

# PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Longstone Community  
Playgroup, Ballymena

Report of an Inspection  
in April 2010

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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



CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

## STATISTICAL INFORMATION

<b>Name of pre-school centre:</b>	Longstone Community Playgroup
<b>Address:</b>	82 Carnearney Road Ahoghill BALLYMENA Co Antrim BT42 2PN
<b>Management Type:</b>	Voluntary

<b>Date of inspection:</b>	28 April 2010
<b>Date of previous inspection:</b>	1 November 2004

### 1. Details of Children

<b>Total number of children:</b>	<b>am session</b>	<b>pm session</b>
• attending the pre-school centre	17	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	9	-
• funded by Department of Education (DE)	9	-
• 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	1	-
• with English as an additional language	0	-
• who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	0	-
<b>Attendance:</b>		
• attendance* of funded children for the previous school year	98%	-

\* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

## 2. Details of Staff

<b>Number of:</b>	<b>Full-time</b>	<b>Part-time</b>
Staff, including leader	2	1
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	2	0
New appointments within previous 12 months	0	0

<b>Number of: **</b>	
Students	0
Trainees	0

\*\* Total placements since September of current year

## 3. Details of Sessions

<b>Duration of morning session</b>	<b>Duration of afternoon session</b>	<b>Number of days open in previous year</b>
3 hours	-	188

## 4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	12
Percentage returned:	50%
Number of written comments:	3

## **LONGSTONE COMMUNITY PLAYGROUP, BALLYMENA, CO ANTRIM, BT42 2PN (3BB-0131)**

1. Longstone Community Playgroup is situated in mobile accommodation within the grounds of Longstone Primary School. Since the last inspection, the centre has been refurbished and the staff have worked with the primary school to access funding to develop an attractive outdoor play area. There have been some recent staffing changes; the current early years specialist was appointed in April 2009.

2. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this playgroup is very good. The playgroup is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children, and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

### **CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENTS**

3. Within the group of children currently enrolled in the centre, there is a range of stages of development. Those children who are in their penultimate pre-school year have integrated well into the group and they settle well to their play. All of the children are happy, well-settled and respond well to the planned programme. They are confident, approach the staff easily and show high levels of independence. They are familiar with the routines and co-operate well during their play. Most of the children show a strong interest in books, stories and early writing; they recognise names, numbers and letter shapes and their drawings and paintings show signs of representational detail.

4. The children communicate well with the staff and with each other. They can talk with ease about their play and their interests. Many show evidence of a growing vocabulary, particularly related to the current themes and topics.

### **THE PROVISION FOR LEARNING**

5. The staff have created an attractive and stimulating learning environment for the children. The playroom is small, but the play areas are clearly identified; resources are carefully labelled and easily accessed by the children. The recently developed outdoor area provides further opportunities to enrich the children's experiences across the curriculum. The routines are well-managed and the daily session includes lengthy periods of uninterrupted play. There are good opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The children's personal, social and emotional development is promoted well, and a range of interesting topics help extend the children's understanding of the world around them. A particular strength of the provision is the emphasis on the development of the children's language and communication skills.

6. The staff interactions are caring and supportive, and they engage naturally with the children in conversations about familiar experiences. They are also very skilful in developing the children's language and thinking skills through extended questioning and discussion.

7. The written planning outlines a range of appropriate monthly themes and topics, and the short-term planning highlights the learning potential within the areas of play. Since the last inspection, the staff have improved their skills in recording observations of the children's responses to their play and assessing the children's progress; they are beginning to link this information more closely to the intended learning within the planning.

8. The staff provide very effective support for those children with identified special educational needs. Clearly focused learning plans have been developed and detailed observations are made of the children's responses. The staff have been very proactive in establishing valuable links with other health and social care professionals, including the Downs Syndrome Association and the local speech therapist. There is evidence that the children with special educational needs are making good progress.

9. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the centre is very good. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place to ensure the welfare of the children. The staff and the children show high levels of respect for one another. The children's behaviour is very good.

10. The pre-school has very good, comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department.

11. The centre gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. A healthy eating policy has been agreed and shared with the parents, and the centre has achieved the "Boost Better Breaks" award. The children have regular opportunities for energetic physical play.

12. The leader has been in post for 12 years and manages the centre very effectively. The staff work very well together as a team, and they have established a culture of continual reflection and self-evaluation.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

13. The centre has a development plan which identifies appropriate priorities for improvement. Since the last inspection, the centre's early years specialists have made a very good contribution to the overall development of the provision in this pre-school centre. The current support is well-focused, particularly in relation to the planning and assessment procedures. The staff, the management committee and the early years specialist are currently working hard to ensure the long-term sustainability of the centre.

14. The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents and the staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. A majority of the parents responded to the questionnaire and three made additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaire were almost all positive and indicated that the parents regard the pre-school centre as a caring place where the children feel safe and secure. One parent commented on the quality of the accommodation and the lack of funding available. The responses from the management group and the staff questionnaires were wholly positive. All of the responses have been shared with the staff and management of the centre.

### **15. The key strengths in this pre-school centre include:**

- the very positive ethos, the atmosphere of mutual respect and the very good behaviour of the children;
- the quality of the learning environment, both indoors and outside;
- the good opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum and the progress made by the children;

- the quality of the staff interactions with the children, which help extend their learning;
- the improvements made to the written planning and the assessments of the children's learning; and
- the very good support provided for the children with special educational needs.

16. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this playgroup is very good. The playgroup is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

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