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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

## **Education and Training Inspectorate**

### **Report of an Inspection**

#### **Rathkeltair Cross-Community Playgroup Downpatrick**

**Inspected: November 2009**

## STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Rathkeltair Cross-Community Playgroup
Address:	Rathkeltair Road DOWNPATRICK BT30 6NL
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	23 November 2009
Date of previous inspection:	23 March 2000

### 1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school centre	16	-
in their immediate pre-school year	16	-
funded by Department of Education (DE)	16	-
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	2	-
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	95%	-

\* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

## 2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	2	0
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	2	0
New appointments within previous 12 months	1	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	-	190

## 4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	16
Percentage returned:	50%
Number of written comments:	5

## **RATHKELTAIR CROSS-COMMUNITY PLAYGROUP, DOWNPATRICK, CO DOWN, BT30 6NL (4BB-0277)**

1. The playgroup is accommodated in the main building of St Brigid's Primary School, Downpatrick. Since the last inspection, a new leader and assistant leader have been appointed.

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 majority of the parents responded to the questionnaire and five made additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaire were wholly positive and indicated that the parents regard the playgroup highly. The response from the management group commented on the dedication and commitment of the staff. All of the responses have been shared with the staff and management of the playgroup.

3. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the playgroup is very good. There is a positive ethos based on very good working relationships between the staff and the children.

4. The playgroup has satisfactory arrangements in place for child protection. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department. A minor area needs to be addressed by the staff and management committee, that is, to ensure that all members of the management committee who sit on the interview/appointment panels receive specific training on recruitment and vetting of staff.

5. The playgroup gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. The children are offered a daily, healthy snack and have regular opportunities for outdoor physical play.

### **6. The main strengths within the playgroup's educational and pastoral provision are as follows:**

- the use made by the staff of the children's art work and the space available to create an attractive learning environment for the children;
- the provision of a good balance between extended periods of free play and enjoyable and purposeful group activities: the transitions and routines are managed smoothly and effectively;
- the many good examples by the staff of skilful interaction which extended the children's language and thinking skills; the staff should continue to develop and build upon this good practice;
- the good progress made by the children evident in their levels of independence, their interaction with their peers and their ability to extend their play activities by selecting additional resources;
- the provision of sensitive support where additional learning needs are identified and the good quality of the one-to-one support provided: the staff ensure that the children are well integrated within the playgroup and that individual needs are met;

- the good opportunities to learn in all areas of the pre-school curriculum: the children's learning experiences relating to the world around us, the development of early mathematical concepts and the children's personal, social and emotional skills are particular strengths of the playgroup's provision;
- the children's skills of observation and prediction which are promoted by the staff through the appropriate use of early scientific investigations; and
- the helpful written planning which guides the staff in their work with the children.

**7. The inspection identified areas for improvement. The following is the most important area that needs attention.**

- The staff need to develop further their methods of assessing and recording the children's progress to ensure that there is adequate evidence of development throughout the year.

8. There is a strong sense of team-work among the dedicated staff. They have started to develop some useful methods of self-evaluation, and good progress has been made in reviewing the programme for outdoor play. The staff need, however, to develop a more rigorous approach to self-evaluation to sustain improvement in the children's learning experiences and to address the area for improvement identified during the inspection. The early years specialist provides very good support to the staff; they all contribute effectively to the good quality of the provision.

9. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the playgroup is good. The playgroup has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the playgroup has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the playgroup's progress on the areas for improvement.

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