

Education and Training Inspectorate

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Kiddies Castle Early Years, Castledawson, County Londonderry

Voluntary playgroup DE Ref No (3AB-0104)

Report of an Inspection in March 2019

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1. Context

Kiddies Castle Early Years Playgroup is accommodated in premises which are located off the main street in Castledawson. There is no outdoor learning area attached to the premises. Since the last inspection, two new playgroup assistants and a new independent early years specialist have taken up post.

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending part-time	24	24
Funded by Department of Education	24	24
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	#	#
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	#	#
At CoP stages 3 or 4	#	#

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	100%
Average percentage attendance for the previous year.	84%
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

Seventeen of the parents and all of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. The responses were highly positive about all aspects of the provision. The additional written comments by parents highlighted the excellent, caring staff, the progress their children make in their learning and the very good range of information provided to enable them to help their child at home. The staff commented on how they minimise the negative impact of the lack of an outdoor space by providing physical activity and natural resources as an integral part of the daily indoor experiences. 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	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Outcomes for learners	Outstanding
Quality of provision	Very good
Leadership and management	Very good

5. Outcomes for learners

- The children have very positive attitudes and dispositions for learning and make very good to excellent progress across almost all aspects of their learning.
- The children are highly independent in making choices and developing their own play. They self-manage their snack, daily routines and key transition points with great confidence and maturity. They are very respectful towards the staff and one another as they collaborate during their play and care for their playroom environment.
- The children are very attentive during large and small group sessions and spend sustained periods focusing on their tasks and developing their own ideas during their play. They enjoy listening to group stories and explore books on their own or with a friend; they are also beginning to understand print has meaning in real life contexts. They ask questions and talk confidently to the staff and one another about their experiences using a very good range of vocabulary.
- The children use a wide range of early mathematical language naturally through their play and as they participate in number rhymes and stories. They count, make shapes with the dough, sort animals at the farm, follow the sequence of the day at greeting time and make comparisons of size when manipulating a range of equipment.
- The children respond with enthusiasm and good co-ordination to a range of songs and music using small and large body movements and small equipment such as bean bags. They use a range of materials to represent their own ideas in for example, the dough, block play area and the art areas.
- The children's self-initiated role play is very well developed. They co-operate and negotiate in groups; they use the available materials with imagination to act out familiar roles, such as, caring for babies, cooking the dinner, farming and going to the office.
- The children throw and catch, jump and move with increasing skill and dexterity. They enjoy investigating the properties of the dough, water and sand for prolonged periods and feeding the fish and watering the plants within the playroom.
- The children identified as requiring support with their speech and language skills and concentration are making steady progress with effective adult support.

6. Quality of provision

- The playroom is well resourced and set out very attractively into distinct areas of play. The addition of natural materials, balance of table top and floor play areas and displays of the children's own art work enhance further the child friendly learning environment indoors. While the staff provide well-planned physical activity throughout the morning within an area of the playroom, the lack of an outdoor space places limitations on the extent of the energetic play experiences available.
- The high quality of the interactions between the staff and the children is a key strength of the provision. The staff are all skilful in supporting and extending the children's own ideas, language and thinking through sustained conversations during play activities and daily routines such as snack and tidy-up time. Large and small group times are led well and balanced effectively with very good adult engagement during child-initiated play.
- The staff have a good understanding of the pre-school curriculum and plan a varied and interesting programme across the year with very good to excellent opportunities for learning in almost all aspects of the programme. The weekly planning guides the staff effectively in their day to day work with the children and their evaluations of learning are used well to respond to the children's interests. The support being provided for individual children's needs to be more explicitly embedded into the planning and monitored and evaluated more systematically.
- The staff observe and assess the children on a monthly basis and use the information to identify individual learning needs and report to parents. The staff are currently trialling new methods of assessment; the staff recognise the need to develop these further to provide more systematic tracking of progress across each area of the pre-school curriculum.
- The children who have additional learning needs are identified early and are given caring and sensitive support to access the curriculum and are making good to very good progress. The staff have engaged in a good range of training which informs well their practice. They liaise regularly with parents and other relevant professionals. Individual plans are drawn up to set and review targets for each child; however the targets are not sufficiently specific and achievable to measure effectively the children's progress.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the pre-school's approach to care and welfare impacts positively on learning and teaching, and outcomes. The very caring and positive approach to children and families fosters a positive ethos for learning enabling the children to become confident and independent learners.

7. Leadership and management

- The leadership, management and staff work well as a team in the management and organisation of the playgroup. The staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and are deployed very effectively within the playroom.
- The independent early year's specialist provides regular and relevant practical guidance and advice to both the leaders and the management committee.

- The staff, parents and management committee are consulted regularly as part of the ongoing review of provision. The leadership and management have prioritised a range of relevant areas for further development such as the development of an outdoor area, updating policies and their assessment methods. They can demonstrate the impact of improvement in for example, a more effective room layout, the engagement of parents in the Big Bedtime Read, building staff capacity and maintaining high quality learning experiences for the children. The action planning process does not focus specifically enough on measuring the impact of actions on the children's learning and requires further development with the support of the early year's specialist.
- The close links and effective communication between the main feeder primary schools and the playgroup help to provide smooth transitions for the children. The playgroup is well regarded within the local community and the parents report benefits to themselves and their children as a result of being involved in the Big Bedtime Read.

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 the pre-school centre needs to:

- have a scheduled timetable for updating policies;
- update the risk assessment formats for outings to identify more clearly the risks and how they are being minimised; and
- complete the current updates and share them with the parents.

9. Overall effectiveness

Kiddies Castle Early Years has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners.

The ETI will monitor how the playgroup sustains improvement.

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 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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