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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



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Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of an Inspection

Loughiel Community Playgroup Ballymena

Inspected: March 2007

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Loughgiel Community Playgroup
Address:	The Millennium Centre Lough Road Loughgiel BALLYMENA Co Antrim BT44 9JN
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	5 March 2007
Date of previous inspection:	21 February 2001

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	28	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	17	-
• funded by Department of Education	16	-
• qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	16	-
• with a statement of SEN*	0	-
• without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for SEN	1	-
• with English as an additional language	0	-
• who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	4	-
Attendance:		
• percentage attendance** of funded children for the previous school year	97%	-

* Special Educational Needs

** Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	4	1
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	4	1
New appointments within previous 12 months	0	0

Number of: ***	
Students	3
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
4 hours	-	190

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	16
Percentage returned:	43.75%
Number of written comments:	5

LOUGHGIEL COMMUNITY PLAYGROUP, BALLYMENA, CO ANTRIM, BT44 9JN (3AB-0259)

1. The centre is situated in a rural area. It is accommodated in purpose-built rooms within the local community centre. The children come from a wide surrounding area. Since the last inspection, there have been several staffing changes. The leader has been in post for almost four years.

2. The parents, staff and management committee were given opportunities to express their views about the centre through the inspection questionnaires. The responses received were taken into account as part of the inspection. Most of the parents who completed the questionnaire were satisfied or very satisfied with almost all aspects of the centre's provision.

3. The centre has a suitable written policy on child protection, which is shared with the parents. The staff have discussed and developed appropriate procedures to safeguard the welfare of the children. They have identified appropriately the need to update their training regarding child protection practices.

4. The centre demonstrates a commitment to promoting a healthy lifestyle among the children. Regular opportunities are provided for the children to participate in a variety of appropriate physical activities.

5. The main strengths within the centre's educational and pastoral provision are as follows.

- The centre has a caring and welcoming atmosphere; there are good working relationships between the staff and the children.
- The staff's interaction with the children is supportive; there are many instances when the staff are effective in promoting the children's language and learning.
- The children's play is often settled and most children display good concentration, especially when the staff are involved in the activities. Some of the children are developing the ability to sustain and develop their own play.
- There are satisfactory opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The staff promote the development of mathematical language and ideas as they encourage the children to count, order, compare and sort as integral elements of play. The children have frequent opportunities to develop their interest in books. During the course of their play, the children turn readily to the adults to ask them to read to them and they engage in purposeful discussion about the story. Many of the children show an interest in experimental writing as part of their imaginative play in the veterinary surgery. There are appropriate opportunities for singing which develops well the children's awareness of pitch and rhythm and enjoyment of musical activities. The children's learning experiences of the world around them are enhanced further by visits to places of interest.

- The staff complete transition records for the primary schools to which the children transfer and the information is shared with the parents.
- All the staff are hard-working and dedicated; they work well as team. The staff value the support provided by the management committee.

6. The inspection identified areas for improvement. The following are the most important areas that need attention.

- The staff need to develop the planning in order to ensure that the learning potential of the activities is exploited more fully and that the support given by the adults matches more closely the children's range of differing needs.
- The staff should review the organisation of the daily timetable to facilitate more effective use of the whole session to promote the children's learning.

7. The staff have started to develop some useful methods of self-evaluation which include a review of the physical play opportunities and a questionnaire to seek the views of the parents. The early years specialist needs to give more specific support to the staff to ensure developments are sustained and the areas highlighted by the inspection lead to further improvement in the centre's provision.

8. The pre-school centre has strengths in many aspects of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified a few important areas for improvement which need to be addressed to meet effectively the needs of all the children.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the pre-school centre's progress in addressing these areas for improvement.

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