

Education and Training Inspectorate

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Happitots Pre-school Centre, Cullybackey, County Antrim

Voluntary playgroup DE Ref No: 3AB-0102

Report of an Inspection in October 2019

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1. Context

Happitots Pre-school is located within a large hall in a community centre in Cullybackey; there is access to outdoor play which includes the use of tarmac and grass areas. The children attending the playgroup come from the local area. There have been changes in staff since the last inspection.

Number of children:	Class 1
Attending part-time	21
Funded by Department of Education	20
With English as an additional language	#

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	95
Average percentage attendance for the previous year.	Not available
Number of days open in previous school year	185

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

N/A not available

2. Views of parents and staff

A small number of the parents and all of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. All of the responses were very positive about the life and work of the playgroup. In written responses the parents commented positively on the very approachable staff who provide regular updates on the children's progress. The staff comments highlighted their collegial commitment to delivering a child-centred approach. The questionnaire responses were shared with the leader and a representative from the management committee.

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 well settled for the time of year. They engage in good periods of purposeful play and most play collaboratively, especially in the small world and in role play areas. A majority of children understand and can follow independently the rules and routines of the playgroup. The children are well behaved and most of them are able to share, take turns and play an active role in the tidy-up routine.
- A significant majority of children are beginning to recognise that print has meaning. They have a good interest in books and join in enthusiastically with singing and rhymes. A minority of the children require adult support to listen and participate during story time.
- The children's fine motor skills are developing well; they use skilfully a range of equipment including real cutlery, writing implements and art tools. A majority of the children express confidently their ideas through model making and playing musical instruments. Their representational drawings are of a good standard and they make creative use of and investigate the properties of natural materials, such as, the foliage, fruit and vegetables of the season.
- In the outdoor area the children use, with good control, a variety of wheeled vehicles. Most of the children explore their learning environment with curiosity and are very engaged in play that relates to the world around them. They enjoy activities that reflect their interests, such as, playing in the mud kitchen, digging and looking for mini-beasts.
- With the exception of number, the children's use of early mathematical language is limited and is not integrated naturally within play.

6. Quality of provision

- The staff provide a varied programme with good opportunities for the children to develop their learning across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. While outdoor planning is in place, it is underdeveloped; this has been identified appropriately by the staff and the independent early years' specialist as an area for improvement. The staff know the children very well as is evidenced by the regular and meaningful observations of the children; however, they are not linking the assessment information closely enough to the planning to ensure progression for individual children's learning.
- The quality of staff interactions with the children is variable. Where the practice is good the staff model language and topic vocabulary appropriately and ask open-ended questions to extend the children's thinking and develop sustained conversations. However, a majority of the staff also missed opportunities within the play activities to exploit fully the children's learning. All of the staff are encouraging and support the children to develop well their social skills, for example, snack time and re-enacting familiar roles during role play.
- The staff make good use of the expansive learning environment. A stimulating range of well-organised authentic and natural resources are provided for the children to access freely across the distinct play areas. The children's art work is valued and celebrated through the wall displays.

- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the pre-school's approach to care and welfare impacts positively on the children's learning. The caring ethos and effective teamwork supports the children's self-esteem and confidence.

7. Leadership and management

- There are important areas for improvement within the leadership and management. While there is a three-year development plan in place, the action planning processes do not sufficiently guide the staff to bring about the necessary improvements and measure the impact on the outcomes for the children and the quality of the provision. The staff understanding and use of self-evaluation is underdeveloped.
- The staff team and management committee work well collegially. The management committee members are supportive of all aspects of the playgroup; they are well informed through regular visits to the playgroup sessions. The management committee fundraise extensively, to purchase resources for the identified needs of the playgroup.
- The playgroup is developing positive links with parents, primary schools and the local community.

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. However, Happitots Pre-school Centre needs to:
 - update the Anti-bullying Policy to reflect more fully the current guidance from the Department of Education; and
 - review the procedure for completing detailed risk assessments.

9. Overall effectiveness

Happitots Pre-school Centre needs to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners.

The areas for improvement are:

- to use the observations and assessments of the children's learning to inform the short-term planning and ensure progression in learning for all children;
- to develop the planning and effective use of the outdoor area for learning;
- to develop the children's understanding and use of early mathematical language and concepts; and
- to develop further the processes of self-evaluation and development planning.

The ETI will monitor and report on the playgroup's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection in 12 to 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 chairperson of 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 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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