

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

First Steps Playgroup, Lisburn,
Co Antrim

Report of an Inspection in
March 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

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.

All of the returns from the questionnaires indicated high levels of satisfaction with the work of the playgroup.

2. Context

First Steps Playgroup is accommodated within the day nursery in the Lagan Valley Hospital complex in Lisburn, County Antrim. At the time of the inspection, there were 16 children enrolled in the playgroup. The children come from a very wide catchment area; the playgroup also accommodates the children of the staff who work within the hospital.

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	Very Good
Achievements and Standards	Very Good
Provision	Very Good
Leadership and Management	Very Good

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- Most of the children are very well settled; they are confident and familiar in following the routines within the setting and display good levels of independence. They engage enthusiastically in their learning; they are confident, well-motivated and inquisitive about the world in which they live. During the inspection, there were many examples of sustained, purposeful, collaborative play. The children's behaviour is very good and they are confident in engaging with the staff and visitors to the playgroup.
- The children demonstrate very good self-management skills. The availability of an appropriate range of writing tools and materials encourages them 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 promote 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.

6. Provision

- There is a relaxed, happy atmosphere within the playgroup; this is underpinned by the adults' responses to the children's individual needs. The daily routines are used effectively to promote and extend learning, particularly in the children's understanding of early mathematical concepts; nearly all the available time is used effectively for learning. The adult interactions with the children are of a high quality; the adults respond skilfully to the children's sense of enquiry, often building on their ideas and exploiting opportunities to extend their thinking. It will be appropriate for them to review the adult deployment arrangements within the playroom, in order to support further the development of the children's independence. There are very good opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The use of role-play to develop the children's language, imagination and communication skills and the opportunities to develop the children's early mathematical language are particular strengths of the provision. The written planning is developing well; it outlines some of the planned learning within each area of the pre-school curriculum. The staff carry out regular and detailed observations and assessments of the children's progress and needs. They have appropriately identified the need to develop further their planning in order to demonstrate more clearly progression in the children's learning.
- The links with the parents to help them support the children's learning are very good. The parents are kept informed about the planned learning themes, songs and rhymes through a monthly newsletter. The parents are kept up-to-date about their children's achievements and progress through one meeting each term and through an informative written report at the end of the year. There are very good pastoral links with the primary schools to which most of the children transfer.

- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the playgroup is very good; this is evidenced, for example, through the inclusive ethos. The staff are very caring and sensitive to the needs of individual children; there is an atmosphere of mutual respect among both the adults and the children.
- The playgroup has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department.
- The playgroup gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, through the healthy snack menus and routines and the opportunity for regular energetic outdoor play.

7. Leadership and Management

- The work of the playgroup is overseen by a regional manager; the leader of the playgroup ensures the smooth administration, organisation and operation of the playgroup. They are supported very effectively by the dedicated and hard-working staff team who share their enthusiasm and commitment to meeting the needs of all of the children.
- The staff have begun to develop self-evaluation to promote improvement. It will be important for them to develop these procedures further and to use the outcomes to inform the planning for the continued long-term development of the playgroup.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this playgroup is very good. 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 FIRST STEPS 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	8	
funded by Department of Education (DE)	8	
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	8	
with a statement of special educational needs	1	
without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	0	
with English as an additional language	1	
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.	96%
Number of days open in previous school year	185

** Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Sessions

Duration of morning session	Duration of afternoon session
2½ hours	-

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader		4
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification		4
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification		1
New appointments within previous 12 months		0

Number of: ***	
Students	0
Trainees	0

*** Total placements since September of current year

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