

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Ballee Pre-School Playgroup,
Ballymena, County Antrim

Voluntary playgroup

Report of an Inspection in
May 2018



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments

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1. Context

Ballee Pre-School Playgroup operates in a purpose-built community child care facility in the Ballee area of Ballymena. The playgroup operates two part-time funded sessions for children in their immediate pre-school year. The children come mainly from the local area. Working in collaboration with the local community, the playgroup has recently developed a new outdoor learning area.

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending part-time	26	16
Under 3 years of age*	0	0
Funded by Department of Education	23	9
With statement of special educational needs	#	#
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	#	#
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	0	#
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	#	5
With English as an additional language	#	#
Number of children who transferred from a Sure Start 2 year old programme	0	#

Average percentage attendance for the previous year.	88.7%
Number of days open in previous school year	185

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.

fewer than 5

2. Views of parents and staff

A small number of the parents and all of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. The responses were very positive about all aspects of the life and work of the playgroup. The parental comments highlighted the playgroup's nurturing and child-centred ethos and the staff's effective support for the children's individual needs. The questionnaire responses were shared with the staff 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	Very good
Quality of provision	Very good
Leadership and management	Very good

5. Outcomes for learners

- Most of the children settle quickly, engaging enthusiastically for extended periods in concentrated play. They are developing well their self-management skills and most respond positively to the staff's encouragement to make choices and access the resources they need independently. For the time of year, and given the range of the children's individual needs, most carry out the daily routines successfully, including their responsibilities within the buffet snack in the 'Snack Shack'. The children are developing well their social skills and their behaviour is mainly very good.
- The children are developing their understanding of early mathematical concepts including number, measures and shape where it occurs naturally within their play. Most of the children enjoy sharing stories and browsing books; a significant minority are interested in mark-making, painting water letters and writing notes in the various play areas. They respond very well to learning outdoors, exploring confidently the newly developed play areas; particularly the physical, creative and nature play zones. The children's colourful artwork and the interesting natural and man-made resources they investigate, help them to build and express their early understanding of the world around them. Their improving motor skills and agility are evident in their confident use of the high quality equipment indoors and outdoors.
- All of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, are making continuous progress in their learning and all-round development.

6. Quality of provision

- The staff understand well the children's individual needs and stages of development; they provide a nurturing and child-centred learning environment; making effective use of all the available space and resources to extend the children's learning experiences and growing self-reliance.
- In their daily practice, the staff use their shared knowledge of the children and their families to good effect to inform strategies and interventions for individual children. Appropriately, the staff are reviewing currently the system for observing and assessing the children to inform more effectively the future planning and record systematically the children's progress.
- The quality of the staff interactions with the children, in particular the effective use of questions to promote and extend the children's language and understanding, is a strength in the provision. The staff make effective use of incidental opportunities and build on the children's responses to extend the learning further.

- The children who require additional help are given well-tailored and sensitive individual support. Helpful resource packs and guidance are provided for the parents to enable them to support the children's learning at home. The staff communicate effectively with the parents in relation to the children's individual needs and the progress they are making. They take ongoing account of the recommendations of outside agencies to inform the well-constructed and carefully evaluated individual education plans.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the playgroup's approach to care and welfare impacts positively the children's learning and well-being. The child-centred, open-door ethos and pastoral working relationships at all levels create a welcoming and nurturing learning environment for the children and their families.

7. Leadership and management

- There is a collaborative team approach within the playgroup which makes effective use of the staff's range of skills and their very good knowledge of the families and the local community. The leader is supported very well by the dedicated staff team and management committee in all areas of the life and work of the playgroup.
- The staff team has a positive and productive working relationship with the independent early years specialist; the approaches to self-evaluation and the shared understanding of the children's needs bring about continuous improvement in the provision for the children.
- The staff and management committee work in positive partnership with the local community association to improve further the quality of the children's learning experiences. For example, the recent development of the extensive outdoor learning area to embrace the six learning areas provides considerable benefit for the children.
- The staff communicate regularly and effectively with the parents who are supportive of their work with and for the children.

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

Ballee Pre-school Playgroup has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners.

The ETI will monitor how the playgroup 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 the treasurer of the management group and the independent early years specialist; 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 management:

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

Overall effectiveness

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

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.
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.
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.
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.

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