

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Meigh Community Pre-school,
Newry, County Down

Report of an Inspection in
April 2016

Quantitative terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

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 Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels when reporting on Achievement and standards, on Provision for learning and on 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 nursery school / playgroup has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the nursery school / playgroup sustains improvement.
The nursery school /playgroup demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the nursery school/ playgroup sustains improvement.
The nursery school/ playgroup needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the nursery school's/ playgroup's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.
The nursery school / playgroup needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all learners. It requires external support to do so. The ETI will monitor and report on the nursery school's / playgroup's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

Contents

Section	Page
1. Inspection method and evidence base	1
2. Focus of inspection	1
3. Context	1
4. Overall findings of the inspection	1
5. Achievements and standards	2
6. Provision for learning	2
7. Leadership and management	3
8. Overall effectiveness	3
Appendix	

1. Inspection method and evidence base

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of pre-school settings, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the ETI publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self-evaluation* at: [Together Towards Improvement Pre-school | Education and Training Inspectorate](#)

Inspectors observed learning and teaching through play, the children's achievements and standards, scrutinised relevant documentation, and held formal and informal discussions with children, and 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 confidential questionnaires.

Thirty-five percent of the parents and all of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaire; almost all of the responses from the parents and staff were positive. In particular, the parents highlighted the work of the caring staff. The effective team approach within the playgroup was reported by the staff. All of the findings from the questionnaires were shared and discussed with the representative from the management group and the staff.

2. Focus of inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interests of all children, the purpose of inspection is, through effective linking of internal and external approaches, to evaluate the:

- children's achievements and standards;
- quality of provision for learning; and
- quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

Meigh Community Pre-school is situated in a purpose built facility in the village of Meigh, approximately four miles south of Newry. The playgroup leader has been in post for approximately 30 years and a new deputy leader was appointed recently. There are currently 18 boys and eight girls in the playgroup; all of the children come from the surrounding area.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Achievements and standards	Outstanding
Provision for learning	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are very well settled, highly motivated and engage well in sustained periods of purposeful play. They are very well behaved and respectful to their peers, the staff and visitors. The children show high levels of independence often accessing additional resources and taking responsibility for tidying the activities throughout the session. During the inspection, there were many examples of the children persevering with challenges and experimenting during play.
- The creative and stimulating environment and the provision of a wide range of art media and natural resources motivates the children to produce high quality representational junk-models, drawings and paintings; all the children's art work is annotated with their thoughts and ideas which are detailed and imaginative.
- The children demonstrate a keen interest in books often using them at the activities for reference, reading individually or with staff in the book corner for enjoyment. They interact confidently with adults, follow directions carefully and are well focused during story and rhyme-time. The children are able to use and apply early mathematical language associated with number, shape, capacity and length. Their extensive involvement in the choice of play activities and the range of resources available encourages a positive disposition to learning and develops further the children's confidence in asking questions of each other and the staff when exploring the learning environment.

6. Provision for learning

- The provision of an extensive range of authentic and natural resources, and real tools and equipment has developed the children's sense of resourcefulness and natural curiosity in the world around them. The children's self-esteem and pride in their achievements has been further developed through the staff's imaginative and extensive display of children's work. The interactive areas of interest stimulate the children's imagination and, in particular, harness the interests of the relatively large number of boys.
- The quality of the staff interactions is of a consistently very high quality. They respond skilfully and intuitively to spontaneous learning opportunities and facilitate the children's ideas on extending their play. The staff model appropriate language and use open-ended questions to provide opportunities for the children to discuss their learning and develop their reasoning skills.
- The quality of the pastoral care in the playgroup is outstanding. There is an inclusive ethos of mutual respect; the staff know the children and their families well and respond with care to their needs and interests. A particular feature of the playgroup is the staff's in-depth understanding of learning through play and their ability to provide creative opportunities for the children to express their thoughts, ideas and interests in a range of individual ways.
- The children are fully involved in the planning process and their ideas are infused through the thematic approach to learning. The flexibility and spontaneity within the planning process is managed carefully by the staff to ensure continuity and progression across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. Detailed observations are linked closely to the evaluation of learning and are used well by the staff to assess the children's achievements and future development needs.

- The playgroup gives very good attention to healthy eating and physical activity through, for example, the provision of healthy snacks and use of real fruit and vegetables in role-play activities. The outdoor area is used well to provide a range of more physical activities and further awareness of plants and living things.
- The staff have identified a small number of children who require additional support with their learning; they liaise effectively with parents and outside agencies to support the needs of these children. The staff have undertaken additional training to build further their own professional learning and, in particular, to develop further skills in effective communication strategies.

7. Leadership and management

- The playgroup leader is an excellent role model who has dedicated her professional working life to meeting the needs of the young children in her care. She has a clear vision of the needs of the community and leads a team of skilled and hard-working staff who share her enthusiasm for and commitment to pre-school education.
- The playgroup has a well embedded process of self-evaluation and reflection and there are regular and extensive opportunities for the staff and other members of the school community to contribute to the process. The development plan identifies innovative priorities for further development which have a clear focus on children's learning.
- The staff have developed very effective links with parents through, for example, the informative monthly newsletter and social activities, such as, cookery workshops. There are excellent pastoral and curricular links with the local primary school; the playgroup children and local year one children recently took part in a significant joint art project. The management committee is involved in all aspects of the life and work of the playgroup and provides support, for example, through regular fund-raising activities in the community.
- The early years specialist from the Early Years Organisation has provided very high quality support over a number of years and works well with the playgroup in supporting innovative and forward thinking ideas for future development.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the playgroup has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children and young people. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Departments.

8. Overall effectiveness

Meigh Community Pre-school has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will continue to monitor how the playgroup sustains improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON MEIGH COMMUNITY PRE-SCHOOL, NEWRY

1. Details of children

Number of children:	Class 1
Attending full-time	26
Attending part-time	0
Under 3 years of age*	0
Funded by Department of Education	26
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**	
With English as an additional language	0
Who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	0

* On 1 July.

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

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

2. Duration of sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
	9:00 am-12:00 pm	

3. Details of staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff including, Teachers/Leaders	4	
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification	4	
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification	0	
New appointments within the previous 12 months	1	

Number of: ***	
Students	0
Trainees	0

*** Total placements since September of current year

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