



*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

Maine Integrated Primary School Playgroup Randalstown

Inspected: May 2009

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Maine Integrated Primary School Playgroup
Address:	93 Portglenone Road RANDALSTOWN Co Antrim BT41 3EH
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	28 May 2009
Date of previous inspection:	N/A

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	19	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	14	-
• funded by Department of Education (DE)	14	-
• qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	4	-
• 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	95%	-

* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

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

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
2½ hours	N/A	182

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	14
Percentage returned:	35.7%
Number of written comments:	1

MAINE INTEGRATED PRIMARY SCHOOL PLAYGROUP, RANDALSTOWN, CO ANTRIM, BT41 3EH (3BB-0533)

INTRODUCTION

1. The pre-school centre is situated in mobile accommodation within the grounds of Maine Integrated Primary School. The accommodation is also used before and after the play sessions for extended schools activities and as a dining facility for the primary school; the staff are required to set up and clear the playroom each day. The pre-school centre has access to the primary school's facilities, including a small enclosed outdoor play area. At the time of the inspection, a temporary assistant was in post.

2. 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 significant minority of the parents responded to the questionnaire and one made additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaire were wholly positive and indicated that the parents regard the pre-school centre highly. The responses from the management group and the staff questionnaires were very positive. The management group commented on the dedication and commitment of the staff and the efforts made to raise the profile of the pre-school centre in the local area. All of the responses have been shared with the staff and management of the pre-school centre.

3. The provision for pastoral care within the pre-school centre is very good. The staff are committed to the care and the well-being of the children and have developed appropriate strategies to promote mutual respect and positive behaviour. The children are happy, settled and their behaviour is very good.

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

5. The pre-school centre gives good attention to promoting healthy eating. The children are provided with a healthy snack and have opportunities to play outdoors. The staff need to develop a more progressive and challenging programme for physical play.

THE QUALITY OF THE EDUCATION PROVISION

6. The pre-school centre has a warm, supportive ethos and relationships at all levels are good. The staff are caring and supportive and they have worked hard to make the best use of the available space to create distinct areas for play. Displays of the children's art work help to create a bright, welcoming environment and resources are easily accessible.

7. The children and parents are greeted warmly on arrival and the children settle quickly to play. The children have opportunities for freely chosen play balanced with group activities, stories and rhymes. The daily session is well organised and the children are familiar with the routines and transitions. The staff recognise the need to provide more opportunities for extended learning outdoors.

8. In their interactions with the children, the staff encourage the children to play in a settled manner. They talk to the children about their play and develop natural conversations about the children's interests and experiences. The children show good levels of confidence and independence and during the inspection there were several instances of sustained and co-operative play. The staff need to exploit more fully the learning potential of all the materials, and to use more effective strategies to promote the children's thinking skills and their language development.

9. The pre-school centre's educational programme offers satisfactory opportunities for learning in most areas of the pre-school curriculum. The particular strengths observed during the inspection include the attention given to promoting the children's personal, social and emotional development, their interest in role-play and the opportunities provided to develop a range of art work. The curriculum should be developed further to foster and extend the children's physical skills, their interest in early writing and their early mathematical ideas and concepts.

10. The pre-school centre has recently drawn up a comprehensive policy for special educational needs. Valuable support is provided for those children who require additional help with their learning; individual learning plans have been developed to focus this support and to monitor the children's development.

11. A variety of methods is used to inform the parents of the work of the pre-school centre and the staff are developing further strategies to encourage the parents to play a full role in the education of their children.

12. The staff have worked hard to develop the written planning, which outlines a broad, balanced programme for the children, designed to foster their all-round development. The weekly planners provide useful guidance for the staff and appropriate themes and topics are designed to develop a range of learning activities and experiences for the children. The staff need to ensure that the intended learning is developed more fully through their interactions with the children to ensure progression and challenge across the year.

13. The staff have begun to develop an appropriate system of observing and recording the children's responses to the play activities. Further development is needed in order to highlight clearly the children's progress in their learning and to meet more effectively the children's individual needs and interests.

14. The pre-school centre has established a variety of pastoral links with the primary school to which the majority of the children will transfer. It is important that curricular links are built upon to ensure continuity and progression in the children's learning and development.

15. The leader manages the pre-school centre very effectively and demonstrates a willingness to develop and improve the quality of the provision. The staff work well as a team and regularly evaluate the planned programme. Although this process of self-evaluation is at an early stage, some progress has been made in identifying priorities for action, including the development of outdoor play. The staff have experienced a recent change of

early years specialist (EYS) and have reported some inconsistencies in the advice and guidance they have received. The contribution made by the centre's current EYS has strengths, including the development of the provision for special educational needs. The staff, with the continued support from the centre's EYS, are well placed to take forward the developmental work required.

16. The key strengths within the pre-school centre's educational and pastoral provision are as follows.

- the caring support provided by the staff, which helps the children settle and which promotes their confidence and independence;
- the efforts made by the staff to improve the layout of the playroom and ensure a broad range of activity for the children;
- the satisfactory opportunities for learning in most areas of the pre-school curriculum;
- the progress made by the staff in developing their policies and the written planning;
- the quality of the support provided for those children with special educational needs; and
- the commitment of the leader to the development of the centre.

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

- The staff need to ensure that they exploit more skilfully the learning potential of the planned activities and that their interactions are more effective in building on the children's needs and interests, and extending their thinking and learning.

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

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

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