

Education and Training Inspectorate

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Little Smarties Playgroup, Garrison, County Fermanagh

Voluntary playgroup DE Ref No (2AB-0340)

Report of an Inspection in April 2019



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 Smarties Playgroup is located in purpose-built accommodation situated within the village of Garrison, County Fermanagh. The children enrolled are from the surrounding rural area. Since the last inspection a new leader and deputy leader have been employed. The staff team has limited experience in delivering the curriculum for pre-school education.

| | |
|---|---------|
| Number of children: | Class 1 |
| Attending full-time | 15 |
| Funded by Department of Education | 15 |
| Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs | # |
| At CoP stages 1 or 2** | # |

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

Source: data provided by the setting.

* On 1 July.

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

fewer than 5

N/A not available

2. Views of parents and staff

A majority of parents and all of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. All of the responses were very positive regarding the work and life of the playgroup. In written comments, the parents highlighted the children's excitement in attending the playgroup each day. The parental responses also referred to: the effectiveness of the staff and management team; the caring approach of the staff; and, the wide range of interesting experiences provided for the children. A summary of the responses were shared with the leadership and management.

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 | Important areas for improvement. |
| Outcomes for learners | Good |
| Quality of provision | Important areas for improvement |
| Leadership and management | Important areas for improvement |

5. Outcomes for learners

- The children achieve good outcomes across almost all areas of the pre-school curriculum. They are familiar with the daily routines of the playgroup and almost all have good levels of independence; accessing resources for their play and self-managing the snack routine.
- The children express their own ideas well through music-making and are confident in taking on roles in imaginative play. A majority of children count, sort and match accurately and most participate confidently in physical exercise which includes singing and moving in time to music. A small number also display advanced scissor skills; however the children's creative skills are underdeveloped.
- The children's behaviour is very good and they respond well to the basic rules of the playgroup. The children ask questions confidently and share ideas relating to their play throughout the day. They listen attentively at story time and interact confidently with staff and visitors.
- The children who require support with aspects of their learning are integrated very well into the playgroup and are making good progress.

6. Quality of provision

- The cycle of observation and planning is an important area for improvement. The staff meet regularly to review the children's learning and are beginning to link their observations of the children's learning to the short-term planning. However, the observations of the children are not undertaken during periods of free and natural play and as a result they are too formal and assessment-focused. The subsequent planning does not then take sufficient account of the children's needs and interests.
- The provision and progression in learning in the areas of the arts and the world around us are not developed sufficiently. The staff provide limited opportunities for the children to explore, experiment and investigate malleable materials and the natural world around them. Although the staff have identified and purchased a number of relevant new resources, there is a lack of natural and authentic resources available to further engage the children in their learning.
- The development of children's personal, social and emotional skills is particular strength of the provision. The staff are caring, supportive and skilful in promoting and developing the children's self-esteem and confidence. They use open-ended questions consistently well to develop and extend the children's learning.
- The staff have put in place individual education plans to support a small number of children who have been identified as having additional needs. The targets and strategies to be used are clearly outlined to enable the children's progress to be measured and recorded.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the pre-school's approach to care and welfare impacts positively on outcomes but does not impact positively enough on the provision.

7. Leadership and management

- The new staff team and management committee are working collaboratively to gain an understanding of their roles and responsibilities and to develop a shared vision for the future of the playgroup. The staff participate actively in a local playgroup cluster, however they do not currently have the support of an early years specialist. Consequently, it will be important for the management committee to ensure the staff have access to appropriate early year's specialist experience and support to develop further the necessary leadership skills required to oversee an effective pre-school provision.
- Recent improvement work has been undertaken to review and implement a cycle of self-evaluation and action planning. Whilst the one year development plan has appropriate priorities; the current approaches do not monitor clearly enough the impact of the actions to promote improvement on the quality of the provision and the outcomes for the children.
- There are good links with the parents and the parents' newsletter provides a range of information on the current theme. Very good use is made of visitors to the setting to enrich the children's learning, including visits from a local farmer and his lambs, a firefighter and a nurse.

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:

- ensure that aspects of the child protection policy are updated to reflect the most recent safeguarding guidance from the Department of Education; and
- ensure that there is a robust procedure in place for recording whether or not there have been any complaints against members of staff.

9. Overall effectiveness

Little Smarties Playgroup needs to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners.

The areas for improvement are to:

- develop the cycle of observation and assessment to inform future planning and ensure progression in learning for all children;
- develop the planning and provision for the arts and the world around us;
- implement an effective development plan and action planning process, underpinned by cycle of self-evaluation to monitor the impact of the improvement work on the quality of the provision and outcomes for the children; and,
- ensure that the staff have access to appropriate early years specialist knowledge and support.

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 12 to 18 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 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 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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