

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Ballykinlar Cross-Community
Playgroup, Downpatrick,
Co Down

Report of an Inspection in
February 2015

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 Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels in reports:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

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1. Inspection method and evidence base

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of pre-school centres, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the ETI's publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self evaluation* at: [Together Towards Improvement Pre-school | Education and Training Inspectorate](#)

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

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a discussion with the staff;
- a meeting with those involved with leadership and management; and
- the opportunity for the parents, staff and members of the management group to complete a confidential questionnaire.

All of the returns from the questionnaires indicate high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the work of the playgroup.

2. Context

Ballykinlar Community Playgroup is located in purpose-built accommodation in the village of Ballykinlar, County Down. The children attending the playgroup come from the village and surrounding rural area. Recently, the playgroup has experienced a decrease in the numbers attending the group as a result of changing demographics within the catchment area.

3. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards;
- the quality of provision; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

4. Overall findings

Overall Performance Level	Outstanding
Achievements and Standards	Outstanding
Provision	Outstanding
Leadership and Management	Outstanding

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are very well-settled, friendly and confident; they engage well with the adults often inviting them to join in their play and co-operate with their peers as they join in paired and group work. They make creative use of the learning resources; for example, they can access and store the resources independently, and demonstrate a growing sense of responsibility for their learning environment. Most of the children play together co-operatively, taking increasing account of the needs and interests of others. During the inspection, there were many examples of sustained purposeful play and many occasions when the children attended to their own needs, for example, when they added their name to their own work, and self registered for the snack.
- The children listen attentively and join in appropriately during group story and rhyme sessions; they are developing a wide repertoire of rhymes and songs which is developing their oral communication skills well. The availability of an appropriate range of writing tools and materials within the areas of play encourages the children to develop their experimental writing skills. As a result of the staff using appropriate mathematical language when participating in the children's play, they have promoted the children's understanding of size, shape, weight, capacity and positional language. Many of the children demonstrate a good understanding of early mathematical concepts. The children's representational drawings and art work shows an increasing awareness of the world around them. The children are curious as they explore the wide range of items in the interest area.

6. Provision

- There are very good opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum, however, the development of the children's personal, social and emotional development, language and communication skills and their understanding of early mathematical concepts are particular strengths. There is a warm welcoming ethos within the playgroup. The staff provide a bright, clean and stimulating learning environment for the children both indoors and outside. The attractively presented and well organised playroom provides very good opportunities for learning in all aspects of the pre-school curriculum. The well developed, interesting outdoor play areas are a strength of playgroup's provision.
- During the inspection, there were very good examples of the staff interacting skilfully with the children to extend their language and thinking skills, a key strength is the emphasis placed on the development of early mathematics concepts. The staff engage meaningfully in the play activities, they value the children's opinions and often build effectively on their ideas, and they make very effective use of the small group sessions to consolidate and extend the children's learning.
- A range of appropriate themes and topics is used to develop a good variety of stimulating activities and learning experiences for the children in all areas of the pre-school curriculum throughout the year. The staff make relevant and detailed observations of the children's responses to the play programme and use the information effectively to assess the children's progress and inform the future planning.

- The provision for children identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning is a strength of the provision. The setting participated in the Special Educational Needs Capacity Building Pilot A and the staff report that the training they received was excellent. It provided them with the skills to liaise effectively with a range of support agencies and to report more effectively to the children's parents on their progress. There is evidence that the staff are implementing their training very effectively, for example, they have developed appropriate individual educational plans, pictorial schedules and workstations which are greatly enhancing the children's learning and development.
- There are very good links with the parents and they are kept well informed about events within the playgroup through the parents' information board and an informative newsletter. It is appropriate that the parents receive information about their child's progress regularly throughout the year. The staff encourage the parents to take an interest in their children's learning by offering parent workshops.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the playgroup is outstanding. This is evidenced through the staff's ongoing response to the children's interests and needs, the caring atmosphere, the promotion of safe play in the wider environment, and the excellent working relationships at all levels.

7. Leadership and management

- A high priority has been given to developing good working relationships, in which all members of the staff feel valued and this is underpinned by good teamwork and the excellent contribution made by all of the staff. The leader is well-organised, enthusiastic and committed to the ongoing development of the playgroup in the best interest of the children and the community.
- The staff have developed a culture of reflection and self-evaluation to promote improvement as an integral element of their practice. There is evidence that the reflective practice of the staff has resulted in them bringing about improvement in many aspects of the playgroup's provision and they continue to outline appropriate areas for further development. The playgroup staff are highly qualified, experienced and professional in their work. They are fully committed to their work and this is evidenced through their attention to detail and involvement in on-going professional development. The centre employs an early years specialist from the Early Years Organisation; she has a good working relationship with the staff and supports them well as they continue to develop their work.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection the playgroup has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding the children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Departments.
- The playgroup gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. For example, the children have access to a healthy snack and regular opportunities for a wide range of physical play activities.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this playgroup is outstanding; the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. The playgroup has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school setting	17	
in their immediate pre-school year	12	
funded by Department of Education (DE)	12	
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	12	
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	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		

* Special Educational Needs = fewer than five

** Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

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

Number of: ***	
Students	0
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
2½ hours	N/A	185

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