



*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**

**Oasis Playgroup  
Belfast**

**Inspected: May 2009**

## STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Oasis Playgroup
Address:	102-108 Castlereagh Street BELFAST BT5 4NJ
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection	26 May 2009
Date of previous inspection:	N/A

### 1. Details of Children

<b>Total number of children:</b>	<b>am session</b>	<b>pm session</b>
attending the pre-school centre	24	-
in their immediate pre-school year	8	-
funded by Department of Education (DE)	8	-
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	3	-
who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	N/A	-
Attendance:		
attendance* of funded children for the previous school year	N/A	-

\* 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	0	4
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	0	3
New appointments within previous 12 months	0	3

<b>Number of: **</b>	
Students	1
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	-	N/A

## 4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	8
Number returned:	37.5%
Number of written comments:	0

## **OASIS PLAYGROUP, BELFAST, BT5 4NJ (1AB-0020)**

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. Oasis Playgroup is accommodated in St Clement's Church Hall which is situated in east Belfast off the Castlereagh Road. The playgroup operates as a part of a wider range of services provided by "Oasis Caring In Action". The children come mainly from the immediate local area.

2. The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents, the management group and the staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. The responses received from the parents indicated satisfaction with the level of care provided by the staff but less satisfaction with their management of the children's behaviour and the information provided to help parents to support their own child's learning. The staff questionnaires indicated a strong commitment towards the well-being of the children. They indicated that more could be done to engage all of the staff more fully in evaluating the work of the pre-school centre and in providing opportunities for suitable training and development. The management responses indicated a high level of satisfaction with the provision.

3. The inspectors found the quality of the pastoral care within the pre-school centre to be satisfactory. The pre-school centre has an inclusive ethos and the staff are committed to the care and well-being of the children. While appropriate policies have been agreed for managing the children's behaviour, there are many times throughout the session when the children require further help to be more purposefully engaged and to develop their social skills.

4. The pre-school centre has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding the children; the arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department but the following areas need to be addressed:

- the completion of a written risk assessment process for trips and outings; and
- the development of a more detailed code of conduct on the arrangements for the intimate care of the children.

5. The pre-school centre's programme for the promotion of health and well-being has strengths, with a developing commitment to encourage the children to eat healthily and be physically active.

### **THE QUALITY OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROVISION**

6. The staff are working hard to make effective use of the available space within the large playroom and to create distinct areas for play which promote the children's choice and independence. The recent introduction of natural materials and interest areas enhance the children's learning experiences. More needs to be done to promote consistently settled and productive play.

7. The pre-school centre demonstrates a commitment to inclusion: children with additional needs and those who speak English as an additional language are welcomed and are well-integrated in the group.

8. The daily routine offers a suitable period of extended free play balanced with some useful small group activities, which foster the children's concentration. The snack routine is helping to develop the children's language and decision-making. The organisation and management of the indoor physical play, story time sessions and the transitions between activities are not yet effective enough, to make the best use of all of the time available for learning.

9. During the inspection there were a number of instances when staff engaged purposefully with the children to extend their language and thinking, for example, during the role-play and small group painting activities. The staff need to build on this better practice and improve their skill and expertise in order to exploit more skilfully the learning potential of all activities, and to build more effectively on the children's own ideas.

10. The children have daily access to a range of activities which provide satisfactory opportunities for learning in some areas of the pre-school curriculum. The programme needs to be matched more closely to the children's stages of development and interests, and to provide better challenge and progression in the children's learning. The particular strengths observed during the inspection include the examples of co-operative and imaginative role-play, the children's water play and their use of the large soft play shapes to construct models. The staff need to do more to foster and extend the children's language and listening skills, their personal, social and emotional development, their early mathematical ideas and concepts, and their opportunities to make and respond creatively to music.

11. The staff have made a useful start to the development of the written planning. The planning and assessment methods are not yet sufficiently well developed to ensure a rich, stimulating and challenging pre-school curriculum, matched to the needs and interests of the children. The high turnover of staff and the lack of sufficient time for the staff to meet together as a team has impeded progress in this important area.

12. The pre-school centre has a basic policy for special educational needs. During the inspection, well focused and sensitive support was provided for children identified with special educational needs. The staff are aware of those children who may require additional support; they now need to undertake further training to enable them to develop further their expertise.

13. The parents receive information about the work of the pre-school centre through a range of appropriate methods. The staff have met with each of the parents to discuss their children's progress and to encourage them to be involved in the life of the pre-school centre through sharing a skill or interest.

14. The staff are beginning to develop useful links with a local primary school. At the end of the pre-school year, the staff forward the completed transition forms to the year one teachers in the primary school. These links need to be further developed to ensure adequate progression in the children's learning and experiences throughout the pre-school and foundation stages.

15. The pre-school centre has a good range of play resources which have been recently enhanced with additional natural and authentic items. There is a small outdoor area which provides limited space for outdoor play.

16. The recently appointed leader is a good role-model in her own interactions with the children. The staff in the pre-school centre work hard to care for the children and provide a range of experiences for them. They are developing a team approach and demonstrate clearly a willingness to develop and improve the quality of the provision.

17. The pre-school centre has had a high turnover of key staff over the last two years. The constant change in leadership, management and early years specialist (EYS) support has had an adverse effect on developing and sustaining the quality of the provision. The staff require well-focused, regular EYS support and training to develop further their skill and expertise. The impact of the extended services being provided by the centre is having an adverse impact on the ability of the staff to set up the playroom and to plan and evaluate the programme together. The staff, management and EYS need to work closely together to identify the key priorities for future development and the associated actions which need to be taken to bring about improvement.

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

- the instances of effective interaction during, for example, the "holiday" role-play and small group art activity;
- the good commitment to inclusion;
- the effective support being given to children identified with special educational needs;
- the good quality resources purchased through Children in Need funding; and
- the role-model demonstrated by the recently appointed leader.

**19. The inspection identified important areas for improvement, which require urgent attention:**

- the consistent implementation of the pre-school centre's behaviour management policy to promote settled play and to develop and reinforce the children's social skills, respect for their environment and one another;
- the quality of the staff's interactions with the children in order to support the children's learning more effectively through the activities and daily routines; and
- the development of the staff's skills in planning and assessment, in order to implement a sufficiently broad and balanced pre-school programme which matches the needs and interests of all of the children.

20. In almost all of the areas inspected, the quality of the education provided by this pre-school centre is inadequate; the areas for improvement outweigh the strengths in the provision. The inspection has identified significant areas for improvement in learning, teaching and leadership and management which need to be addressed urgently if the centre is to meet effectively the needs of all of the children.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the pre-school centre's progress in addressing the areas for improvement, over a 12-18 month period.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2009

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](http://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.