

Education and Training Inspectorate PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Alphabet Playgroup, Greenisland, County Antrim

Voluntary Integrated Playgroup DE Ref No: 3AB-0353

Report of an Inspection in October 2019



Providing inspection services for:

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CONTENTS

Section	Page
1. Context	1
2. Views of parents and staff	1
3. Focus of the inspection	1
4. Overall findings of the inspection	1
5. Outcomes for learners	2
6. Quality of provision	2
7. Leadership and management	3
8. Safeguarding	4
9. Overall effectiveness	4

Appendices

- A. Inspection methodology and evidence base
- B. Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

1. Context

Alphabet Playgroup is accommodated in a shared community building located in Greenisland estate. The children who attend come from the immediate and surrounding local area; the group includes a small number of younger, fee-paying children. The playgroup equipment has to be set up and cleared away by the staff almost every day. Since the last inspection there has been a complete change of staffing, leadership and management.

Number of children:	Class 1
Attending part-time	32
Funded by Department of Education	22

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	100
Average percentage attendance for the previous year.	94.6
Number of days open in previous school year	184

Source: data provided by the setting.

* On 1 July.

** The stages refer to those set out in the Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs.

2. Views of parents and staff

Most of the parents and all of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. The responses from the parents were highly positive about all aspects of the provision including: the high quality of the learning experiences; the effective communication with parents; and the caring and nurturing staff approach. The staff highlighted their team approach and their commitment to the care and reported development of the children. A small number of parents indicated they would like further information on how to help their child learn at home. A summary of the questionnaire responses were shared with the leader and a representative from the management committee.

3. Focus of the inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all learners, the inspection linked internal and external approaches to evaluate the:

- outcomes for the children;
- quality of provision for learning; and
- leadership and management.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Outcomes for learners	Outstanding
Quality of provision	Very good
Leadership and management	Outstanding

5. Outcomes for learners

- The children are almost all making excellent progress across the pre-school curriculum with very positive attitudes and dispositions for learning. They are highly motivated, confident, independent and imaginative.
- The children's personal, social and emotional development is a key strength. They are very well settled and focus for sustained periods during both indoor and outdoor play. They are respectful to the adults and one another, talk about how they feel and are beginning to resolve their own conflicts with sensitive adult support.
- The children are developing very well their listening and oral communication skills as they engage with the staff to talk about their experiences and ideas and participate during well-led group sessions focused on physical activity, songs and stories.
- The children sort, match and count naturally during their play. They monitor independently the number of children at activities, understand the sequence of the day and use and respond well to positional and directional language. The children use a range of simple tools such as brushes and rollers with increasing dexterity. They are developing their spatial awareness and have very good co-ordination of their larger body movements.
- Imaginative use is made of the wide range of creative experiences available to experiment with paint, create collages and simple models and express their own ideas. They develop their imagination through self-initiated home play taking on a variety of familiar roles to act out family relationships and tasks such as making the dinner and caring for babies and pets.
- They are enthusiastic and curious to explore and investigate, using all of their senses, the wide range of natural materials incorporated into the sand, water, dough, art area and small world. They talk about the items and experiment, for example, with squeezing and grating oranges and testing how the conkers run down the guttering outdoors.
- The small number of younger children are well supported to integrate and access all aspects of the curriculum at their own level.

6. Quality of provision

- The staff plan a rich and varied pre-school programme and provide high quality opportunities for learning across the pre-school curriculum. The planning and resources for outdoor and physical energetic play are in the process of being developed and improved further.
- All of the available space is used effectively to create richly-resourced, distinct areas of play which support well the children's language development, learning and independent choices. The inclusion of natural resources, displays of children's own work, visual cues and meaningful print all enhance the quality of the learning experiences. Recent resources added to the outdoor areas have improved the opportunities for investigation and further improvements are planned. The daily and weekly timetable give a good balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities with smooth transitions between activities in the day.

- The staff all contribute effectively to high quality interactions which promote the children's independence, social skills, language and learning. The staff listen carefully to the children and engage in sustained conversations to help them to develop and build on their own creative ideas; they exploit the learning potential of activities very well. The staff help the children to express their emotions, understand early mathematical language, enjoy books, develop their listening skills and promote participation during well led group sessions.
- There is an effective collaborative team approach to the weekly planning which is increasingly responsive to the needs and interests of the children. The staff are currently piloting and evaluating new approaches to their observation and assessment of the children's progress. The assessment information is used to inform parents of their children's progress and to inform the planning. It will be important as part of the ongoing review to monitor that the children's progress in all areas of play is being tracked systematically. The ongoing development of the planned learning for outdoor play has been appropriately identified on the current development plan.
- The staff, leadership and management at all levels are building very well their capacity to meet the needs of children with additional needs through relevant training and links with the Education Authority link worker from the early years inclusion support team. Appropriate policies and processes are in place.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the pre-school's approach to care and welfare impacts positively on learning and teaching, and outcomes. The calm, caring, inclusive and respectful ethos supports a positive climate for learning and helps the children to form trusting relationships.

7. Leadership and management

- The leadership and management is highly effective in bringing about improvement. Along with the whole staff team, they have made excellent progress in improving the quality of the outcomes for the children, the provision and the leadership and management.
- The improvement journey within the pre-school is underpinned by the professional understanding of the staff, very good collaboration, the distributed leadership approach and the effective communication between the leadership, staff and committee. The staff also benefit from the effective support, training and guidance of their independent early years specialist.
- The development plan and associated action plans are well focused on relevant priorities; progress is tracked and evaluated effectively to demonstrate clearly the impact on the outcomes for the children. The associated staff training is evaluated and ideas are implemented promptly.
- Parent's views are valued and responded to by making relevant changes, such as, the arrangements at the start of the pre-school day. Effective communication with parents and local schools promotes smooth transitions both into the playgroup and then into year one.
- Links with the parents, visits to the library and visitors from the local community all contribute well to the children's learning experiences.

8. Safeguarding

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect the guidance from the relevant Departments.

9. Overall effectiveness

Alphabet Playgroup has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the children. The ETI will monitor how the pre-school sustains improvement.

Inspection methodology and evidence base

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework is available on the ETI website <https://www.etini.gov.uk/publications/inspection-and-self-evaluation-framework-isef-effective-practice-and-self-evaluation>.

Inspectors observed learning and teaching through play, the children's achievements, progression and standards, scrutinised relevant documentation, and held formal and informal discussions with staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a meeting with those involved with leadership and management, including a phone call with a representative of the management group; and
- the opportunity for the parents and staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

Quantitative terms

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%

Performance levels

The ETI use the following performance levels when reporting on outcomes for learners, quality of provision and leadership and management¹:

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on governance:

High degree of confidence
Confidence
Limited confidence

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on safeguarding:

Reflects the guidance
Reflects broadly the guidance
Unsatisfactory

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on care and welfare:

Impacts positively on learning, teaching and outcomes for learners
Does not impact positively enough on learning, teaching and outcomes for learners

¹ And the overall provision in a subject area or unit, as applicable.

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the school:

<p>The school has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.</p>
<p>The school demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.</p>
<p>The school needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.</p>
<p>The school needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners. It requires external support to do so. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.</p>

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