

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Little Acorns Playgroup,
Derrymore, County Armagh

Report of an inspection in
November 2015

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

A minority of the parents completed questionnaires and the responses indicated high levels of satisfaction with the work of the playgroup. All of the staff completed questionnaires and were wholly positive about the life and work of the school.

2. Focus of inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interests 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

Little Acorns playgroup is situated in the grounds of St Mary's Primary School in Derrymore. Since the last inspection the playgroup has moved to new purpose built accommodation and, while the leadership has remained the same, two new members of staff have been appointed.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

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

5. Achievements and standards

- The children settle quickly on arrival in the playgroup and spend lengthy periods in purposeful and concentrated play. Their behaviour is exemplary and almost all demonstrate independence, are at ease with the staff and show a good regard for the views and opinions of others in the group. The quality of the children's own work is of a very high standard and shows good attention to detail.
- The literacy rich environment provides very good opportunities for the children to develop their pre-reading and writing skills. They enjoy listening to stories, browsing through the many books located around the playgroup and can make good attempts at early mark making.
- The children are keen to explore and investigate the activities on offer in the areas of play and can talk confidently about their work and experiences. In the imaginative role play areas they have valuable opportunities to engage with their peers and act out real life scenarios such as attending the hospital or visiting a cafe. Much of this play is based on their first hand experiences and helps to develop their confidence and social skills.

6. Provision for learning

- The quality of pastoral care is outstanding. There is a friendly, caring atmosphere in the playgroup and the working relationships at all levels are excellent. The indoor learning environment is presented to a very high standard and every opportunity is used effectively to promote learning and teaching across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The staff have identified the need to develop the outdoor learning environment further.
- The quality of the staff interactions with the children are consistently of a very high quality. The staff engage readily with the children in their play, build on their responses and develop their thinking skills. The children's ideas, interests and responses are regularly noted by the staff and linked to the planning of the pre-school programme. The staff need to take more account of all six areas of the curriculum while gathering evidence about the children's progress and development and also when reporting formally to the parents.
- The organisation of the day is managed well to provide variety in the experiences for the children. The staff need to provide more regular and longer periods for the development of outdoor learning and physical activity.
- The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are identified at an early stage and appropriate procedures are in place to address their individual needs.
- The playgroup gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and the daily programme includes a healthy snack.

7. Leadership and management

- The staff are very committed to providing quality pre-school provision and are supported by the management group in developing the work of the playgroup. The staff regularly self-evaluate aspects of their work and the provision for the children and, as a result, appropriate areas for development are identified and addressed over time.
- Very effective links have been established with the parents and the local primary and feeder schools for the benefit of the children.
- The playgroup has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant department.
- The early years specialist from the Early Years Organisation provides very good levels of support to the staff. She encourages a reflective approach to their work and has assisted them well in their improvement agenda in recent years.

8. Overall Effectiveness

The playgroup demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the pre-school setting sustains improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON LITTLE ACORNS PLAYGROUP

1. Details of children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3
Attending full-time			
Attending part-time	26		
Under 3 years of age*	0		
Funded by Department of Education	26		
With statement of special educational needs			
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	1		
At CoP stages 3 or 4**			
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.	100%
Average attendance for the previous year.	81%
Number of days open in previous school year	186

2. Duration of sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
	9.00-12.00	

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	
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification	0	
New appointments within the previous 12 months	0	

Number of: ***	
Students	2
Trainees	

*** Total placements since September of current year

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