

# PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Stepping Stones Playgroup,  
Newtownabbey

Report of an Inspection  
in May 2013

## 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
Conclusion	

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

<b>Name of pre-school setting:</b>	Stepping Stones Playgroup
<b>Address:</b>	St Gerard's Hall 722 Antrim Road NEWTOWNABBEY Co Antrim BT36 7PG
<b>Management Type:</b>	Voluntary

<b>Date of inspection:</b>	28 May 2013
<b>Date of previous inspection:</b>	2006

### 1. Details of Children

<b>Total number of children:</b>	<b>am session</b>	<b>pm session</b>
attending the pre-school setting	24	-
in their immediate pre-school year	24	-
funded by Department of Education (DE)	24	-
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	1	-
with a statement of special educational needs	0	-
without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	1	-
with English as an additional language	3	-
who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	0	-
<b>Attendance:</b>		
attendance** of funded children for the previous school year	N/A	-

\* Special Educational Needs = fewer than five

\*\* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. **Details of Staff**

<b>Number of:</b>	<b>Full-time</b>	<b>Part-time</b>
Staff, including leader	3	
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification	3	2
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification	0	0
New appointments within previous 12 months	1	0

<b>Number of: ***</b>	
Students	1
Trainees	0

\*\*\* Total placements since September of current year

3. **Details of Sessions**

<b>Duration of morning session</b>	<b>Duration of afternoon session</b>	<b>Number of days open in previous year</b>
4 hours	-	188

4. **Parental Questionnaires**

Number issued to parents:	24
Percentage returned	50%
Number of written comments:	6

## 1. Introduction

Stepping Stones Playgroup is accommodated on the upstairs floor of a community hall set within the grounds of St Gerard's Church. At the time of the inspection, all of the children attending were in their pre-school year. Since the last inspection, there have been a number of staff changes including the appointment of a new assistant who took up post several weeks prior to the inspection, and several changes of early year's specialists.

## 2. Inspection methods and evidence base

The inspection evaluations are based on evidence gained from in-class observations, discussions with the staff and from a range of documentation provided by the pre-school setting.

The views of the parents and staff were sought through a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Twenty-four of the parents (50%) responded to the questionnaire, 6 made additional written comments. The responses to the questionnaires were wholly positive about all aspect of the provision. The written comments indicated parent's appreciation of the caring and approachable staff and the progress their children were making.

## 3. Overall finding of the inspection

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this pre-school is good. The pre-school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for development which the pre-school has demonstrated the capacity to address.

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 confident and independent sustaining high levels of concentration and attention during their activities. Almost all of the children cooperate well with each other taking turns and playing collaboratively. A small number of children still require adult support, at times, to develop their social skills and engage in productive play.

The children are making good progress in developing their language and communication skills. Almost all of them talk freely to each other and the adults about their experiences and ideas. The children are interested in books and stories both informally during the session and at group story sessions. A few children are beginning to show an interest in emergent writing and print; the children would benefit from a greater range of opportunities to engage in experimental writing and mark making.

Many of the children show an interest in and early understanding of measurement, number, size, shape and pattern during their play. They make extensive and creative use of the junk materials available to make three dimensional models, and. their paintings and drawings are often detailed and well developed. The children show curiosity as they enjoy investigating the properties of natural materials such as the dough and the water and as they grow plants and observe their pet tortoise. The opportunities for the children to develop their imaginative role play need to be developed further.

## **5. Provision for learning**

### **The quality of the provision for learning is good.**

The large playroom is laid out with a good range of interesting activities with materials that are easily accessible to promote the children's independence and interest. The recent addition of new bathroom facilities accessible directly from the playroom, is a significant improvement to the pre-school room.

The daily timetable is well managed to provide both an extended period of freely chosen play well balanced with enjoyable group sessions for story, songs and physical activity. The children participate well during the daily routines such as self-registration, the snack and transition to the hall.

The staff interact well with the children during play to promote their interest, language and learning. They value and support the children's own ideas and celebrate their achievements. The group sessions for stories and songs are well managed and enjoyable for the children. This good practice needs to be embedded more fully during the sessions in the hall.

The staff work hard to plan a broad and varied pre-school programme which provides good to very good opportunities for learning in most areas of the pre-school curriculum. The staff have identified the need to review and develop their planning methods to ensure that all aspects of the curriculum are developed systematically through the year and are well matched to the needs and interests of the children.

The staff know the children well, they make regular and relevant observations of their progress and achievements which are shared with the parents. The staff have appropriately identified the need to link the assessment more closely with their planning as a priority on their development plan. There are no children currently identified as having additional needs in the setting. The staff recognise the need to access relevant training to build their capacity to identify and plan for children with additional needs.

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is good. There is a very positive and inclusive ethos in which the children appear happy and secure. Working relationships are very good among the staff, the children and the parents. There are good effective links with the parents to keep them informed about; the pre-school news and their children's progress, and useful pastoral links with the main feeder primary schools.

The pre-school gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. For example, there are regular opportunities for energetic physical play and a healthy eating policy is implemented.

## **6. Leadership and management**

### **The quality of leadership and management is good.**

The leader is well organised and manages the running of the pre-school effectively. She promotes a sense of teamwork and values the support of the parents and the management committee. While the development plan identifies a number of relevant improvements with associated action plans, overall the processes for self-evaluation and development planning require further improvement. Since the last inspection there have been several changes in the personnel who provide early years specialist support through the Early Years Organisation (EYO). While the most recent EYS has provided some useful advice and guidance, there has been a lack of continuity in personnel over recent years.

On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the pre-schools arrangements for safeguarding children are comprehensive; they reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

### **CONCLUSION**

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this pre-school is good. There are has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified an area for development which the pre-school has demonstrated the capacity to address.

The key areas for improvement is:

- to ensure that all aspects of the pre-school curriculum are developed systematically and progressively through the year and are more closely matched to the needs and interests of the children.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the pre-school settings progress in addressing the area for improvement..



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