

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Happy Days Playgroup, Newry,
County Down

Report of an inspection in
April 2016

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 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 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 confidential questionnaires.

The responses to the confidential questionnaire by the parents were highly positive about the care, dedication and professional approach of the staff and the high quality of the children's learning experiences. The staff responses to the questionnaire were also very positive about almost all aspects of the provision. A small number of responses indicated staff would welcome more involvement and links with the management committee.

2. Focus of inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest 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

Happy Days Playgroup is accommodated in the Meadow and Armagh Community Centre in Newry. Since the last inspection, there have been several changes of staff and early years specialists.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

| Overall effectiveness | High level of capacity for sustained improvement |
|----------------------------|--|
| Achievements and standards | Very good |
| Provision for learning | Very good |
| Leadership and management | Very good |

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are making good to excellent progress across all areas of the pre-school curriculum and clearly enjoy their learning.
- The children are developing very well their independence, concentration and attention as they engage with the play activities and the daily routines. They are respectful to the staff and one another and can collaborate and take turns during play.
- The children are interested in familiar stories, show an interest in print and experimental writing and participate very well in a good range of active rhymes and songs. They talk confidently to the adults about their experiences and hold sustained conversations with the staff and each other. The children who have delays in their expressive language and communication skills are making good progress in developing well their receptive language and listening skills; they respond well to a range of strategies to support them.
- The children explore pattern and shape through the paints and independent use of junk materials to create models. A majority of the children, in particular the girls, are developing well their use of tools, such as, scissors and pencils. They take on roles in their home-play and show a high level of interest in the natural materials included in areas of play. A majority of the children show an interest in counting, the use of the sand-timer, size and shape during their play and the snack routine.
- The children respond well to the wide range of educational visits to enhance their learning experiences, expand their vocabulary and raise their awareness and understanding of the wider community.

6. Provision for learning

- The learning environment includes a playroom, outdoor space and large hall for physical play. The space is managed effectively to provide a very good range of learning experiences that are organised to meet the specific needs of the children.
- The staff are all caring, respectful and supportive as they interact with the children. They promote very effectively the children's independence, concentration and productive play. The staff promote a sense of fun and extend the children's language and thinking skills as they read stories and ask appropriate open-ended questions to stimulate their ideas.
- The staff have focused recently on developing further their written planning which is detailed and increasingly responsive to the needs of the children. They plan a rich and varied programme providing good to excellent opportunities for learning across all aspects of the pre-school curriculum. All staff contribute to the evaluations of the planned programme and record regularly the children's progress. This information is used well for early identification of need and to provide detailed information to the parents. The staff have identified the need to continue to develop the link between tracking the children's stages of development and matching the range of resources to meet the full range of needs.

- The children with additional needs are identified early and their needs are being well met with a combination of individual support and close liaison with parents, health professionals and other agencies. The individual plans need to be developed further to identify small, achievable and more measurable targets.
- The quality of pastoral care is very good. The staff create a positive, caring environment in which every child is valued. The children from a wide range of backgrounds and needs are well integrated and respectful to one another. They are developing very well their social skills; their behaviour is very good.
- The healthy break, curricular focus on healthy foods and dental care and, the very good opportunities for energetic, physical play promote a healthy lifestyle.

7. Leadership and management

- The leader is a very good role model in his work with the children. He and the deputy leader have worked hard along with the staff to develop a collegial whole team approach to developing the provision. Both leaders have completed higher-level qualifications in early years leadership and management to build further their capacity and, there is evidence that such study has led to further improvement in their practice.
- There is an open and honest culture of reflection and consultation with the staff and parents which informs relevant priorities for development. The staff, management committee and early years specialist need to work together to develop action plans which link relevant staff development and measure more clearly the improvement in the children's experiences and outcomes.
- There are good links with a number of local primary schools to which the children transfer to year one classes. There is effective communication with the parents through, for example, the informative newsletter and regular parental meetings.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the playgroup has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect broadly the guidance issued by the relevant Departments. The following area needs to be addressed:
 - the recently appointed management committee need to complete training on the recruitment and vetting of staff.

8. Overall effectiveness

Happy Days Playgroup has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all learners. The ETI will continue to monitor how the playgroup sustains improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON HAPPY DAYS PLAYGROUP, NEWRY

1. Details of children

| Number of children: | Class 1 |
|---|---------|
| Attending full-time | 0 |
| Attending part-time | 26 |
| Under 3 years of age* | 5 |
| Funded by Department of Education | 21 |
| With statement of special educational needs | 0 |
| Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs | 3 |
| At CoP stages 3 or 4** | 2 |
| At CoP stages 1 or 2** | 5 |
| With English as an additional language | 5 |
| Who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school | 0 |

* 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. | 86% |
| Number of days open in previous school year | 189 |

2. Duration of sessions

| Full-time | Part-time: am | Part-time: pm |
|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| | 09:00-11:30 | |

3. Details of staff

| Number of: | Full-time | Part-time |
|---|------------------|------------------|
| Staff including, Teachers/Leaders | 2 | 3 |
| Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification | 2 | 3 |
| New appointments within the previous 12 months | | 1 |

Accommodation

1. The toilets are located outside of the playroom.

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