

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Early Days Country Playgroup,
Ballymoney, Co Antrim

Report of an Inspection in
April 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 settings, 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 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 and staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

All of the parents and staff who responded to the questionnaires were wholly positive about all aspects of the life and work of the playgroup. They praised the child-centred, caring and friendly approach of the staff and the high quality learning experiences provided for their children.

2. Context

Early Days Country Playgroup is situated one mile from the town of Ballymoney. All of the staff have been newly-appointed since the last inspection.

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 and are secure in the established routines of the day; they show increasing independence and a growing sense of responsibility as they access the resources and attend to their own needs. The children can make independent choices and decisions; they show high levels of concentration and perseverance when engaging in the activities and co-operate well with one another in purposeful and productive play.
- The children are developing well their ability to communicate with each other and with adults as they talk readily about their play and learning experiences. They concentrate during story-time and circle-time, listening attentively and participating enthusiastically. The children's early mark making and writing is of a high standard and they can express their ideas well through representational drawings and paintings.
- The quality of the children's mathematical language and their understanding of associated mathematical concepts, such as time, capacity, shape and number, are very well developed. They use mathematical language appropriately and with confidence across all areas of learning, both in the playroom and outdoors.
- The children's fine and gross physical motor skills are very well developed through the many opportunities available to them, throughout the day, to use a range of authentic tools, equipment and materials, both inside the playroom and in the well-resourced outdoor learning environment.

6. Provision

- The staff have created attractive and stimulating indoor and outdoor learning environments for the children and have provided a range of authentic resources and materials that promote effectively the children's problem solving skills and enhance their curiosity. A particular strength of the provision is the attention and detail given to developing the children's interest and knowledge in their natural surroundings.
- The daily routine is very well organised and provides an appropriate balance between free play and the more adult-led activities. The snack routine provides very good opportunities for the children to use their mathematical language and to continue to develop their independence and social skills.
- The quality of the interactions between the staff and the children is of a consistently high standard. The staff engage effectively with the children during play and extend their thinking and vocabulary through skilful and investigative questioning.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the playgroup is outstanding. The staff treat the children with care and respect and respond sensitively to their individual needs. There is an inclusive and supportive ethos in which each child is valued.

- The play programme is well-balanced and provides very good opportunities for learning across all six areas of the pre-school curriculum. The staff know their children very well. They have developed a thorough and effective cycle of observing, assessing and planning that ensures the needs of all the children are met at all times.
- The playgroup gives very good attention to healthy eating and physical activity.

7. Leadership and management

- There is evidence of high quality teamwork and a culture of collegiality at all levels within this playgroup. The leader is a very effective role model and is supported well by her enthusiastic and skilful team in all areas of the life and work of the playgroup. The staff are reflective practitioners and there is evidence of very effective self-evaluation which is informed appropriately by consultation and is leading to improvement in the provision on an ongoing basis.
- There are highly effective links with the parents who are kept informed about the life and work of the playgroup in a number of ways, including an informative monthly newsletter. A particular feature of the partnership with parents is the practice of sharing the observations on a weekly basis with parents and offering them an opportunity to comment, if they wish, or to share any particular achievements or news from home with the playgroup.
- The early years specialist (EYS) from the early years organisation provides effective support to develop the provision in the playgroup.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the playgroup has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Departments.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this playgroup is outstanding. The playgroup is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION EARLY DAYS COUNTRY PLAYGROUP

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school setting	16	-
in their immediate pre-school year	16	-
funded by Department of Education (DE)	16	-
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	2	-
with a statement of special educational needs	0	-
without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	0	-
with English as an additional language	0	-
who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	0	-

* Special Educational Needs = fewer than five

Attendance** of funded children for the previous school year.	92%
Number of days open in previous school year	188

** Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Sessions

Duration of morning session	Duration of afternoon session
3 hours	-

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	0	3
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification	0	3
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification	0	0
New appointments within previous 12 months	0	1

Number of: ***	
Students	1
Trainees	0

*** Total placements since September of current year

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