

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Little Acorns Playgroup,
Laghey, County Tyrone

Report of an inspection in
May 2016



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

Twenty-five percent of the parents responded to the confidential questionnaire and were highly positive. In their additional written comments, the parents expressed high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the playgroup. All of the staff responded to the questionnaire; their responses were also positive.

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:

- the children's achievements and standards;
- the quality of provision for learning; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

Little Acorns Playgroup is situated in the grounds of Laghey Primary School in Killyman, near Dungannon, County Tyrone. Currently, 24 pre-school education programme funded children attend the part-time session in the playgroup. A new leader has been appointed since the last inspection.

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

- All of the children are well settled, friendly and confident and respond well to the routines of the day. They engage in purposeful, concentrated play and take pride in their work, which is often of a high quality. The children's independence and self-management skills are very well developed; they have effective social skills and positive attitudes to their learning.
- The children communicate effectively with each other and with adults during play. They enjoy books, access them independently and make very good use of the opportunities for early mark-making around the indoor and outdoor play areas. The children enjoy listening to stories and participate fully in the singing and rhyme session.
- The children are developing well their fine motor skills as they use a range of tools in the playroom during snack, at the dough table and in the home corner. They are developing appropriately their gross motor skills as they engage in physical energetic play during outdoor activities.
- The children have a very good understanding of key mathematical concepts, such as, number, measures and positional language; they use mathematical language appropriately during play, both indoors and outdoors.

6. Provision for learning

- The staff have created an attractive, child-centred and well-organised learning environment. The playgroup is well resourced; the staff make very good use of natural resources to extend the children's curiosity and creativity, for example, in the construction area. The layout of the playroom is used effectively to encourage the children's independence, decision-making and self-management skills.
- The daily routines provide a good balance between free play and the more adult-led activities. The snack routine and all transitions between the activities are developed effectively to provide very good learning opportunities across the curriculum. All of the time is used effectively throughout the session to maximise the learning potential of the resources for all children.
- The quality of the interactions between the staff and the children is consistently of a high quality. The staff use effective open-ended questions to develop the children's thinking and extend their vocabulary. A particular strength of the provision is the modelling of play by the staff which encourages the children to engage in sustained, purposeful activities.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is outstanding. The staff have a respectful and caring approach to the children; they listen to them, through, for example, involving the children in the weekly evaluation process, and build effectively on their ideas. The children are happy and secure with the staff who implement consistently and skilfully the positive behaviour management strategies; the children's behaviour is exemplary.

- The play programme is broad and well-balanced and provides very good learning experiences across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The planning is informed effectively by the rigorous system of observation and assessment of the children's progress in their learning.
- The planning and provision for the children who have been identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning is a particular strength of the playgroup. The targets set for the children are well-focused on their learning needs and are reviewed regularly by the staff. As a result, the progress made by the children is tracked robustly and the children are included fully in the work of the playgroup.
- The playgroup gives very good attention to healthy eating and physical activity; the children learn how to make healthy food choices, enjoy healthy snacks, and participate in a range of energetic physical activities.

7. Leadership and management

- The staff work very effectively as a team and have a clear, shared vision for providing high quality care and education for all of the children. The leader is a very effective role model and is supported well by her skilful staff in all areas of the life and work of the playgroup.
- The staff are reflective practitioners and have developed a systematic approach to self-evaluation and development planning. There is very good evidence of self-evaluation leading to improvement in the provision.
- The early years specialist from the Early Years Organisation has made a very good contribution to the overall development of the provision in this playgroup.
- The playgroup has developed effective links with the parents through, for example, the regular, informative newsletters and opportunities to meet regularly with the children's key workers. There are very good pastoral links with the local primary schools which help the children's transition from the playgroup to the foundation stage.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the playgroup has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect broadly the guidance issued by the Department of Education. The following area needs to be addressed:
- All members of the management committee should have a thorough understanding and, copy of, the child protection policy, procedures and circulars.

8. Overall effectiveness

Little Acorns Playgroup has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will continue to monitor how the playgroup sustains improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON LITTLE ACORNS PLAYGROUP, KILLYMAN, DUNGANNON

1. Details of children

| | |
|---|----|
| Number of children: | 24 |
| Attending full-time | |
| 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 | * |
| At CoP stages 3 or 4** | * |
| At CoP stages 1 or 2** | 6 |
| 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. | 4 |
| Average attendance for the previous year. | 94% |
| Number of days open in previous school year | 185 |

2. Duration of sessions

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

3. Details of staff

| Number of: | Full-time | Part-time |
|---|------------------|------------------|
| Staff including, Teachers/Leaders | 3 | 1 |
| Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification | 3 | 1 |
| Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification | 0 | 0 |
| New appointments within the previous 12 months | 0 | 1 |

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Number of: *** | |
| Students | 0 |
| Trainees | 0 |

*** Total placements since September of current year

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