

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Randalstown Community
Playgroup, Co Antrim

Report of an Inspection
in June 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

Name of pre-school centre:	Randalstown Community Playgroup
Address:	Neilsbrook Community Centre RANDALSTOWN Co Antrim BT41 3AE
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	1 June 2010
Date of previous inspection:	24 January 2005

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	26	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	25	-
• funded by Department of Education	24	-
• qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	2	-
• with a statement of special educational needs	0	-
• without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	5	-
• with English as an additional language	0	-
• who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	1	-
Attendance:		
• attendance* of funded children for the previous school year	88%	-

* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	0	4
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	0	4
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
2½ hours	-	188

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	24
Percentage returned:	50%
Number of written comments:	6

RANDALSTOWN COMMUNITY PLAYGROUP, CO ANTRIM, BT41 3AE (3AB-0097)

1. Randalstown Community Playgroup is situated in dedicated accommodation within the Neilsbrook Community Centre, Randalstown. The children have access to the community centre's hall for physical play. Since the last inspection, a new leader was appointed and took up post in September 2005 and the playroom and toilet facilities have been refurbished. The staff have recently developed a small outdoor play area. The current early years specialist (EYS) was appointed in May 2009. The staff report that the admission of children who are below compulsory school age to the local primary school continues to have an adverse effect on the long-term development of the centre.

2. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this pre-school is outstanding; the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. The pre-school has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENTS

3. The children have made very good progress during their pre-school year in the centre. They are confident and all cope very well with the daily routines. Their play is very settled and purposeful; they can access resources easily and are very capable of making independent choices and decisions about their play. They all show a strong interest in books, stories and early writing. Their drawings are detailed and most enjoy producing group pictures and paintings. Many of the children use appropriate mathematical language and they are all very interested in the world around them.

4. The children's language skills are well developed; they engage in very natural conversations with the staff and with each other. Nearly all speak fluently and are used to expressing their thoughts, ideas and feelings. They all listen well to stories and respond to songs and rhymes. Their imaginative play is well developed and many take on roles linked to familiar stories and fairy tales. Most can speak with enthusiasm about things they have learned or discovered.

THE PROVISION FOR LEARNING

5. The staff have worked hard to overcome the limitations of the accommodation and have created an exciting and stimulating learning environment for the children, with lots of interest areas to attract the children's attention and promote exploration and conversation. The small space outdoors has been set up creatively to offer a broad range of curricular experiences. There are very good opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum.

6. The interactions which the staff have with the children are of a very high quality; the staff carefully exploit all of the learning potential within the planned activities and the environment. The adults are very skilful and confident in listening to the children, responding to their ideas and interests and in extending their thinking and understanding.

7. The staff have identified a small number of children with additional learning needs; they provide very well-focused support for these children and ensure they are fully integrated into the centre's programme. A member of staff has been designated as special educational needs co-ordinator and detailed observations are made of the children's development, what they can do and what they find more difficult. There is evidence that the children are making suitable progress.

8. Since the last inspection, the staff have made very good progress in the development of their written planning and their assessment of the children's learning. The leader has recently made a study visit to Reggio Emilia, and this experience has had a significant and beneficial impact on the staff's understanding of the purpose of planning and how their observations of the children's responses should inform their plans. The short-term planning now evolves from the children's interests, and projects develop naturally and spontaneously. These mini-projects are carefully documented and very effective use is made of photographic evidence to record the children's progress.

9. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the centre is outstanding. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place to ensure the welfare of the children. The atmosphere is warm and welcoming and the pervading ethos is one of caring support and respect for the children and their families. The children show high levels of respect for one other. Relationships at all levels are very good and 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. The children have a healthy snack each day; they have access to fresh drinking water and have regular opportunities for outdoor play and energetic physical activity.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

12. The leader has been in post for five years and manages the centre very effectively. The staff team is very experienced and there is a very strong culture of self-evaluation within the centre. A key feature of the ethos of the centre is the extent to which the children are encouraged to contribute to the evaluation of many aspects of their play. The views of the children are recorded and displayed throughout the playroom, and the children's ideas are incorporated into the decisions taken by the staff in relation to layout and resources. The EYs who have supported the staff since the last inspection have made a very good contribution to the overall development of the provision. The centre has a comprehensive development plan, which helps to guide the staff and the management committee in the process of continuing self-improvement.

13. The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents, the staff and the management committee to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. A majority (50%) of the parents responded to the questionnaire and six made additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaire were all positive and indicated that the parents regard the pre-school centre very highly. The responses from the management committee and the staff questionnaires were very positive. All of the responses have been shared with the staff and management of the centre.

14. The key strengths in this pre-school centre include:

- the progress made by all of the children, in relation to their age and stage of development;
- the very high quality of the staff interactions with the children;

- the efforts made by the staff to create an appropriate learning environment for young children and to maximise the learning potential within the activities and resources;
- the quality of the written planning and the documentation of the children's learning;
- the provision made for those children with special educational needs; and
- the very effective self-evaluation processes in place, which promote continual improvement in provision and learning.

15. **CONCLUSION**

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this pre-school centre is outstanding; the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. The centre has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

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