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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

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of an Inspection

St Comgall's Playgroup Antrim

Inspected: January 2007

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	St Comgall's Playgroup
Address:	1 Ballymena Road ANTRIM BT41 4JG
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	22 January 2007
Date of previous inspection:	25 January 2001

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	28	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	18	-
• funded by Department of Education	16	-
• qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	3	-
• with a statement of SEN*	0	-
• without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for SEN	3	-
• with English as an additional language	2	-
• who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	5	-
Attendance:		
• percentage attendance** of funded children for the previous school year	86.6%	-

* Special Educational Needs

** Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	0	3
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	0	3
New appointments within previous 12 months	0	1

Number of: ***	
Students	2
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
2¾ hours	-	184

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	26
Percentage returned:	50%
Number of written comments:	1

ST COMGALL'S PLAYGROUP, ANTRIM, BT41 4JG (3BB-0351)

1. The centre is accommodated in a mobile building in the grounds of St Comgall's Primary School. Since the last inspection, there have been several staffing changes including the appointment of both a new leader and a new early years specialist.

2. The parents, staff and management group were given opportunities to express their views about the centre through the inspection questionnaires. The responses have been taken into account as part of the inspection and any issues raised have been shared with the staff. The responses indicated a high level of satisfaction with the provision.

3. The pre-school centre has appropriate policies and procedures in place for child protection. The inspection evidence indicates that the staff implement these policies and procedures effectively and consistently to safeguard the children.

4. The centre promotes healthy eating habits among the children and provides regular opportunities for physical play.

5. **The main strengths within the centre's educational and pastoral provision are as follows.**

- The centre has a positive ethos based on good relationships between the staff and the children.
- The staff work hard to create an attractive and stimulating learning environment within the playroom. The room is enhanced with interest areas and displays of the children's art work.
- The children are generally settled and well behaved. During the inspection there were many examples of concentrated and productive play.
- The daily timetable provides a good balance between the children's freely chosen play and appropriate group activities.
- The staff are caring and supportive and often demonstrate skill in promoting a wide range of language and learning through the play activities.
- There is a broad and balanced programme which provides good or satisfactory opportunities to learn in all areas of the pre-school curriculum. Key strengths of the programme are the development of the children's confidence, the many examples of co-operative play, the children's own representational art work and the promotion of the world around us.
- The staff have made very good progress in developing an effective system for planning and assessing the pre-school programme and tracking the children's development.
- The leader is hard-working and enthusiastic and generates a strong sense of team-work among the staff.

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

- The staff need to review the organisation of the latter part of the session and match the group activities more closely to the children's differing stages of development.
- The staff should review the use of all of the rooms within the mobile in order to make more effective use of all the available space.

7. The staff are reflective in their own practice and make useful evaluations of the weekly activities. They have identified appropriately the need to develop the opportunities for physical and outdoor play and to access further training and support for special educational needs. There are also plans for the centre to move to more permanent premises. The centre should work closely with their management and early years specialist to draw up a more systematic development plan to guide all of these future improvements.

8. The pre-school centre has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified minor areas for improvement which the pre-school centre has the capacity to address.

The pre-school centre's progress on the areas for improvement will be monitored by the District Inspector.

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