

# PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

St Mary's Playgroup,  
Banbridge

Report of an Inspection  
in January 2010

## STATISTICAL INFORMATION

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Name of pre-school centre: | St Mary's Playgroup                             |
| Address:                   | Reilly Park<br>BANBRIDGE<br>Co Down<br>BT32 3DJ |
| Management Type:           | Voluntary                                       |

|                              |                 |
|------------------------------|-----------------|
| Date of inspection:          | 27 January 2010 |
| Date of previous inspection: | N/A             |

### 1. Details of Children

| Total number of children:   | am session | pm session |
|---|------------|------------|
| • attending the pre-school centre   | 24         | -          |
| • in their immediate pre-school year  | 22         | -          |
| • funded by Department of Education (DE)  | 22         | -          |
| • 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  | 3          | -          |
| • who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school                      | 0          | -          |
| Attendance:   |            |            |
| • 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                           | 3         | 0         |
| Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications | 3         | 0         |
| New appointments within previous 12 months        | 0         | 0         |

| Number of: ** |   |
|---------------|---|
| Students      | 1 |
| 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 |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 3 <sup>4</sup> / <sub>5</sub> hours | -                             | 173                                  |

## 4. Parental Questionnaires

|                             |     |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| Number issued to parents:   | 22  |
| Percentage returned:        | 50% |
| Number of written comments: | 4   |

## **ST MARY'S PLAYGROUP, BANBRIDGE, CO DOWN, BT32 3DJ (5BB-0557)**

1. St Mary's Playgroup is located in a mobile building behind St Mary's Primary School in Reilly Park, Banbridge.

2. The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents, the management committee and the staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. The responses from the questionnaires were generally very positive, however a few issues were raised in relation to aspects of the accommodation and resources, and the training for, and involvement of, the management committee. All of the responses have been shared with the staff and management of the playgroup.

3. The provision for pastoral care within the playgroup is good.

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

- there is a need to draw up an 'Intimate Care' policy to guide the staff in their work with the children; and
- the written information relating to the child protection policy is not sufficiently detailed, and all of the procedures need to be clearly understood by the staff and shared with the parents.

5. The playgroup gives good attention to promoting healthy eating, fruit for example, is provided on a daily basis. There are regular opportunities provided for physical activity.

6. Almost all of the children make independent choices, are settled and appear happy. During the inspection the children were observed engaging in purposeful, productive and sustained play. The staff make good efforts to meet the individual needs of the children and seek the help of appropriate support staff to help overcome any difficulties the children may experience.

7. The staff place much emphasis on promoting the children's personal, social and emotional development and their language and communication skills. They are patient and supportive, and clearly enjoy participating with the children in their play. Throughout the session, there were many examples of good quality interaction from all of the staff when they engaged the children in valuable discussion about their play and encouraged them to talk about their experiences, ideas, feelings and achievements. The children display a keen interest in books and stories; they listen attentively during the group story session, browse independently in the book area and know how to handle books carefully and appropriately.

8. The staff have worked hard to develop an attractive learning environment which is enhanced with examples of the children's art work and photographs. There is an adequate range of good quality resources. The staff should consider the addition of natural materials and authentic items in some of the areas of play to enhance further the activities and experiences on offer to the children. Aspects of the organisation of the daily timetable and the use of the different play areas should be reviewed to ensure that all time and space is used more effectively to promote learning.

9. The staff have made a good start in planning a varied pre-school programme through the use of themes and topics, however, more emphasis should be placed on the learning to be promoted in the planned activities. The staff know the children very well and operate a key worker system to assist them in the monitoring of their progress and development. There is evidence of a link between the observations of the children's responses to play and the planning of the programme. While the staff have regular informal opportunities to engage with nearly all of the parents, there is a need to provide more formal opportunities throughout the year to share information relating to the children's progress.

10. The leader demonstrates enthusiasm and commitment to the work of the playgroup and promotes a team-spirit among the hard-working staff. Although the staff have not yet embarked on a formal process of self-evaluation they have identified a few areas within the provision for improvement or further development. The early years specialist has to date, provided good support and guidance which is valued by the staff, however, it will be important to focus future support on the key areas identified for improvement within this report.

**11. The key strengths in this playgroup include:**

- the very caring and supportive ethos in the centre;
- the exemplary behaviour of the children and their positive attitude to learning;
- the satisfactory to good opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum; and
- the hard-working and committed staff.

**12. The priorities identified for further development include the need to:**

- review aspects of the organisation of the daily timetable and the use of the different play areas; and
- draw up an 'Intimate Care' policy to guide the staff in their work with the children and ensure that all the information relating to the child protection policy is sufficiently detailed, is clearly understood by the staff and shared with the parents.

13. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the playgroup is good. The playgroup has important strengths in most of its educational 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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