

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Leitrim Community Playgroup,
County Down

Report of an inspection in
April 2016

eti

The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
Department for Communities

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



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;
- a meeting with a group of parents; and
- the opportunity for the parents and staff to complete confidential questionnaires.

The views of the parents as expressed through the confidential questionnaire and the meeting with the reporting inspector were highly positive about the care of the staff, the high quality of the children's learning experiences and the effective communication of information. The staff responses to the questionnaire were also very positive about all aspects of the provision and indicated a strong team approach.

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

Leitrim Community Playgroup is located in the rural village of Leitrim approximately four miles from Castlewellan. It is accommodated in a purpose-built centre within the grounds of the local sports club. The pre-school is managed as a limited company with a board of directors.

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 very good progress across all areas of the pre-school curriculum and are developing positive attitudes and dispositions for learning.
- The children are confident and independent in their use of materials and in following the daily routines including self-registration and managing their snack. Almost all of the children concentrate for sustained periods at activities; a majority of children are also skilled at initiating and developing their own ideas for play with creativity and imagination. The small number of children who have been identified as requiring help to remain focused on their tasks are making good progress with adult support.
- The children are confident and eager to talk to the adults and each other about their own home experiences, their play activities and recalling topics, such as, the 'Three Little Pigs'. They listen to and engage well with whole group stories, songs and rhymes. While most of the children are developing very well their awareness of early mathematical concepts, they need further encouragement from the staff to use early mathematical language as an integral part of their play and daily routines.
- The children's art work is well developed; they make detailed representations in their drawings, paintings and junk art models. The children enjoy investigating the properties of natural materials such as the dough, water and the outdoor, sand area. They are interested in, and can talk about, the natural environment and living things, such as, farms and the bug hotel.

6. Provision for learning

- The learning environment is attractive, spacious and well resourced, both indoors and outdoors. The children's own work and ideas are celebrated through attractive displays and photographs.
- The staff treat the children with care and respect, they listen to them and engage in sustained conversations which promote well their oral communication skills. They foster effectively the children's independence, social skills and productive play. In a majority of the practice, the staff also use effectively open-ended questions to extend and develop further the children's thinking.
- The written planning informs an interesting and varied pre-school programme which provides good to very good opportunities for learning across all aspects of the pre-school curriculum. The regular evaluations of the planned programme are detailed and well focused on the children's responses and their learning. The staff record regularly the children's progress and the information is used well for early identification of need and to provide detailed information to the parents. Good progress is being made in developing individual plans for children with additional needs.

- The quality of pastoral care is very good. The playgroup has a nurturing, respectful and inclusive ethos with good working relationships between the children, the staff, the management group and the parents. The children are developing very well their social skills and care for one another; their behaviour is very good.
- The children have a healthy break and talk readily about healthy eating; they have regular opportunities for energetic, physical play promoting a healthy lifestyle.

7. Leadership and management

- The leadership and management are well organised and have the confidence of the parents and the staff. There is evidence of a culture of reflective practice among the staff team and continuous development leading to improvement in the provision. This is evident in, for example, the development of the outdoor learning environment and the associated staff development leading to improvements in the children's learning experiences. The recently appointed management group bring a good range of skills and experience to support the improvement process.
- The development plan identifies some relevant priorities for future work including the further development of early mathematical concepts and associated language and ongoing training for special educational needs (SEN) being provided by the Education Authority. The development plan needs to be reduced to focus on a smaller number of key priorities. The action plans need to indicate more clearly the baseline position and the link between actions taken, relevant staff training, support from the early years specialist and the outcomes for the children's learning.
- The staff have good links with the local primary schools to which most of the children transfer and they liaise with relevant agencies when required. There is good communication with the parents through, for example, the informative newsletter and regular parental evenings.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the pre-school 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 newly appointed management group need to receive training on the recruitment and vetting of staff.

8. Overall effectiveness

Leitrim Community 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 LEITRIM COMMUNITY PLAYGROUP, LEITRIM

1. Details of children

Number of children:	Class 1
Attending full-time	0
Attending part-time	24
Under 3 years of age*	0
Funded by Department of Education	24
With statement of special educational needs	0
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	0
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	*
With English as an additional language	0
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.	25
Average attendance for the previous year.	93%
Number of days open in previous school year	187

2. Duration of sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
	9:00-11:45	

3. Details of staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff including, Teachers/Leaders		4
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification		4
Students		1

Number of: ***	
Students	
Trainees	

*** Total placements since September of current year

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