

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Lower Mourne Pre-school
Playgroup, Annalong,
County Down

Voluntary playgroup

Report of an Inspection in
March 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

Lower Mourne Pre-school Playgroup is accommodated within a community hall just outside the village of Annalong, County Down. The playroom is set up and cleared away each day. There is no outdoor area; however, the playgroup has access to a large hall for physical play. The playgroup was last inspected in 2011; one new temporary assistant has recently been appointed.

Number of children:	Class 1
Attending part-time	23
Under 3 years of age*	0
Funded by Department of Education	16
With statement of special educational needs	0
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	#
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	#
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	5
With English as an additional language	0

Average percentage attendance for the previous year.	123.9
Number of days open in previous school year	180

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 small number of the parents and staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. Almost all of the responses were positive about all aspects of 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	Important areas for improvement

5. Outcomes for learners

- All of the children are well-settled and engage in extended periods of purposeful play. They are very confident and willingly approach the adults to show and discuss their work. The majority of the children can play collaboratively and this is particularly evident in the construction and small world areas.
- The children are secure in the routines of the playgroup and have very good levels of independence. They can access the resources they need, label their own work displaying it in clear pockets on the portable noticeboards and both register for and serve their snack. Most of the children play an active role in the tidy-up routine and can sort and put away the toys and resources with adult supervision and encouragement.
- The children have a very good interest in and understanding of early mathematics. They engage naturally in counting and number recognition during play and can name common shapes and identify their properties. During the inspection a small number of children sorted farm animals by size and type while others investigated measures using a measuring tape in the construction area.
- The children have a good interest in the arts and show great pride in their drawing and painting. Their representational drawings are of a very good standard for the time of year and they make creative use of the natural resources provided with the play dough. The children use a variety of small tools effectively and most of them have very good fine-motor skills.
- Almost all of the children can recognise their name and a small number are beginning to write their name. The children use well the opportunities for writing across the playroom to engage mark-making. They have a good interest in books and listen with enthusiasm at story time; joining in with the songs and rhymes.
- During the physical play session the children make good use of the resources provided to develop their hand-eye co-ordination.
- The small number of children who require support with aspects of their learning are making good progress.

6. Quality of provision

- The broad and balanced programme presents very good opportunities for learning across most of the areas of the pre-school curriculum. The provision and planning for physical development and music are currently underdeveloped. While the large hall provides ample space for the children's physical development, the staff do not provide the children with choice in the activities and the physical programme is limited.
- The staff make very good use of the space in the playroom and provide a bright and stimulating learning environment. The routines in the playgroup ensure effective transitions across the day and encourage independence and responsibility within the children.

- The staff interactions with the children are of a consistently high quality. During the inspection the staff used effective questioning to develop the children's thinking and problem-solving; particularly in the construction area. A key strength of the staff interactions is the development of the children's early mathematical language and concepts in a natural way through their play.
- The staff plan regularly as a team with a clear focus on learning and on developing the children's interests and spontaneous responses. Regular and relevant observations of the children's learning are used well to inform the weekly planning.
- There are individual education plans for those children identified with additional learning needs. The targets on the plans need to be more clearly defined in order for the children's progress to be measured.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the pre-school's approach to care and welfare impacts positively on learning and teaching, and outcomes. The staff are very responsive to the needs and interests of the children which impacts very positively on the outcomes they achieve.

7. Leadership and management

- The priorities on the current action plans are appropriate; however the use of self-evaluation and development planning processes are currently underdeveloped. The staff work well collaboratively with effective teamwork and, along with the supportive management committee, share a vision to provide a high quality pre-school experience for the children.
- The early years specialist (EYS) from the Early Years Organisation provides very good on-going support to the staff. The recent focus on the organisation of the playroom and the staff development on special educational needs have impacted positively on the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners.
- There are good links with the parents and the local primary schools which promote a smooth transition for the children.

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:
 - review aspects of a small number of policies to reflect more accurately the practice within the playgroup; and
 - ensure that the ratification of policies by the management committee is recorded formally.

9. Overall effectiveness

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

Areas for improvement include the need to:

- develop the planning and provision for physical play and music; and
- develop further and embed the processes for self-evaluation with the support of the management committee and the EYS.

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 a member of the management group and 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:

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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