



*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

Stepping Stones Crèche Coleraine

Inspected: October 2008

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Stepping Stones Crèche
Address:	Busy Bees Pre-School Room Cavehill Building University of Ulster Cromore Road COLERAINE Co Londonderry BT52 1SA
Management Type:	Private

Date of inspection:	16 October 2008
Date of previous inspection:	12 May 2003

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	19	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	10	-
• funded by Department of Education (DE)	10	-
• qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	0	-
• 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	0	-
• 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	83%	-

* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	2	2
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	2	2
New appointments within previous 12 months	0	1

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
2½ hours	NIL	194

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	9
Percentage returned:	66.7%
Number of written comments:	1

**STEPPING STONES CRÈCHE (BUSY BEES PRE-SCHOOL), COLERAINE,
CO LONDONDERRY, BT52 1SA (3CA-0486)**

1. The Stepping Stones Crèche is situated in premises within the grounds of the University of Ulster in Coleraine. Since the last inspection there have been several staffing changes and the leader has been in post for one year. There are currently 19 children attending the pre-school centre and ten of them are in their pre-school year.

2. The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents, the management group and the staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. A majority of the parents responded to the questionnaire and one parent made additional comments. The responses from the parental questionnaires indicated that the parents regard the pre-school centre highly and appreciate:

- the staff's recent redecoration of the playroom;
- the hard-work of the staff; and
- the good working relationships at all levels.

The responses from the management group and the staff were also very positive and supportive of the work of the pre-school centre, and the positive team working arrangements. The responses have been taken into account as part of the inspection and were shared with the staff and management group.

3. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is very good. Among the strengths are the caring and supportive staff, who work well as a team.

4. The pre-school centre has very good arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department.

5. The pre-school centre gives satisfactory attention to developing aspects of healthy eating and physical activity, for example through the provision of opportunities to be involved in making healthy food and during 'healthy eating week'. The areas for improvement identified include the need to develop further the physical play programme for the children.

6. The main strengths within the pre-school centre's educational and pastoral provision are as follows.

- There is a positive ethos throughout the playroom which promotes a settled and caring atmosphere. The staff are committed to the children's welfare, they are hard-working and have an enthusiastic approach to their work with the children. Working relationships at all levels are very good.
- The staff provide sensitive support as they engage with the children at their activities.
- There are satisfactory opportunities for learning in most areas of the pre-school curriculum. The children maintain good levels of co-operative play throughout the session.

- The children's language is developed very appropriately through skilful and expressive story-telling and the use of rhymes and songs, and discussions with the children.
- The leader and the manager of the crèche provide effective leadership. They are committed to reflect on and improve their practice, particularly in relation to the improvement and redevelopment of the premises.
- The staff have established effective links with the parents. In addition to informal meetings with the parents each day they meet formally with the parents twice a year, to discuss the children's progress.

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

- There is a need to develop further the planning and assessment methods in order to ensure that the activities progress appropriately throughout the year and that the information gained through the observations of the children's work is linked clearly to the planning.
- There is a need to develop the staff's understanding of how to promote the learning inherent in the planned curricular programme, and in particular, to extend the children's thinking skills through the play activities.
- The staff need to raise their expectations for the children to ensure that they are adequately challenged throughout the year.

8. The staff have started to develop and implement some useful methods of self-evaluation. They have identified their links with the parents as an appropriate area for development, have consulted with them to seek their comments and suggestions on the quality of the provision and begun to introduce and monitor new approaches to inform and involve the parents more fully in the education of their children. The contribution made by the pre-school centre's early years specialist (EYS) to the development of the centre's work has a few strengths. The staff require more specific and comprehensive support from their EYS in order to bring about the necessary improvement in planning and implementing a high quality educational programme, assessing the children's progress, and supporting the staff in compiling a relevant development plan.

9. In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this pre-school centre is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in standards and 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 pre-school centre's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

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