

Education and Training Inspectorate

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Killough Playgroup, Killough, County Down

Voluntary playgroup DE Ref No: 4BB-0388

Report of an Inspection in December 2019

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1. Context

Killough Playgroup is located in mobile accommodation within the grounds of St Joseph's Primary School in the village of Killough. The playgroup operates a morning session. At the time of the inspection, there were no permanent members of staff employed; the playgroup was being led and managed by volunteer staff.

No statistical data was provided by the setting.

2. Views of parents and staff

A small number of parents responded to the confidential questionnaire. The responses were positive about a majority of aspects of the life and work of the playgroup. In particular, the parents are content with: the children's enjoyment of and progress in their learning; and, the appropriate range of learning activities available for their children within the playroom. Most of the parents raised issues concerning the lack of activities available for the children outdoors and the poor communication and consultation surrounding the recent staffing changes. A summary of the questionnaire responses were shared with the acting 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	Address urgently the significant areas for improvement
Outcomes for learners	Requires significant improvement
Quality of provision	Requires urgent improvement
Leadership and management	Requires urgent improvement

5. Outcomes for learners

- Overall, the children's level of interest, independence and perseverance in play falls well below the standard expected for the time of year. The children do not engage sufficiently in social and collaborative play and a small number of children have difficulty in sharing resources and turn-taking. The children's understanding of early mathematical concepts and use of mathematical language is underdeveloped. The majority of children require support in the development of their fine motor skills.
- The children are beginning to self-manage their snack routine, label their own work and access resources. They show interest in the recently acquired resources, in particular, the magnifying glasses, sensory tent and craft materials. During the inspection, the children engaged in spontaneous singing and played percussion instruments. Most of the children listen well during story time and join in during rhymes and songs.

6. Quality of provision

- At the time of the inspection, there were no suitably qualified staff with relevant working knowledge of the Curricular Guidance for Pre-School Education or prior experience of working in a pre-school setting. As a result, the volunteer staff, while they engage warmly with the children, do not have a shared understanding of how to develop learning through purposeful play. In particular, there are too many missed opportunities to develop the children's mathematical language and concepts, curiosity and creativity. The interactions are regulatory and do not promote, develop and extend sufficiently the children's learning.
- The current planned programme is not challenging enough for the children and consequently does not ensure appropriate progression for the time of year across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. Some aspects of the playgroup's early mathematical programme are too formal and not age and stage appropriate.
- The volunteer staff are getting to know the children and are beginning to develop an understanding of the children's current learning needs. The short-term planning outlines the activities that the children are to undertake, but does not outline sufficiently the learning to be promoted. While the volunteer staff have begun recently to record observations of the children's learning, these are not used to assess the children's learning and inform the planned programme. There is no planning for outdoor play.
- The volunteer staff have taken significant steps, in a short period of time, to make the environment safe, attractive and welcoming for the children, including the repainting and reorganisation of the playroom and investment in new resources. While the playgroup has access to an outdoor area, this is not utilised currently to promote the children's learning and development.
- Recently introduced routines are providing the children with greater opportunities to develop their independence, in particular, the snack routine and labelling of completed work. These routines need to be further embedded. There is a need to review the routine at the end of the day to ensure that the children's interest and behaviour is maintained.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the pre-school's approach to care and welfare does not impact positively enough on learning and teaching, and outcomes. The lack of an appropriately planned programme is not promoting effectively the children's progression in learning.

7. Leadership and management

- The leadership and management requires urgent improvement. It is imperative that the management committee appoint a suitably qualified leader and staff as soon as possible. There is no development plan and supporting action plans in place. At the time of the inspection, there was no evidence of any self-evaluation being undertaken.
- The management committee do not yet have the necessary skills and knowledge to lead and manage the playgroup. They have identified appropriately the need for additional support and training to develop further their roles and responsibilities.

8. Safeguarding

- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding children are unsatisfactory.

The areas which must be improved urgently include:

- accessing safeguarding training for a designated officer on the premises;
- ensuring that all voluntary members of staff are fully conversant in the child protection and safeguarding procedures of the pre-school;
- a review of the Positive Behaviour policy, including the identification of strategies to promote positive behaviour;
- a review of a small number of key safeguarding policies to reflect recent guidance;
- ensuring that safeguarding and managing attendance are standing items on the agenda of management committee meetings; and
- ensuring that the management committee sign annually the record of complaints against staff.

9. Overall effectiveness

Killough 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 areas for improvement are to:

- appoint suitably qualified staff in order to provide high quality learning experiences for all of the children;
- improve the skills and knowledge of the management committee to monitor and evaluate effectively the quality of the provision;
- improve the outcomes of the children across all areas of the pre-school curriculum;
- improve the quality, planning and assessment of the pre-school programme;
- improve the quality of the staff interactions to promote the children's learning;
- introduce a process of self-evaluation and action planning leading to improvement; and
- address the unsatisfactory safeguarding.

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 18 to 24 months.

The ETI will also return to the playgroup within six weeks to monitor and report on progress in addressing the safeguarding issues¹.

¹ The Department of Education will seek assurance from the relevant authority that they are working with the playgroup in relation to the inspection report.

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 management²:

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

² 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.

ADDENDUM TO THE REPORT ON THE INSPECTION OF KILLOUGH PLAYGROUP (4BB-0388) IN DECEMBER 2019

SAFEGUARDING

The Education and Training Inspectorate returned to Killough Playgroup on 14 May 2021 as a follow-up to the inspection which took place on 12 December 2019; the purpose of the visit was to ensure that the safeguarding issues, evaluated as unsatisfactory in the inspection, had been addressed.

Since the last visit, key changes include:

- the appointment of suitably qualified staff;
- safeguarding training has been completed by all staff and the management committee; and
- the review and amendment of relevant safeguarding policies and procedures, including the development of additional policies and procedures to protect the children, staff and parents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

On the basis of the evidence available, the revised arrangements reflect broadly the requirements of the relevant Departments. The playgroup needs to implement effective positive behaviour strategies to improve the children's engagement and encourage more productive play outdoors.

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