

eti

*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*



CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

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 Cross-Community Playgroup
Ballymoney**

Inspected: May 2008

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Stepping Stones Cross-Community Playgroup
Address:	Castle Community Centre Castle Street BALLYMONEY Co Antrim BT53 6JT
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	15 May 2008
Date of previous inspection:	19 November 2002

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	25	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	24	-
• funded by Department of Education (DE)	23	-
• qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	4	-
• with a statement of special educational needs	1	-
• without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	0	-
• with English as an additional language	2	-
• 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	85%	-

* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

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

Number of: **	
Students	4
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
2 ³ / ₄ hours	-	188

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	22
Percentage returned:	55.6%
Number of written comments:	7

STEPPING STONES CROSS-COMMUNITY PLAYGROUP, BALLYMONEY, CO ANTRIM, BT53 6JT (3AB-0414)

1. The pre-school centre is situated in Castle Community Centre in Ballymoney. Since the last inspection there have been several staffing changes. A new leader has been appointed. The children come from within a radius of five miles.

2. The parents, staff and management group were given opportunities to express their views about the centre through the inspection questionnaires. A majority of parents responded to the questionnaire and indicated a high level of satisfaction with the overall provision of the centre. The written responses from the parental questionnaire highlighted the positive ethos and supportive staff. The responses from the management group and the staff indicated a high level of satisfaction with the centre. The responses have been taken into account as part of the inspection and any issues raised have been shared with the staff.

3. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection has important strengths. The centre has some appropriate policies and procedures for child protection. Some minor additions are needed to ensure they are comprehensive. These include the need to update the policy on anti-bullying and to ensure members from the management committee receive appropriate training on child protection matters.

4. The centre gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, and has effective policies and programmes in place to encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

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

- The children are generally well-behaved, friendly and welcoming to visitors. They co-operate well with the staff. A few children still require encouragement to develop social skills.
- The positive ethos promotes a settled and caring atmosphere for both the children and the staff. The children are happy and purposefully engaged in their chosen activity. The staff work hard to make imaginative use of the equipment and all the available space both indoors and outdoors.
- Detailed and comprehensive planning and assessment systems are in place. Account is appropriately taken of the children's differing needs.
- There are good opportunities for learning in all the areas of the pre-school programme. The children's learning experiences relating to early science, creativity and the development of the children's personal, social emotional and physical skills both indoors and outdoors are particular strengths of the centre's provision.

- The staff are all skilful in naturally promoting language and the full range of learning through the play activities and daily routines. They use skilful questioning, extend the children's ideas and they match appropriate support to the children's abilities.
- The leader demonstrates a strong commitment to the children to raising the quality of the work for the centre and to developing links with the wider community. She generates a strong sense of team-work among the hard-working staff who have a caring and enthusiastic approach to their work with the children.

6. The staff have started to implement some useful methods of self-evaluation. They have begun to work together as a team in evaluating aspects of the programme each week and have also reviewed and improved specific areas of the physical environment. This is a valuable base from which to develop a more structured approach to self-evaluation leading to improvement. The staff should now work together with the early years specialist (EYS) and the management committee to develop their plans for continued improvement of the provision, and develop a more co-ordinated approach to meeting the children's needs.

7. The contribution made by the centre's EYS has important strengths, including the cluster support and the appropriate areas identified for improvement. The staff, with the continued support from the centre's EYS, are well placed to continue the developmental work required.

8. The quality of education provided in this pre-school is very good. The educational and pastoral needs of the children are being well met. The parents can have confidence in the pre-school centre's capacity for sustained self-improvement.

No follow-inspection is required.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2008

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the DE website: www.deni.gov.uk or may be obtained from the Inspection Services Branch, Department of Education, Rathgael House, 43 Balloo Road, Bangor, Co Down BT19 7PR.