

Education and Training Inspectorate PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Little Ones Playgroup, Downpatrick, County Down

Private Day Nursery Playgroup DE Ref No: 4CA-0657

Report of an Inspection in February 2020



Providing inspection services for:

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1. Context

Little Ones Playgroup is located within Little Ones Day Nursery which is a privately owned day care setting located in the centre of Downpatrick town. The playgroup re-entered the pre-school programme in September 2018 after a year without funded places. This is the first inspection of the playgroup. Since September 2019 there has been a complete change of staffing.

Number of children:	Class 1
Attending part-time	6
Under 3 years of age*	0
Funded by Department of Education	6

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	100
Average percentage attendance for the previous year.	
Number of days open in previous school year	185

Source: data provided by the setting.

* On 1 July.

2. Views of parents and staff

A majority of the parents and all of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. The responses were wholly positive about all aspects of the life and work of the pre-school. The parents' written comments praised their children's enjoyment of and progress in learning. A summary of the questionnaire responses were shared with the leader and the proprietor.

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	Address urgently the significant areas for improvement
Outcomes for learners	Important areas for improvement
Quality of provision	Important areas for improvement
Leadership and management	Important areas for improvement

5. Outcomes for learners

- The children's understanding of early mathematical concepts is an important area for improvement. While the children are developing an awareness of number through rhymes and songs, their use of early mathematical language within their play is limited and insufficiently developed for the time of year.

- All of the children are happy, settled and are developing well their independence through, for example, the snack routine, putting on their coats and managing their self-care. Throughout the session, the majority of children play alongside their peers or engage in solitary play. The children are familiar with the routines of the pre-school and the majority of them help to tidy away the toys at the end of the session.
- Most of the children listen well during story time and are beginning to recognise some letters within their names. However, the children have limited interest in mark-making and their representational drawings are underdeveloped for the time of year.
- All of the children have an interest in and curiosity of the world around them. They talk about the weather and people who help them in the community, such as the nurse, and explore the natural materials in the playroom. Most of the children are developing well their fine motor skills through, for example, buttering toast and using a range of tools, such as tongs and scissors. The children's gross-motor skills are less well developed.

6. Quality of provision

- There are important areas for improvement across most areas of the pre-school curriculum. The staff have not yet developed a sufficient understanding of how to promote progression in the children's learning. There are too many missed opportunities to develop and extend the children's knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts, language and learning through the staff interactions with the children.
- While the staff have in place a system for recording observations of the children's learning, the number, frequency and detail are not sufficient to track progression in learning; particularly in relation to the children's mathematical and physical development.
- The staff have recently carried out a review of the playroom which has clearly defined areas for play resourced with a good range of authentic and natural materials. New resources have been purchased recently for the outdoor area to provide better opportunities for the children to explore mathematical concepts; however, the full potential of these resources is not being maximised by the staff.
- The staff have reviewed recently the short-term planning which now includes planning for outdoor provision and takes account of the children's interests and ideas. The planned programme for developing the children's knowledge and understanding of the world around them is good. The children have regular opportunities to visit places of local interest and engage with a wide range of visitors to the pre-school which enhances greatly their understanding of the community in which they live.
- While some aspects of the provision at the beginning of the session are too structured and do not enable the children to make choices about where to play, the snack routine is used well to promote children's independence and the importance of healthy eating.

- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the pre-school's approach to care and welfare does not impact positively enough on learning and teaching, and outcomes. There are positive relationships in the pre-school and the staff engage warmly with the children; however, the quality of the staff interaction with the children does not enable the children to achieve the expected outcomes in a number of areas of the pre-school curriculum.

7. Leadership and management

- The processes of self-evaluation and action planning leading to improvement are not sufficiently developed. The staff team have identified a number of appropriate areas requiring improvement; these are outlined in the development plan. However, the current action plans do not outline clearly enough the steps required to bring about improvement. The staff have identified the positive impact of the actions taken to date, for example, the reorganisation of the room and enhancing the outdoor area with natural materials and more challenging equipment for the children.
- The pre-school team are supported well by the proprietor and the early years' specialist (EYS) and are developing their knowledge of the pre-school curriculum through attendance at a range of training courses. The staff act on recommendations provided by the EYS and there is clear evidence of the impact of this support.
- There are very effective links with parents who are provided with regular opportunities, to develop their knowledge and understanding of how they can best support their child through, for example, stay and play sessions, workshops and curriculum evenings. An informative newsletter, the use of story sacks and a lending library enhances further the opportunities for the parents to be involved in their child's education.

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, Little Ones Day Nursery needs to: put in place more robust risk assessments for pre-school trips off the premises.

9. Overall effectiveness

Little Ones Playgroup 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 areas for improvement are to:

- develop the children's understanding of early mathematical concepts and their use of mathematical language;
- improve the staff knowledge and understanding of all areas of the pre-school curriculum;

- improve the quality of the staff interactions to promote progression in the children's learning; and
- develop the self-evaluation and action planning process to improve the quality of the provision and the outcomes for the children.

The ETI will monitor and report on the playgroup's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection in 18 to 24 months.

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 proprietor; 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 management¹:

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

¹ 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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