

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Little Acorns Pre-School,
Bangor, County Down

Report of an inspection in
February 2016



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing Inspection Services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
Department for Communities



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 meeting with those involved with leadership and management; and
- the opportunity for the parents and staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Twelve parents and all of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. Overall, the responses indicate high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the life and work of the playgroup. In particular, the parents praised the committed and dedicated staff and stated that their children are happy and enjoy their learning. The staff praised, in particular, the hard work and collegiate approach by the playgroup leader which creates a positive and enjoyable working environment for the staff and the children. The responses were shared with the management group.

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

Little Acorns Pre-School is a well established playgroup accommodated in Clondeboy Primary school in Bangor, County Down. Since the last inspection, a new deputy leader has taken up post. The playgroup operates across two playrooms and has access to a small, secure outdoor area.

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

- Nearly all of the children are very well settled. They know the playroom routines, can choose resources independently and make good use of all the space available for play.
- During the inspection, nearly all of the children engaged in lengthy periods of purposeful play, they co-operated well with one another and with the adults. The children are developing firm friendships and are growing in confidence. They demonstrate good self-management skills as they write their names on, and store, their own work.
- The children are confident to ask and respond to questions. Many of children are beginning to engage in early mark making and most can identify their own name in print; a few are beginning to identify and write the letters of their own names. Most of the children enjoy listening to stories; rhymes and songs are used well to introduce them to number and other early mathematical ideas and, the children enjoy clearly taking part in the singing sessions. They often model language and learning as a result of positive interaction with the staff and are making good progress in all aspects of their learning.
- The children are developing their capabilities to use various techniques to produce a very good range of representational pictures and models. They are provided with a wide range of materials which they are encouraged to explore freely; their paintings, drawings and model-making show close attention to detail and good control of tools.

6. Provision for learning

- There is a welcoming ethos within the playgroup. The attractively presented and well organised playrooms provide very good opportunities for learning in almost all aspects of the pre-school curriculum.
- The staff spend extended periods of time with groups of children and individuals promoting the children's language reasoning and early mathematical concepts as they participate skilfully with the children in their activities.
- The staff plan together regularly; they know the children well and often use the information collated in the observations to inform future learning; they are aware of the need to develop further the use of observations. As the staff continue to develop the programme, it will be important to plan for the development of a wider range of the children's physical skills that progress throughout the year.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the playgroup is very good. The staff are very caring and committed to the needs of the children; good links have been established with the parents and outside agencies.
- The playgroup gives good attention to promoting healthy eating during the snack time and provides useful physical activity through the good opportunities for energetic play.

7. Leadership and management

- The leader of the playgroup is an excellent role-model; she promotes a culture of continuous improvement. The working relationships are excellent and the staff work very effectively and collaboratively for the benefit of all the children. The early years specialist has provided the staff with good support and guidance.
- The staff have made a good start to evaluating aspects of their provision and have demonstrated through the process of self-evaluation that they have brought about improvements in their provision for the World Around Us. They should now continue to work with their early years specialist to develop further the process of continuous self-evaluation and demonstrate how it is leading to improvement in their outdoor physical programme. The leader should continue to develop her role of monitoring and evaluating the quality of the practice in both playrooms.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the playgroup has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Departments.

8. Overall effectiveness

Little Acorns Pre-School 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 PRE-SCHOOL, BANGOR

1. Details of children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3
Attending full-time	0	0	0
Attending part-time	20	20	11
Under 3 years of age*	3	2	11
Funded by Department of Education	17	18	0
With statement of special educational needs	0	0	0
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	2	0	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	0	0	0
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	2	0	0
With English as an additional language	3	0	0
Who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	0	0	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.	6
Average attendance for the previous year.	86%
Number of days open in previous school year	184

2. Duration of sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
N/A	09.00-12.00	12.30-15.00

3. Details of staff

Number of:	Full-Time	Part-Time
Staff including, Leader		7
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification		7
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification		0
New appointments within the previous 12 months		1

Number of: ***	
Students	0
Trainees	0

*** Total placements since September of current year

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