunities for learning in most of the areas of the pre-school curriculum. During the inspection, the children demonstrated high levels of motivation, concentration and autonomy. They displayed positive attitudes to learning. 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. The children are acquiring appropriate manipulative skills using small tools such as scissors and pencils. The children have daily opportunities for some energetic play activities in the playroom at the beginning and end of each session.
- The range of creative activities provided encourages the children to experiment with different materials. There are frequent opportunities for informal singing and action songs; the children are acquiring an appropriate repertoire of rhymes and songs which they clearly enjoy.
- The staff continually promote the children's oral language and listening skills through discussion, singing and stories. The children enjoy the wide range of books both in the story corner and throughout the playroom. The children are introduced to text incidentally through many captions displayed around the room; most display an interest in marking and early writing; a significant minority are beginning to write their own names.
- Early mathematical ideas are promoted in many areas of play. During the inspection, the staff used the topics of 'Animals' and 'Planting and Growing' well to promote the children's knowledge of, and interest in, caring for animals and plants. The children's experiences are extended usefully by a variety of visitors to the centre, including the dentist.
- Early scientific ideas are developed effectively through the children's play with seeds, plants, a range of gardening tools and peat and through informal play experiences in the home area such as cutting and tasting a variety of vegetables. The construction area, for example, contains an interesting range of real tools, drawing materials and pieces of wood for the children to observe, investigate and create.

11. The staff have established a key-worker system to observe and record the children's responses to play. There are good daily informal meetings with the parents to share information on the children's progress. The staff now need to formalise these opportunities in order to provide written feedback to the parents at the end of the year.

12. The communication with the parents is developing effectively; a detailed prospectus, daily information displayed on the entrance whiteboard, along with parent's courses are designed to encourage the parents to play a full role in the education of the children. Valuable links have been established with the local primary schools, pre-school centres, the local community and with other professionals.

13. The staff work well as a team and display much commitment to the centre and to the children's welfare. There is a strong sense of team-work among the staff and they take a reflective approach to their work. The staff, with the support of the EYS have appropriately identified the priorities for further improvement and have drawn up a carefully structured development plan. It identifies clear roles and responsibilities, and timescales. The Education and Training Inspectorate would endorse these priorities. The EYS has made an excellent contribution to the overall development of the provision in a short period of time. The support provided is well focused and matches effectively the needs of the centre.

14. The strengths of the centre include:

- the positive ethos which helps to promote the children's confidence, self-esteem, and good behaviour and the very inviting and richly resourced learning environment;
- the good opportunities for learning in most of the areas of the pre-school curriculum;
- the skill of all of the staff in promoting the children's language and learning through all of the activities and routines;
- the well planned timetable which supports the children's freely chosen play, and promotes settled and concentrated activity;
- the many instances when the children displayed sustained interest and concentrated play; and
- the staff's commitment to the children's welfare and their hard-working, caring and enthusiastic approach to their work with the children.

15. The inspection has identified areas for improvement. The following are the most important areas that need attention. The staff should continue to:

- develop further the planning methods in order to ensure that the activities progress appropriately throughout the year; and
- develop a policy and appropriate procedures for supporting those children who require additional support with their learning.

16. In the areas inspected, the centre has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified minor areas for improvement which the centre has the capacity to address.

The centre's progress on the areas for improvement will be followed-up by monitoring visits, conducted by the District Inspector.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2008

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the DE website: www.deni.gov.uk or may be obtained from the Inspection Services Branch, Department of Education, Rathgael House, 43 Balloo Road, Bangor, Co Down BT19 7PR.