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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -  
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*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**

#### **Round Tower Community Playgroup Antrim**

**Inspected: November 2008**

## STATISTICAL INFORMATION

<b>Name of pre-school centre:</b>	Round Tower Community Playgroup
<b>Address:</b>	Round Tower Controlled Integrated Primary School Durnish Road Springfarm ANTRIM BT41 2TH
<b>Management Type:</b>	Voluntary

<b>Date of inspection:</b>	11 November 2008
<b>Date of previous inspection:</b>	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	20	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	13	-
• funded by Department of Education (DE)	12	-
• qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	1	-
• 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	2	-
• 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	95.2%	-

\* 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	3
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	0	3
New appointments within previous 12 months	0	1

<b>Number of: **</b>	
Students	0
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>
2¾ hours	-	185

## 4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	20
Percentage returned:	45%
Number of written comments:	5

## **ROUND TOWER COMMUNITY PLAYGROUP, ANTRIM, BT41 2TH (3BB-0536)**

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. The centre is situated in rented accommodation within the community wing of Round Tower Integrated Primary School. The centre has access to many of the primary school's facilities, including the use of the hall for physical activities. The staff report that the older children in the pre-school cohort are enrolled in reception provision in the primary school, the age profile of the children attending the pre-school centre is younger than the norm.

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 five made additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaire indicated that almost all the parents regard the centre highly and appreciate that staff have helped their child to settle well, the centre is a caring place and the children take part in a wide range of activities. A minority of the parents who responded to the questionnaire are unsure of the procedures that the centre uses to deal with pastoral care and child protection issues. The responses from the management group and the staff questionnaires were positive and indicated satisfaction with the work of the centre. All of the responses have been shared with the staff and management of the centre.

3. The provision for pastoral care within the centre is 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.

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

- the staff should ensure that incidents in relation to the personal care of the children are documented and shared with the parents; and
- the staff should carry out and document risk assessments as part of all planned trips or visits.

5. The centre gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, the encouragement of a healthy break and regular sessions of energetic play.

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

6. The staff are all caring and supportive to the children. The children are generally well behaved and they respond well to the staff. The playroom is spacious and the staff have worked hard to make the best use of the available space to create distinct areas for play. It is important that the staff continue to review the presentation and accessibility of the resources in order to stimulate the children's interests and to enrich the quality of their play.

7. The children and parents are greeted warmly on arrival and the children settle quickly to play. The children have opportunity for freely chosen play balanced with group activities, stories and rhymes. The organisation of the session and the daily routines should be kept under review to promote longer periods of uninterrupted play.

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 occasionally add ideas to promote the children's thinking skills and their language development. The staff need to exploit more fully the potential of all the materials, and to use more effective strategies to promote the children's language and learning.

9. The 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, the children's interest in role-play and early writing and the opportunities for regular music-making and physical play sessions. The curriculum should be developed further to foster and extend the children's creativity and imagination, and their early mathematical ideas and concepts.

10. The centre has recently drawn up a policy for special educational needs. The staff have accessed some training in this area and have identified those children who may require additional support; they are aware of the need to ensure that, where appropriate, individual learning plans are drawn up to provide 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 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 written planning 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.

13. The staff have begun to develop an appropriate system of assessing the children's learning and development. They operate a key-worker system which allows them to observe the children's responses to play, and they are building up individual profiles of the children's achievements. Further development is needed in order to highlight clearly the children's progress and to meet more effectively the children's individual needs and interests.

14. The centre has established close links with the local primary school. These include the sharing of information about the children's progress and they help ensure a smooth transition as the children move into year 1. Curricular links should be established to ensure continuity and progression in the children's learning and development.

15. The leader and staff meet regularly to evaluate the planned programme and they demonstrate a willingness to develop and improve the quality of the provision. 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 the outdoor play area. The contribution

made by the centre's early years (EYS) specialist has important strengths, including the advice given on planning the programme and the focus on the quality of the staff's interactions with the children. The staff, with the continued support from the centre's EYS, are well placed to continue the developmental work required.

**16. The key strengths within the 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 the written planning;
- the close working relationship that has been established with the primary school; and
- the quality of the support provided by the EYS.

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

- The staff need to ensure that their interactions are more effective in building on the children's needs and interests, and that they exploit more fully the potential within the resources to enrich the children's experiences and extend their thinking and learning.
- The staff need to develop their confidence and expertise in providing appropriate and well targeted support programmes for those children with special educational needs.

18. In most of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided in this 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 centre's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

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