

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Chuckles Pre-School Centre,
Newtownards, County Down

Report of an inspection in
October 2016



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments



Quantitative terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

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

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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 settings, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the ETI publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self-evaluation* at: [Together Towards Improvement Pre-school | Education and Training Inspectorate](#)

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 management group; and
- the opportunity for the parents and staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

A small number of questionnaires were returned by the staff and parents. All of the returns indicated high levels of satisfaction with the centres work.

2. Focus of inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all children¹, the purpose of inspection is, through effective linking of internal and external approaches, to evaluate the:

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

3. Context

Since the last inspection in 2009, Chuckles Pre-School Centre has relocated to Castle Gardens Primary School in Newtownards. The group is accommodated within two spacious classrooms that are solely for their use. Since re-locating the staff have worked very hard to create a stimulating environment for the children. The new location provides excellent facilities for the children including an enclosed courtyard and access to the primary school hall.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Achievements and standards	Very Good
Provision for learning	Very Good
Leadership and management	Good

¹ In the case of a Day Nursery this refers only to the DE-funded pre-school provision.

5. Achievements and standards

- Almost all of the children are well-settled for the time of year and set about exploring and investigating the interesting range of stimulating activities on offer. The children's paintings are often detailed representations of their world. Their interest and curiosity is aroused as they explore the natural materials in the freely accessible interest areas.
- The children choose from the wide range of real and authentic resources which they access to extend their play and which develops further their self esteem and confidence. Most of the children are confident in expressing their feelings; some are caring and show empathy to their peers. The children are beginning to show a good understanding of early mathematical language, counting and sorting, and can apply their understanding of number in the correct context.
- Most of the children listen well during the group story time; many can recognise their own names as they self register for snack and outdoor play; a few are beginning to write letters in their names. The children often count as part of their play and join in readily with number rhymes and songs.

6. Provision for learning

- The staff provide a varied and interesting range of activities and resources for play. The children have very good opportunities for learning, in nearly all areas of the curriculum. The development of the children's physical skills is under-developed; the staff have identified appropriately the need for improvement.
- The quality of the staff's engagement with the children is often very good; they ask open-ended questions and encourage the children to observe and investigate. The written planning provides a useful overview of the programme but requires further development to outline more clearly progression in the children's learning and the learning inherent in the activities. The staff regularly observes the children's responses to play and use the information appropriately to inform future planning.
- The rich literacy environment ensures that the children have excellent opportunities to develop both their early writing skills and a keen interest in books.
- The children with additional needs are identified early. Smart, achievable targets are prioritised in effective individual education plans which guide well all of the staff. The centre liaises purposefully with parents and relevant agencies in planning to meet the needs of the children.
- Pastoral care is a particular strength: there is a calm, friendly ethos and very good relationships; the children respond well to consistently-applied positive behaviour strategies.

7. Leadership and management

- The leadership of self-evaluation and development planning is insufficiently developed to bring about improvement.

- While the group received good quality support from the independent early years' specialist during the transition to new premises, it is important for all those involved in the management of the group, including the early year specialist, to build on the development work already done to improve further their understanding and the effectiveness of self-evaluation.
- There are good links with the parents; a borrowing library and the regular newsletter encourage the parents to be actively involved in their children's learning. Since the playgroup moved within the primary school both sets of the staff have worked well together and are committed to developing further their links to enable them to take account of the children's prior learning and ensure a smooth transition into year one.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the playgroup has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children which reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Departments.

8. Overall effectiveness

Chuckles Pre-School Centre 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.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON CHUCKLES PRE-SCHOOL CENTRE

1. Details of children

Number of children:	
Attending full-time	N/A
Attending part-time	25
Under 3 years of age*	
Funded by Department of Education	25
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**	***
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	***
With English as an additional language	
Who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	N/A

* On 1 July.

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

*** Denotes a number less than 5.

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	100%
Average attendance for the previous year.	84%
Number of days open in previous school year	188

2. Duration of sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
	9:00 am – 12.00 pm	

3. Details of staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff including, Teachers/Leaders		4
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification		4
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification		0
New appointments within the previous 12 months		0

Number of: ****	
Students	2
Trainees	0

**** Total placements since September of current year

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