

# Education and Training Inspectorate

## PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



### Little Friends Playgroup, Omagh, County Tyrone

Voluntary pre-school playgroup DE Ref No: 2AB-0295

Report of an Inspection in February 2020



The Education and Training Inspectorate  
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education  
Department for the Economy  
and other commissioning Departments

CUSTOMER  
SERVICE  
EXCELLENCE



# CONTENTS

<b>Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. Context	1
2. Views of parents and staff	1
3. Focus of the inspection	1
4. Overall findings of the inspection	1
5. Outcomes for learners	2
6. Quality of provision	2
7. Leadership and management	3
8. Safeguarding	4
9. Overall effectiveness	4

## Appendices

- A. Inspection methodology and evidence base
- B. Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

## 1. Context

Little Friends Playgroup is situated within Strathroy Community Hall in the town of Omagh. The playgroup is located in upstairs accommodation and has access to the use of the downstairs outdoor area and spacious hall. The children come mainly from the local area. Due to fluctuations in the annual enrolment trends, the playgroup had not had funded places for one year in 2017-2018 and returned to the funded programme in 2018.

<b>Number of children:</b>	Class 1
Attending part-time	8
Funded by Department of Education	8
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	#
At Cop stages 1 or 2	#
With English as an additional language	#

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	0%
Average percentage attendance for the previous year.	94%
Number of days open in previous school year	185

**Source:** data provided by the setting.

# fewer than 5

\*On 1 July past

\*\* The stages refer to those set in the Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs

## 2. Views of parents and staff

Sixty-three percent of the parents responded to the questionnaire and their responses were all highly positive about the life and work of the pre-school. In written comments the parents praised highly the approachable staff and the welcoming atmosphere for parents and children and reported that they value the home learning information provided. All of the staff completed the staff questionnaire and their responses were highly affirming of the work of the playgroup. A summary of the questionnaire responses was shared with the leadership and a representative of 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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Very good
<b>Quality of provision</b>	Very good
<b>Leadership and management</b>	Very good

## **5. Outcomes for learners**

- The children concentrate and engage in purposeful and productive play across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. They are highly motivated to explore and experiment and have well-developed play and social skills. The children enjoy warm and caring relationships with the staff. They are forming friendships with their peers and are respectful to one another. The children have very good levels of self-regulation and manage transitional routines with confidence, such as, moving around the play areas, the snack time routine and moving to physical play in the hall.
- The children's language and communication skills are progressing well. They listen enthusiastically to stories and can predict the familiar parts and enjoy browsing in books, particularly those in the construction area. The children sing and recite rhymes during the physical play session. The children's creative representational artwork and early mark making is progressing well and they are confident in choosing appropriate mark making tools and sizes of brushes, to suit the purpose of either making appointments during role play or painting pictures of the world around them.
- The children can sort and match and have a good understanding of measures and early counting concepts during play with natural materials. They use appropriate mathematical language during the snack, tidying routines and incidental play and have a good understanding of spatial, shape and positional awareness.
- The children have very good fine and gross motor skills and are confident to climb, jump, balance and run freely. A key strength is the children's confidence to risk take in a safe physical play environment and to explore a variety of ways to navigate the obstacle course and climbing equipment. The children are imaginative in role play activities and concentrate for lengthy periods to persevere and complete tasks.

## **6. Quality of provision**

- The staff have established a well-organised daily timetable that provides for lengthy periods of play, including energetic play. There are smooth transitions at key times in the programme and the children are familiar with the necessary routines. The staff creatively utilise all space to provide a stimulating learning environment using natural and authentic resources. There is a good balance of freely chosen play and well-planned activities to stimulate the children's interests and to facilitate high quality learning experiences.
- There are very good learning opportunities in all areas of the pre-school programme. All areas of learning are well-connected through the meaningful use of seasonal topics and the children's interests in the world around them. The written planning is very well informed by the key worker observations of the children's progress and needs, and ensures progression throughout the year.
- The staff observe and sensitively listen to the children, skilfully allowing time for the children to initiate their own ideas and intervening at an appropriate time to extend their language and thinking. The consistently very good quality staff interactions promote well the children's language and communication skills. The staff model key words to support the children's understanding and use of language to express their own ideas and understanding of people who help them in the world around them.

- Parents are given regular feedback about their children's progress and there are effective informal daily routines to encourage parents to appreciate the children's play and learning. There are procedures in place for referral to external support services for those children who require additional support with aspects of their learning and development and relevant signposting is provided for their parents. The staff make effective use of learning strategies and individual education planning approaches from a previous capacity building initiative for training in special educational needs; and have appropriately identified further staff training needs to meet the requirements of the special needs code of practice. The written special needs policy is underdeveloped and does not fully reflect the current effective practice in the playgroup to support children with additional needs.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the playgroup's approach to the care and welfare of the children impacts positively on learning, teaching and outcomes. There is a child-centred, inclusive approach based on a warm and nurturing environment for learning and development and as a result the children are respectful of each other and their behaviour is excellent.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The leadership of the pre-school has a reflective and child-centred vision set out clearly within a three year development plan. The plan is informed by relevant action planning which is bringing about ongoing improvement in the outcomes for the children and the provision for learning. The staff work well as a team to identify next steps and promote a cycle of continuous improvement in the pre-school programme. They use self-evaluation effectively to demonstrate the impact of the actions taken by the staff, early years specialist and the committee in developing the learning environment and the associated staff planning and child observation system which have improved the quality of the children's learning experiences.
- The staff value the support of their early years specialist (EYS) from the Early Years Organisation (EYO) who provides them with regular and appropriate advice and guidance. Using a range of evaluative information, they have identified relevant areas for continued improvement for the development of the pre-school programme and maintain a clear focus on high quality learning experiences and working with parents.
- The representative of the management committee reports very good working relationships among the staff. There is a clear vision and focus on promoting the sustainability of the group and recent practices to market the group and access community funding have been successful in acquiring additional staff and increasing enrolment for next year. Recent governance training has enabled the committee and staff to identify that a more rigorous review of policies needs to be implemented and that roles and responsibilities for support and challenge functions need to be developed further in order to ensure more effective monitoring process.
- The playgroup has effective partnerships with local primary schools, support agencies and the local community to benefit the children. They are actively involved in sustaining the Department of Education's Big Bedtime Read programme.

## **8. Safeguarding**

- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect broadly the guidance from the relevant Departments.

However, the playgroup needs to:

- develop further the risk assessment procedures and recording system; and
- ensure that regular safeguarding reports are provided to the management committee.

## **9. Overall effectiveness**

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

### 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 a representative of the management committee;
- a meeting with the early years specialist; 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 management<sup>1</sup>:

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

<sup>1</sup> 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.

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