

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Little Oaks Pre-School,
Lisburn, County Antrim

Voluntary pre-school playgroup

Report of an Inspection in
February 2018



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments

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1. Context

Little Oaks Pre-school Playgroup is located in purpose-built accommodation in St Colman's Parish Centre, Lambeg. None of the current staff were in place at the time of the last inspection in 2011. At the time of the inspection a new leader had recently been appointed and an acting deputy leader was in place.

Number of children:	Class 1
Attending part-time	24
Funded by Department of Education	24

Average percentage attendance for the previous year.	92%
Number of days open in previous school year	186

Source: data provided by the setting

2. Views of parents and staff

A small number of parents and 50% of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. All of the responses were wholly positive about the life and work of the playgroup.

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

Overall effectiveness	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Outcomes for learners	Very Good
Quality of provision	Good
Leadership and management	Good

5. Outcomes for learners

- The children are well-settled and engage in purposeful, collaborative play for sustained periods. They are at ease with the adults and approach them confidently to ask for assistance or to show them their work. The children choose independently where they wish to play and select the resources of their choice. They respond positively to the established routines of the playroom and almost all contribute meaningfully to tidy-up time. The children's behaviour is very good.

- The children are achieving good and very good standards across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. They produce high quality representational artwork, enjoy independently reading and sharing books and engage in a range of meaningful mark-making opportunities during play. Almost all of the children have a very good understanding of key mathematical concepts associated with number, shape, money and measures.
- The children have well-developed fine motor skills as they mould and shape the dough with ease and use a range of resources, materials and tools at the junk art area. The children require further opportunities to develop their gross motor skills, in particular in the outdoor area.
- The children enthusiastically design and construct, both independently and collaboratively and initiate explorative play as they investigate shapes and shadows with torches.

6. Quality of provision

- The staff have created an attractive and well-organised learning environment. The children's representational artwork is displayed with pride around the playroom. There is a very good range of recyclable, natural and commercial resources available, allowing the children to develop further their independence and creativity.
- There are well-embedded routines which promote effectively the development of the children's independence, language and mathematical learning. The transition time from indoor to outdoor play is not managed effectively enough and the children spend too long waiting in line, both going out to and returning from outdoor play.
- The interactions between the staff and the children are of a consistently good and very good standard. During indoor play in particular, the skilful questioning by most of the staff encourages the children to extend their own play, problem solve and think creatively. The outdoor play session was over-directed by the adults and subsequently provided fewer opportunities for the children to develop their independence and learning.
- The cycle of planning, evaluations and assessment is good and guides well the learning and teaching. The new leader has introduced a revised approach which identifies more clearly the intended learning; all staff welcome this change.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the playgroup's approach to care and welfare impacts positively on learning and teaching, and outcomes. A welcoming ethos and excellent working relationships influence the work of the playgroup and provide an environment which promotes creativity and independence.

7. Leadership and management

- The staff are professional, enthusiastic and work very well as a team. The pro-active management committee along with the early years specialist, from the Early Years' Organisation, provided very good support to the staff during a challenging period of instability in leadership and management.

- A culture of self-evaluation has been established and there is evidence of the impact that this has had on, for example, improving resources for learning and links with parents.
- There are effective links with the parents who are involved in fundraising events and are members of the management committee. They are kept informed of the life and work of the playgroup through an informative monthly newsletter and regular meetings. Parents and grandparents are also invited into the playroom to read stories to the children. There are very good links with the on-site primary school to support both the children and their parents in transitioning to primary 1.

8. Safeguarding

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

9. Overall effectiveness

Little Oaks Pre-school Playgroup demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the children.

There are areas for improvement that the playgroup has demonstrated the capacity to address. The areas for improvement are:

- to continue to embed the cycle of planning and observations; and
- to develop further the provision for learning in the outdoor environment.

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 those involved with leadership and management, including the management group; 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:

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 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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