

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Early Days Playgroup,
Bangor, County Down

Voluntary playgroup

Report of an Inspection in
November 2018



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments

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1. Context

Early Days Playgroup operates in a playroom in the Youth Wing of Ballymagee Primary School, Bangor. Most of the children who attend the playgroup come from the surrounding area. A new leader and deputy leader were appointed in 2017 and a new management committee was appointed in September 2018.

Number of children:	Class 1
Attending part-time	26
Under 3 years of age*	4
Funded by Department of Education	22
With statement of special educational needs	0
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**	#

Average percentage attendance for the previous year.	96%
Number of days open in previous school year	183

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

2. Views of parents and staff

Forty-four percent of the parents and all of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. The responses were highly positive about almost all aspects of the life and work of the playgroup. The written comments commended the staff's approachability and their helpfulness and care in responding to the children's individual learning and development needs and interests.

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	Important areas for improvement
Outcomes for learners	Good
Quality of provision	Good
Leadership and management	Important areas for improvement

5. Outcomes for learners

- The children are happy and friendly; they enjoy sharing and talking about their work and interests. Their independence and self-management skills are good; for example, most respond to the staff expectations positively, choose confidently the materials and equipment they need and take responsibility for various aspects of their regular routines and personal care. During the healthy snack time, most children organise their own cups and dishes, pour their drinks and select food items unaided.
- Most of the children are well-settled. They engage in a range of activities which reflect well their various needs and interests. They join in enthusiastically in imaginative role plays, for example, communicating outdoors using walkie-talkies, and often ask and answer questions in relation to their play. Most understand some early mathematical concepts including aspects of number, measures and shape. The children's representational artwork is currently under-developed.
- Most of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, are making good progress in most aspects of the pre-school curriculum. For a minority of the children there is insufficient challenge in the planned activities to develop fully their problem solving and investigative skills.

6. Quality of provision

- In the playroom, the staff provide an attractive, child-centred learning environment. They make effective use of all the available space and add to the resources to take account of the children's needs and interests and foster their growing self-reliance.
- The staff are currently focusing on improving the quality of the planning for learning. The current planning does not specify precisely enough the learning potential and relevant topic vocabulary; both to guide more explicitly the adults' role and provide further progression in the children's learning. The staff's written observations and assessments are mostly relevant and increasingly insightful; in the best practice the recently introduced key worker progression sheets were used well to inform future planning.
- The quality of the staff interactions is consistently good in promoting and extending the children's language and their personal, social and emotional development and to develop, in context, some aspects of the children's early mathematical understanding including aspects of number, shape and patterns.
- The staff take appropriate account of the children's individual needs and, where necessary, the recommendations of outside agencies. There is regular and helpful communication with the parents in relation to the progress the children are making.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the playgroup's approach to care and welfare impacts positively on all aspects of the children's learning and well-being. The thoughtful, child-centred approaches and positive working relationships create a nurturing environment for the children and develops well their confidence and independence.

7. Leadership and management

- The leader and staff collaborate well as a practical team in responding to the children's needs and interests. Their day-to-day work focuses on bringing immediate benefit to the children's learning, personal and emotional well-being and development. They are supported well in their work by the management committee.
- The staff are currently auditing and improving their approaches to self-evaluation and shared reflection. These more rigorous approaches are not yet embedded into practice to inform accurately the strategic improvement work. The current action plans contain a number of relevant priorities for improvement; however, they lack sufficient baseline detail and do not indicate how the staff will monitor and evaluate the impact of the improvement actions on the quality of the provision and the outcomes for the children.
- The work of the playgroup is supported by an early years specialist; appropriately, the staff take good account of the guidance given to effect continuous improvement in the provision for the children.
- There are beneficial working links and positive communication with the parents, the adjacent nursery unit and primary school and several other local playgroups and schools. The staff make effective use of the parents and visitors to extend the children's learning and the children have regular access to the primary school's outdoor courtyard and environmental play areas. Appropriately, the staff are developing further the children's outdoor play.
- The playgroup's approach to care and welfare impacts positively on the children's learning and well-being. The staff know the children very well; they value and praise the children's efforts and suggestions within a relaxed and caring learning environment.

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

Early Days Playgroup needs to address important areas for improvement which include the need to:

- to identify more clearly the learning potential within the planning, including for outdoor learning, to inform the adult interactions and raise further the children's standards; and
- develop further and embed the self-evaluation and development planning processes to enable the staff to measure more accurately the impact of the improvement actions on the quality of the provision and the outcomes for the children.

There will be a formal follow-up inspection in 12-18 months.

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 playroom leader and staff team, the chair and another member of the management committee and the early years specialist; 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:

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.
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.
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.
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.

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