

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Jack Horner Community
Playgroup, Ballycastle,
County Antrim

Voluntary community playgroup

Report of an inspection in
October 2016



Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments



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, 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 a representative of the management group; and
- the opportunity for the parents and staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

A small number of the staff and the parents responded to the questionnaires; their responses and comments were wholly positive and supportive of the playgroup's work.

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

Jack Horner Community Playgroup operates in premises beside the Sheskburn Community Centre in Ballycastle. The children come mainly from the surrounding area. The leader was appointed in 2015 and a new assistant was appointed in 2016.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Achievements and standards	Very good
Provision for learning	Good
Leadership and management	Good

5. Achievements and standards

- The children approach one another, the staff and other adults confidently and respond well to the staff's expectations for them. The children remain engaged in their play activities for sustained periods, taking high levels of responsibility for most aspects of their learning. They enjoy using creatively the various carefully chosen authentic resources available for play. The children's behaviour is exemplary; they treat one another, the adults and their play resources and equipment with respect; the secure development of the children's personal, social and emotional wellbeing is a particular strength.
- The children use accurately their developing language to explain and share what they are doing. They are interested in browsing books and managing their own resources, guided well by the labels and visual prompts provided by the staff to encourage the children's developing self-reliance. They are developing very well their active listening and attention skills during story and rhyme sessions.
- The children respond well to the frequent opportunities the staff provide to engage and extend their interest in the world around them; they enjoy manipulating and investigating the various interesting natural and man-made materials in the playroom, showing curiosity and asking pertinent questions. Their representational artwork is detailed and attractive. Overall, the children have a very positive attitude to learning and are making very good progress in all aspects of the pre-school curriculum.

6. Provision for learning

- The staff team provide a child-centred and stimulating learning environment containing high levels of interest for the children. They make productive use of the daily routines to extend the children's independence.
- The adults always listen to and value the children's talk. The staff's interactions, on the day of the inspection, were of variable quality; in the best practice, the highly skilled use of open questions maintained the flow of the children's learning conversations using relevant topic vocabulary well-matched to the individual needs and responses of the children. In these instances, the staff also made effective use of incidental opportunities to extend the children's learning further. This effective practice is not consistent and needs to be developed further by all of the staff.
- The planning demonstrates that the children have broad and balanced learning experiences across the six pre-school learning areas with the staff monitoring the impact of the programme on the children's progress.
- The staff's observations to assess and record the children's progress are not consistently detailed and evaluative. The current lunch-time arrangements have reduced the amount of time available to the staff for this important shared planning and preparation work. The management committee needs to work with the leader and staff in reviewing the current arrangements in order to ensure that the staff have sufficient time to complete the supporting paperwork to a consistently high standard.

- The children who have additional needs are identified, supported and monitored appropriately by the staff and are progressing well in their learning and all round development.
- The daily programme includes a healthy snack for the children and an appropriate session for energetic physical play outdoors.
- The quality of pastoral care is very good. There is a welcoming caring atmosphere which is evident in all aspects of the life and work of the playgroup; the staff take careful consideration of the needs and interests of the children.

7. Leadership and management

- The highly-skilled leader has a clear vision for the continuous development of the playgroup. She is supported in this by the staff team, who are keen to bring about further improvement in the provision and develop further their skills.
- The playgroup's processes for self-evaluation and development planning are not yet well enough developed. The action plans outline a number of relevant priorities for improvement which need more specific detail about how the impact of the planned improvement actions will be monitored and evaluated.
- The playgroup has built up a very good range of links with the parents, the community and various external agencies to support and extend the staff's work with the children. The parents are welcomed into the playgroup, their views are taken into account and they are given relevant information about the progress their children are making.
- The independent early years specialist provides skilful support to help develop the provision. As a next step, it will be important that the staff embed this training and and sustain the guidance further within the pre-school programme.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the pre-school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Departments.

8. Overall effectiveness

Jack Horner Community Playgroup demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the playgroup sustains improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON JACK HORNER COMMUNITY PLAYGROUP

1. Details of children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3
Attending part-time	12		
Funded by Department of Education	12		
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	#		
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	#		

Source: data provided by the nursery school / playgroup.

* On 1 July past.

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

Numbers fewer than 5 are redacted.

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	12
Average attendance for the previous year.	
Number of days open in previous school year	188

2. Duration of sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
	9.15-11.45	

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		0
New appointments within the previous 12 months		1

Number of: ***	
Students	1
Trainees	0

*** Total placements since September of current year

Health and safety

1. A risk assessment needs to be carried out in relation to the height of the playgroup's perimeter fence, given the playgroup's location beside a river.
2. Some of the small wooden posts in the outdoor play area are rotten and need to be replaced.

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