

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Vincent de Paul Playgroup,
Belfast

Report of an Inspection
in May 2013



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



CONTENTS

Section		Page
1.	Introduction	1
2.	Inspection methods and evidence base	1
3.	Overall finding of the inspection	1
4.	Children's achievements	1
5.	Provision for learning	2
6.	Leadership and management	3
7.	Conclusion	3

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 Vincent de Paul Playgroup
Address:	169 Ligoniel Road BELFAST BT14 8DP
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	1 May 2013
Date of previous inspection:	N/A

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school setting	23	-
in their immediate pre-school year	8	-
funded by Department of Education (DE)	8	-
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2		-
with a statement of special educational needs		-
without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs		-
with English as an additional language		-
who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school		-
Attendance:		
attendance** of funded children for the previous school year		-

* Denotes a number less than five

** Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	3	0
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification	3	0
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification	0	0
New appointments within previous 12 months	0	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
4 hours	-	188

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	18
Percentage returned	78%
Number of written comments:	8

1. Introduction

St Vincent de Paul Playgroup is accommodated within St. Vincent de Paul Primary School. This is the first inspection of the playgroup since they entered the pre-school expansion programme in September 2011. The leader and one of the assistants took up post when the playgroup entered the programme; since then the leader has had a period of extended leave and at the time of the inspection had only recently returned.

2. Inspection methods and evidence base

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

The views of the parents, staff, and management group were sought through a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Eighteen of the parents (78%) responded to the questionnaire and eight made additional written comments. There were six questionnaire responses made by the staff and the management committee and a small number of written comments. The parent, staff and management committee questionnaire responses and written comments indicated a high level of satisfaction with nearly all aspects of the playgroup. The reporting inspector discussed any issues raised through the questionnaires with the leader, staff and members of the management committee of the playgroup.

3. Overall finding of the inspection

In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided by this playgroup is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh the areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in learning and teaching, and leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all children are to be met more effectively. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the setting's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12 -24 month period.

Summary of key findings

Children's Achievements Quality of Provision Leadership and management	Satisfactory Satisfactory Good
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KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

4. Children's achievements

The quality of the children's achievements is satisfactory.

Almost all of the children are well-settled for the time of year and their stage of development and are developing positive attitudes to their learning. This is a particular strength as the majority of the children in the setting are not in their immediate pre-school year,

All of the children engage in periods of sustained and purposeful play. Most of the children co-operate well with one another and the majority of them can take turns and share the equipment. A small number of the children who have behavioural problems are responding well to the agreed strategies being implemented by the staff.

A significant minority of the children have been identified as having speech and language difficulties; however all of the children are confident in approaching adults for assistance when necessary. Some of the children are beginning to engage in collaborative role play within the house corner and the farm shop. A small number of the children display an interest in pre-writing activities and can produce good representational drawings; the majority of the children can recognise their own name. There is a need to develop further the children's early mathematical skills and their use of mathematical language.

Most of the children display good levels of independence and are confident of the routines within the playgroup, however, a number of the children were very tired at the end of the session resulting in some behaviour issues. The staff and management committee should review the length of day for all children, particularly those who are not in their pre-school year.

5. Provision for learning

The quality of the provision for learning is satisfactory.

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the playgroup is very good. This is evidenced through the very positive ethos and the happy, family atmosphere within the playgroup. The staff know the children very well and demonstrate a strong commitment to their care and well-being. There is an excellent focus on developing the children's social skills and perseverance in their learning.

The quality of the staff interactions with the children was always satisfactory and, on occasions, good. All of the adults engage constantly with the children and promote a sense of fun and enjoyment in learning. The staff need to develop further their questioning techniques in order to exploit fully the learning activities provided and ensure that they extend more effectively the children's learning, language and early maths skills.

The staff work hard to create a welcoming and inviting learning environment for the children. There are distinct areas of play and good use is made of all the available space. The playgroup's educational programme offers satisfactory to good opportunities for learning in all of the areas of the pre-school curriculum.

The written planning is of a good quality and focuses effectively on ensuring progression in the children's learning across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. It will be important for all staff to be more involved in the planning process to ensure that they develop a shared understanding of how to maximise the learning potential of all the activities within the indoor and outdoor play areas. A good start has been made by the staff in recording observations of the children's responses and linking them to future planning. The leader has appropriately identified the need to develop further this area of assessment to produce a clearer profile of each child's development and progression across the year.

The setting provides satisfactory support for those children who have been identified as having special educational needs. The staff use their observations of the children to clearly identify individual needs and have put in place strategies which are used effectively and consistently by all the staff, to support the small number of children with behavioural difficulties. The leader recognises the need for the playgroup to produce a policy and create individual educational plans to guide the staff further in providing for all of the children identified as having additional learning needs.

The children are provided with a healthy snack and have very good opportunities for regular physical activity.

6. Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management is good.

The leader has made a very effective start, within a short time-scale, to promoting improvement within the playgroup. She is a good role model in her own engagement with the children, sets high standards and has a strong vision for ensuring high quality pre-school experiences for all of the children in the playgroup. The staff have recently availed of relevant training and had good support from their early year's specialist (EYS) through the Early Years Organisation.

Self-evaluation is at an early stage of development. The leader has identified a number of key areas for development within the playgroup. The staff are beginning to develop a team approach to self-evaluation. They have reviewed the effectiveness of the room layout and resources and put in place a number of changes to better meet the needs of the current cohort of children. The staff now need, with the support of their EYS, to develop further their understanding and use of self-evaluation to promote continuous improvement within the provision at an appropriate pace.

On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the playgroup has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department.

The playgroup has established excellent links with the local primary school to develop further the curriculum and shared outdoor provision, and to ensure a smooth transition for their children as they prepare for the next stage of their education. The playgroup also has very good links with the local Surestart group and with another playgroup with which they share good practice. While the playgroup enjoys very good support from the parents, there is a need for the staff to provide the parents with more detailed information about how they can support their children's learning when at home.

7. Conclusion

In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided by this playgroup is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh the areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in learning and teaching, and leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all children are to be met more effectively.

The areas for improvement include the need:

- to develop the special educational needs provision within the playgroup;
- to improve the quality of the staff interactions with the children to ensure that they effectively extend the children's learning, language and early maths skills; and
- for the staff, with the support of their early years specialist, to develop further their understanding and use of the self-evaluation process.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the setting's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12 -24 month period.

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