

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Dundrum Cross-Community
Playgroup, Newcastle, Co Down

Report of an Inspection in
February 2015

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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*

Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



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.

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

2. Context

Dundrum Cross Community Playgroup is located within the grounds of Sacred Heart Church, Dundrum County Down. Since the last inspection a new leader, two new assistants and a new early years specialist from the Early Years Organisation have all taken up posts. A small enclosed outdoor area for physical activity has been developed. The playgroup has access to a large church hall and the primary school facilities for additional physical activities.

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	Good
Achievements and Standards	Good
Provision	Good
Leadership and Management	Good

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- Most of the children are very well-settled and are developing positive attitudes to their learning; they 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.
- The children use effectively the wide range of books on offer throughout the setting and they listen attentively and join in appropriately during group story time. The availability of an appropriate range of writing tools and materials encourages the children to develop their experimental writing skills; a few of the children are beginning to write their own names.
- As a result of the staff using appropriate mathematical language when participating in the children's play, they have promoted well the children's understanding of size, shape, weight, capacity and positional language. As a consequence, many of the children demonstrate a good understanding of early mathematical concepts.
- The children are confident and familiar in following the routines within the setting and display good levels of independence. The children's behaviour is very good and they are confident in engaging with the staff and visitors to the playgroup.

6. Provision

- There is a warm welcoming ethos within the playgroup. The new staff have worked hard to create a bright, clean and stimulating learning environment for the children both indoors and outside. The attractively presented and well organised playroom provides good opportunities for learning in almost all aspects of the pre-school curriculum. As the staff continue to develop the programme more attention needs to be given to the development of the World Around Us area of the curriculum.
- The quality of the pastoral care provision for the children in the playgroup is very good. The staff are very caring and there is a strong atmosphere of mutual respect among both the adults and the children.
- The quality of the adult interactions with the children is consistently of a high standard. The adults respond effectively to the interests and needs of the children; they use praise effectively to celebrate the children's achievements and to promote their confidence and self-esteem. During the inspection, the adults were most effective in promoting the children's early mathematical language in a natural way across a range of activities including the large block play and through the use of a range of junk materials as the children created models.
- The planned education programme provides good opportunities for learning across nearly all areas of the pre-school curriculum. A good start has been made by the staff to developing a systematic approach to observing the children at play and recording their responses. The staff now need to develop further their planning and assessment methods in order to focus, more sharply, on the learning potential and the role of the adult for each activity. The observations of the children's responses should be linked more clearly to future planning, in order to ensure progression and challenge throughout the year for the children.

- 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 playgroup provides good support for those children who have been identified as having special educational needs and effective links have been established with outside agencies.
- All of the children are provided with a healthy snack and they have good opportunities for regular physical activity.

7. Leadership and Management

- A high priority has been given to developing good working relationships, in which all members of the staff feel valued. This is underpinned by good teamwork and the excellent contribution made by all of the staff who work as part of an effective professional team.
- The new leader is well-organised, enthusiastic and committed to the ongoing development of the playgroup in the best interest of the children and the community. She is committed to the continuous improvement of the playgroup and is a good role model in her own practice.
- The staff have made a useful start to creating a development plan with associated action plans; however the self-evaluation processes are at an early stage of development. There is a need for the staff, with the support of their early years specialist, to develop further their understanding of the self-evaluation process.
- Good links have been established with the local primary school to try to ensure a smooth transition for the children as they prepare them for the next stage of their education. The playgroup enjoys good support from the parents and local community who have organised a variety of successful fund raising events.
- 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 good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity; for example, the children have access to a healthy snack and regular opportunities for physical play.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided in this playgroup is good. The playgroup has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the organisation has demonstrated the capacity to address.

The area for improvement is the need:

- to develop further the planning and assessment methods and the staff's understanding of the self-evaluation process.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the playgroup's progress on the areas for 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	15	
funded by Department of Education (DE)	15	
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2		
with a statement of special educational needs	0	
without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs		
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	-	-
New appointments within previous 12 months	-	-

Number of: ***	
Students	
Trainees	

*** 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
3 hours	N/A	

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