

Education and Training Inspectorate PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Dominican @ Early Years Playgroup, Newry, County Down

Voluntary playgroup DE Ref No: 5AB-0498

Report of an Inspection in November 2019



Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
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1. Context

Dominican @ Early Years Playgroup is located in a purpose-built room within the Early Years Children and Family Centre situated in Newry, County Down. The children enrolled are from a wide surrounding urban and rural catchment area. Since the last inspection, the playgroup has received an 'Investors in People Award' that recognises excellence in the staff's collaboration to ensure meaningful contribution within the local community.

Number of children:	Class 1
Attending part-time	24
Under 3 years of age*	#
Funded by Department of Education	22
With statement of special educational needs	#
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	#
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	#
With English as an additional language	7

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	#
Average percentage attendance for the previous year.	92
Number of days open in previous school year	188

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

N/A not available

2. Views of parents and staff

A majority of the parents and all of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. All of the responses were positive regarding the work and life of the playgroup. In written comments, the parents highlighted their confidence in the playgroup and made particular references to: the experienced, approachable and caring staff; the excellent communication and home/playgroup links; and, the well-considered activities designed to meet the needs and interests of the children. In written comments, the staff emphasised their pride in working within the setting and their efforts to build lasting relationships with the children and their extended families. A summary of the responses were shared with the leadership and management.

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	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding

5. Outcomes for learners

- All of the children, including those who require assistance with their learning, are settled and engage purposefully in their learning. They are making outstanding progress across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. Almost all of the children, including those for whom English is an additional language, converse spontaneously with each other and, if required, can request support from adults using appropriate vocabulary.
- The children listen attentively to stories, expand their vocabulary and make carefully-considered predictions. They engage enthusiastically in role play, singing and music-making activities; all of which are embedded within their regular routines. Most of the children use mathematical language naturally within their play and have a very good understanding of early mathematical concepts in number, pattern, time, and shape and space.
- The children are particularly engaged in learning that relates to the world around them. They use the well-considered indoor and outdoor resources very effectively and have a very good respect for, and knowledge of, living things. The children have a very good understanding of early scientific concepts in meaningful contexts, for example, when considering the ingredients for their weekly baking activity and when planting or caring for their outdoor play areas during the popular family gardening days.
- The children's personal, social and emotional skills are highly developed. They make independent choices for play and snack and work collaboratively to create, explore and investigate using the wide range of resources. The children's behaviour and manners are exemplary; they move indoors and outdoors calmly, showing patience, respect and care for one another. They take pride in their learning and enjoy celebrating and sharing their efforts with their peers and the adults within the room.

6. Quality of provision

- The staff provide a stimulating learning environment for the children and excellent indoor and outdoor opportunities for learning across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The attractive and authentic resources promote independence and allow the children to steer and develop their own learning. Building on the children's natural curiosity, the staff provide activities which encourage the children to predict, experiment and problem solve. The transitions into story time and snack and from indoor to outdoor play are seamless and maximise further the learning opportunities for the children.

- A timely and detailed review of the refreshed Northern Ireland Pre-school Curricular Guidance has identified strategic opportunities for the staff to link the children's learning to the objectives outlined within the playgroup's positive behaviour policy. The resulting planning is comprehensive and encourages interest, progression and challenge within well-connected learning experiences. The staff interactions with the children are a key area of strength within the setting. The staff's open-ended questioning is focused consistently on developing every child's language, interest and problem-solving skills within every aspect of their play.
- The staff make effective use of digital photographs when observing the children. Observations are recorded accurately and reflected upon regularly in order to assess the children's progress and to inform or adapt the learning experiences across all areas of the pre-school curriculum.
- The children who require additional support with their learning are identified early through information gathered from staff observations, parents and other professionals. The staff have identified a number of strategies to support the children which are implemented and reviewed regularly with the parents to monitor and support the children's progress.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the playgroup's approach to the care and welfare of the children impacts positively on learning, teaching and outcomes. The playgroup celebrates its diversity and promotes vigorously the inclusion of every child and family. The emphasis on developing the children's understanding of culture, attitudes, feelings and emotions is impacting very positively on their relationships with each other.

7. Leadership and management

- The leadership and management of the provision is strategic, innovative and committed to providing high quality care and education for the children. The priority placed on identifying appropriate continuous professional development for all staff members has shaped a knowledgeable team who are proficient in securing the best outcomes for every child. The experienced management committee supports well the staff team and understands how to exercise their responsibilities and their challenge function.
- The playgroup's approach to development planning and self-evaluation is reflective and based upon a culture of continuous improvement. The staff use very effectively the sources of first-hand evidence to inform, monitor and evaluate the quality of provision and the outcomes attained by the children.
- The playgroup values the views of parents and has developed numerous highly effective working relationships with them. For example, most recently through 'The Big Bedtime Read' as part of the 'Getting Ready to Learn Strategy' from the Department of Education, parents have been provided with meaningful and frequent opportunities to be involved in their children's learning.

- The leadership contributes skilfully to meaningful collaboration with other local playgroups and primary schools. This has strengthened further the links with local schools, supported smooth transitions for the children and contributed significantly to the sharing of good practice. The high quality of the leadership and the playgroup's work has been recognised through a number of external awards.

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

Dominican @ Early Years 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 chair 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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