

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

First Steps Day Nursery,
Dundonald

Report of an inspection in
November 2015

eti

*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 used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

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 when reporting on Achievement and standards, on Provision for learning and on 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 nursery school / playgroup has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will continue to monitor how the nursery school / playgroup sustains improvement.
The nursery school /playgroup demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will continue to monitor how the nursery school/ playgroup sustains improvement.
The nursery school/ playgroup needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the nursery school's/ playgroup's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.
The nursery school / playgroup needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all learners. It requires external support to do so. The ETI will monitor and report on the nursery school's / playgroup's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

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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 publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self-evaluation* at: [Together Towards Improvement Pre-school | Education and Training Inspectorate](#)

Inspectors observed learning and teaching 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 and staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

The very small number of parental responses and comments were highly positive of the work of the staff and the play experiences provided for the children. The staff responses indicated an effective team approach between the playgroup staff. A small number of issues were discussed with the management.

2. Focus of inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interests of all children, the purpose of inspection is, through effective linking of internal and external approaches, to evaluate the:

- children's achievements and standards;
- quality of provision for learning; and
- quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

The playgroup is part of First Steps Day Nursery which is situated in the grounds of the Ulster Hospital, Dundonald. At the time of the inspection, six children were enrolled for the funded session; this number falls below the minimum criterion of eight children required by the Department of Education to be part of the pre-school programme. Since entering the pre-school programme, there have been several changes across the staff team which has impacted negatively on the rate of improvement and development.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Important areas for improvement
Achievements and standards	Good
Provision for learning	Important areas for improvement
Leadership and management	Requires significant improvement

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are making good progress in most aspects of their learning. They are developing very well their independence, co-operate well with the daily routines and show care and respect for each other. They are well motivated and enthusiastic about their play experiences and have very good attention and listening skills during the greeting time and story sessions. Their oral language and communication skills are well developed and many of the children use early mathematical language to count, talk about colour, measurement and shape as a natural part of their play. While the children enjoy imaginative and creative play, the small number of children attending restricts the full development of their collaborative and imaginative play.

6. Provision for learning

- The staff have a very good working relationship with the children. They promote effectively purposeful play, listen well to the children and value and promote their ideas. They model relevant vocabulary, encourage their independence and often extend the children's language and learning as they engage with them through the play.
- The attractive and stimulating learning environment in the playroom has been a focus of improvement and is set out into well resourced, distinct areas for play. The outdoor environment is appropriately identified by the staff as an area to develop further the learning experiences. The daily timetable is well managed and operates smoothly to provide a balanced programme between freely chosen and enjoyable led activities.
- The staff plan an interesting range of activities which cover the six areas of the pre-school curriculum. They recognise the need to develop further their skill of planning and assessment to improve the progression in learning across all area of the curriculum and to meet the needs of individual children. In particular, the staff need to develop energetic physical play, music and the use of construction materials. The staff would also benefit from training on the identification, planning and record-keeping for children who require additional support with their learning.
- The quality of the pastoral care of the children is good. The key features include the inclusive and respectful environment in which each child is valued and supported, the focus on helping children to recognise and understand their feelings and emotions and their excellent behaviour.
- The children have a healthy break and regular opportunities for outdoor play which help them to develop a healthy lifestyle.

7. Leadership and management

- While there is good team work among the staff in the playroom and the room leader is a good role model in her daily work with the children, there is limited evidence of effective, strategic leadership and management. The processes for systematic self-evaluation, action planning and longer term development planning linked to improvement are at a very early stage of development. No links with schools or other agencies have been developed. The support from the early years specialist from the Early Years Organisation needs to focus on developing incrementally the staff's skill and understanding to enable them to link their actions to evaluations focused on the improvement of the children's learning.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department. The following areas need to be addressed:
 - identify a deputy designated person who is located on the premises; and
 - ensure a systematic approach to all relevant record-keeping.

8. Overall effectiveness

The playgroup needs to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the playgroup's progress in addressing the areas for improvement which include the need to:

- develop effective, strategic leadership and management linked to systematic self-evaluation and development planning to promote continuous improvement; and
- continue to plan suitable progression in learning across all areas of the curriculum and use the observations to meet the needs and interests of individual children.

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

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON FIRST STEPS DAY NURSERY

1. Details of children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3
Attending full-time			
Attending part-time	6		
Under 3 years of age*			
Funded by Department of Education	6		
With statement of special educational needs			
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**			
With English as an additional language	1		
Who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school			

* On 1 July.

** The stages refer to those set out in the Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs.

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	100%
Average attendance for the previous year.	76%
Number of days open in previous school year	185

2. Duration of sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
	9:00-11:30	

3. Details of staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff including, Teachers/Leaders		2
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification		2
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification		
New appointments within the previous 12 months		2

Number of: ***	
Students	
Trainees	

*** Total placements since September of current year

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