

# PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Harbour Bears Pre-school,  
Larne, County Antrim

Voluntary playgroup

Report of an inspection in  
May 2017



The Education and Training Inspectorate  
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education  
Department for the Economy  
and other commissioning Departments

CUSTOMER  
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EXCELLENCE



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## INTRODUCTION

### 1. Context

Harbour Bears Pre-school is accommodated in the Curran Bowling Pavilion in Larne; the pre-school has a small enclosed outdoor area and also makes use of the larger park area in which it is situated. The building is a shared community facility; the staff set out and clear the pre-school resources on a regular basis and accompany children out of the playroom to use the bathroom facilities. The children come from the local area; at the time of the inspection, there were a small number of younger children attending the session. The pre-school is oversubscribed with full age children for the coming academic year. Since the last inspection, a new deputy leader took up post in 2015.

Number of children:	Class 1
Under 3 years of age	12
Attending part-time	29
Funded by Department of Education	17
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	#

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	100
Average attendance for the previous year.	90.2%
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

### 2. Views of parents and staff

The very small number of parents who responded to the confidential questionnaire were very satisfied with all aspects of the provision; in particular they highlighted the care and guidance of the staff to help children reach their potential and the useful information provided for parents. The staff responses indicated a strong sense of teamwork, a shared vision for starting children on their educational journey and a commitment to reflect on their work and make further improvements.

### 3. Focus of the inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all children, 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	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Outcomes for learners	Very good
Provision for learning	Good
Leadership and management	Good

**KEY FINDINGS**

5. Outcomes for learners

- The children are developing very well their social skills; their behaviour is excellent and they are respectful to adults and to one another. Most of the children select and use materials confidently and manage the daily routines very independently. The younger children are gaining confidence and progressing well in line with their age and stage of development.
- Most of the children enjoy participating in sustained conversations about their own family experiences and their activities both with the staff and one another. The girls in particular use their language and communication skills very imaginatively to develop their own stories and ideas using puppets and the small world figures. They also make good use of the writing materials available. The children are beginning to show a good awareness of sounds, rhyme and rhythm and they recognise that print has meaning.
- The children use the wide range of art materials available to experiment and express their own ideas. They make simple representational models of vehicles, experiment with mixing colours and draw some detailed pictures relating to their topics. Small groups of children spend sustained periods playing imaginatively and re-enacting familiar roles in the home corner and mud kitchen areas.
- The children understand simple mathematical concepts and are beginning to use mathematical language appropriately during their play as they sort, count, make comparisons of size and weight and use positional language. They solve problems during their play as they respond to the adults' skilful questioning, which encourages them to think and test out their ideas.
- The children explore the properties of natural materials through their senses; they are highly engaged as they investigate the sand and water tray, water the plants, and cut vegetables. While a small group of girls made very imaginative use of the construction materials, overall the development of the play with construction materials both indoors and outdoors was inhibited by limitations in the resources and space.

## **6. Quality of provision**

- The high quality of the staff interaction to promote the children's independence, language and thinking is a key strength of the provision. The staff model a rich range of vocabulary and mathematical language as a natural part of the play; they use a good range of open-ended questions appropriately to encourage the children to think and solve problems for themselves. Sensitive, effective support is provided for those requiring help with aspects of their social and emotional development. The staff's expectations about the length of time that the children can concentrate and attend to activities are not high enough. Consequently, a small group of pre-school children do not, at times, develop their play sufficiently.
- The attractive and stimulating learning environment is set out with distinct areas for play, attractive displays of the children's own work and a good range of information for parents. The daily timetable is well managed to provide a good balance of freely chosen and adult led activities.
- The staff plan a broad pre-school programme with good to very good opportunities for learning in most aspects of the pre-school curriculum. However, the planning is not integrated well enough to provide sufficient space and resources for children to develop aspects of develop their play fully and to take enough account of the needs and interest of the boys. The staff make regular and relevant assessments of the children's learning and progress. They are currently, and appropriately, in the process of developing a more consistent approach to using this information as a guide in planning for the children's next steps in their learning.
- The staff identify promptly those children who require support with aspects of their learning. They use relevant training effectively to support children's language development and they liaise closely with the parents in monitoring the children's progress. The inspection findings confirm that it is timely that the leader has identified the need for further training in the co-ordination of special educational needs; the use of information from other relevant professionals to guide the planning process is under-developed.
- The care and welfare, impacts positively on the children's ability to form relationships with other adults and one another and is evident in their developing social skills, good behaviour and their positive attitudes to learning.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The leader is her own early year's specialist; she links with other independent early years specialists and the local early education partnership to maintain professional development and share practice. She has led several positive improvements including the introduction of home visits, the introduction of story sacks to promote language and a review of transition information to improve the exchange of information with local primary schools.
- There are effective links with the feeder primary schools to promote smooth transitions. Communication with the parents is developed well through, for example, home visits, induction packs, newsletters and questionnaires.

- The staff team are dedicated, reflective in their work and have a shared vision for developing the pre-school further. They have identified strengths and areas requiring further development which the inspection findings endorse.
- The management committee are kept informed through regular meetings with the leader and contribute to fundraising for resources. The pre-school has purchased a site and building and are actively seeking funding to refurbish it as a dedicated pre-school facility.
- The process of systematic self-evaluation and action planning is under-developed. The leadership, management and staff need to identify more clearly the specific improvements required and the actions to be taken and to measure the impact on the outcomes for the children.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **8. Overall effectiveness**

Harbour Bears Pre-school demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. There are areas for improvement that the school has demonstrated the capacity to address.

The key areas are to:

- use the evaluations of learning and assessment information to guide the staff more clearly on planning the children's next steps in their learning;
- plan the use of the space available both indoors and outdoors in a more holistic way to provide rich experiences across all areas of the pre-school curriculum; and
- continue to develop the processes for self-evaluation and action planning, prioritising focused areas for improvement with clearer links to building staff capacity and improving outcomes for all of the children.

The ETI will monitor how the pre-school sustains improvement.

**Information on sessions and staff****Duration of sessions**

<b>Part-time: am</b>
9:00-12:00

**Details of staff**

<b>Number of:</b>	<b>Part-time</b>
Staff including, Teachers/Leaders	4
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification	4

<b>Number of: *</b>	
Students	1

**Source:** data provided by the setting.

\* Total placements since September of current year

### Inspection method and evidence base

The effective practice and self-evaluation questions which guide inspection and self-evaluation of pre-school settings, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the ETI publication *The Pre-school Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework* at: <https://www.eti.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

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 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 the 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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