

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

First Steps Children's Centre,
Killen, Castlederg,
County Tyrone

Voluntary pre-school playgroup

Report of an Inspection in
November 2017



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

First Steps Pre-School is located in accommodation in the Children's Centre located in the village of Killen, Castlederg, County Tyrone. The leader has been in post since the last inspection, the rest of the staff were appointed in the last year; the acting deputy leader is two weeks in post.

Number of children:	Class 1
Attending part-time	22
Funded by Department of Education	23
With statement of special educational needs	#
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	7

Average percentage attendance for the previous year.	93
Number of days open in previous school year	189

Source: data provided by the setting.

fewer than 5

2. Views of parents and staff

A significant minority of the parents and all of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. All of the responses were very positive and the additional written comments praised the work of the staff and the respect and care shown to the children. The parents appreciate the regular progress meetings and range of learning through play experiences.

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	Very good
Provision for learning	Very good
Leadership and management	Very good

5. Outcomes for learners

- The children are happy on arrival and quickly settle to play. They are curious to explore and experiment and persevere during play to solve problems. The children's behaviour and awareness of one another is very good; they collaborate and share during play and are confident to ask the staff questions or to initiate their own ideas. They have very positive attitudes to learning.
- The children attain very good standards across the six areas of the pre-school curriculum and are independent in making choices of resources and activities to represent their ideas through models and artwork. The children are aware of early mathematical concepts about number, shape and measurement and during the outdoor ball games readily use positional language. They enjoy listening to one-to-one stories, making music in small groups and singing songs and action rhymes in larger groups. While the children's fine motor skills are developing appropriately the more able children's early mark-making skills are identified as an area for development.
- Most of the children listen and respond appropriately during the group story and rhyme session; and a small group are developing their listening and attention skills effectively as an individual group.
- The children who require support with aspects of their learning are fully integrated into the group and are making very good progress.

6. Quality of provision

- There is a well-established routine for the day and lengthy periods of time to enable the children to develop satisfaction in learning through play. The routines and transitions are well integrated and effectively promoted as learning opportunities. The learning environment is stimulating and thoughtfully presented to enable the children to have space and resources to develop their playful learning.
- The staff work effectively as a team to plan a progressive pre-school programme and collaborate weekly to review the children's learning and progress in order to respond to the children's varying stages of development. Through the key-worker approach, information on the children's progress is collated and shared with the parents at termly meetings. The staff know the children and their families well as almost all of the pre-school group have accessed a Pathways Funded Two Year Old programme at the centre and as a result all the children have formed secure relationships with the staff.
- The quality of the interactions between the staff and the children to promote learning and language is good to very good. The many instances of skilful interaction and close staff involvement to sustain thinking and learning is variable, and needs to be identified, consolidated and used more consistently across the team in order to raise further the quality of the interactions.
- The provision for children who have additional learning needs is a key strength of the centre. They are identified early and are very well supported to develop their social communication and language skills through the specific and realistic targeting of appropriate early interventions. The staff evaluations are informing the next steps in the children's learning. The productive links developed between the parents, the school and other agencies promote an effective, multi-agency approach to support the children.

- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the pre-school's approach to the care and welfare of the children impacts positively on all aspects of the learning, teaching and outcomes. The respectful ethos and caring relationships supports the children's sense of well-being and confidence in the staff as significant care givers.

7. Leadership and management

- There is highly effective leadership and management of the centre and a shared understanding among the staff of the promotion of a child-centred learning environment with inclusive access to the pre-school curriculum. The leader has sustained improvement effectively and has continued to embed the training among the staff from the Special Needs Capacity Building Programme.
- The centre's three year development plan and action plans are beginning to develop a focus on curricular aspects for improvement and it is appropriate to strengthen the arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the impact on the learning.
- The management group and the centre manager support the staff very well in their work. The effective early years specialist from the Early Years Organisation, identifies appropriate aspects of the curriculum and associated outcomes for the children's learning for further development. The existing processes for self-evaluation and action planning for improvement are not as effective as they have the potential to be.
- The centre has established effective links with parents, relevant agencies and the main feeder primary schools for the benefit of the children. Information about the children's progress and development is gathered regularly and is shared at key times throughout the year with the parents. Appropriate information is passed to the feeder primary schools to aid transition.

8. Safeguarding

- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect broadly the guidance from the relevant Departments. The chairperson and the new deputy leader are to access training for their respective roles and responsibilities in the near future.

9. Overall effectiveness

First Step's Children's Centre has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners.

The ETI will continue to monitor how the centre 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 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 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 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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