

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Oliver Plunkett Playgroup,
Belfast

Report of an Inspection
in January 2013



Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



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In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school setting:	St Oliver Plunkett Playgroup
Address:	St Oliver Plunkett Primary School 450 Glen Road BELFAST BT11 8AY
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	24 January 2013
Date of previous inspection:	7 February 2006

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school setting	26	-
in their immediate pre-school year	26	-
funded by Department of Education (DE)	26	-
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2		-
with a statement of special educational needs	0	-
without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	0	-
with English as an additional language	1	-
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		-

* Special Educational Needs = fewer than five

** Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	4	0
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification	4	0
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification	0	0
New appointments within previous 12 months	0	0

Number of: ***	
Students	0
Trainees	1

*** 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
4 hours	-	188

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	26
Percentage returned	26.92%
Number of written comments:	3

1. Introduction

St. Oliver Plunkett Playgroup is located on the Glen Road, Belfast. Since the last inspection in 2005, the playgroup has moved into new purpose built mobile accommodation in the grounds of the primary school. There have been a number of changes in staffing and a new early years specialist from the Early Years Organisation took up her post in January 2013.

2. Inspection methods and evidence base

The inspection evaluations are based on evidence gained from in-class observations and from the scrutiny of a range of documentation provided by the playgroup.

The views of the parents, staff, and the management group were sought through a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Twenty-six questionnaires were issued to the parents; seven were returned and a small number included written comments. All of the staff and a small number of the management group returned the questionnaires. All of the questionnaires and written comments expressed high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the playgroup's work. The parents praised the staff for their commitment and dedication to their work and indicated that their children were very happy in the playgroup.

3. Overall finding of the inspection

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this 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.

Summary of key findings

Children's Achievements	Good
Quality of Provision	Good
Leadership and management	Good

KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

4. Children's achievements

The quality of the children's achievements is good.

- The children are highly motivated and many show good concentration and co-operation in their chosen activities.
- The very attractive and stimulating environment, both indoors and outdoors, arouses the children's curiosity and results in purposeful and enjoyable learning experiences.
- During the inspection, the children had opportunities to use a wide range of small tools and writing materials and as a result, many of the children displayed good hand-eye co-ordination and good manipulative skills.

- Many of the children are able to make representational drawings and paintings.
- The children are developing good self-help skills as they help to tidy up; store their own work and attend to their own needs during the snack routine.

5. Provision for learning

The quality of the provision for learning is good.

- The playgroup has a very positive ethos based on good relationships at all levels.
- The staff have made good efforts to create an inviting and colourful learning environment; good use is made of the children's own art work, photographs and posters to enhance the learning environment. The staff should regularly review the range of activities on offer and ensure that the displays relate to the children's current learning.
- The daily timetable is well organised to provide a good balance of free play and activities organised by the staff. The daily snack, and other necessary routines, are organised well to encourage the children to develop their independence. More use could be made of the snack routine to develop the children's social and early mathematical skills.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the playgroup centre is very good. The staff treat the children with care and respect and provide a secure, supportive environment. This is helping the children to grow in confidence and in developing their consideration for the needs and wishes of others. On the day of the inspection, the promotion of the children's observation and exploration skills was emphasised well by the staff. The development of the children's personal, social, emotional and language skills, however, is a priority for improvement.
- The playgroup's written planning needs considerable development; the planning needs to reflect more fully the curriculum outlined in the Curricular Guidance for Pre-school Education document. In particular, the planning needs to outline the learning inherent in the activities and show how the children's learning will progress throughout the year.
- The staff are recording some useful observations of the children at play. As they develop further their understanding and approaches to planning and assessment, more attention will need to be given to using this information to plan more effectively to meet the children's differing needs.
- The children are provided with a healthy snack and they have regular opportunities to engage in outdoor play. The parents have raised additional funds and have been instrumental in developing a new enclosed outdoor play area. The staff are in the process of further developing the outdoor play area which has the potential to create a wide range of learning opportunities for the children.

- On occasions throughout the inspection, the high adult to child ratio limited the opportunities for the children to work alone or in small groups. The staff should review the use and role of adults within the playroom, whilst still adhering to the 1:8 ratio, to try and ensure that the children do not become overly dependent on adults and are encouraged to be as independent as possible and develop appropriate self-help skills.

6. Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management is good

- The leader is a good role model in her interactions with the children. All of the staff are hard-working and committed to the children; they create a calm, caring and supportive atmosphere. The process of self evaluation is at a very early stage of development and requires further development. The staff need to develop a fuller understanding of the process of self-evaluation and use it to bring about improvement in the playgroup's work.
- At the time of the inspection the playgroup's new early years specialist from the Early Years Organisation had only made one initial visit to the playgroup. While she has outlined appropriate areas for further development, it will be important that the staff work with the early years specialist to address the areas for improvement identified in the report.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the playgroup has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department but the following minor areas need to be addressed:
 - the update of child protection training for the designated and deputy designated persons;
 - the deputy designated person with responsibility for child protection matters needs to be named within the setting's child protection policy and displayed for parents; and
 - the procedures for changing children should be clearly documented and shared with the parents.

CONCLUSION

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 organisation has demonstrated the capacity to address.

The areas for improvement includes the need to:

- continue to develop the playgroup's methods of planning, assessment and evaluation.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the playgroup's progress on the areas for improvement.

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