

# PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Mount St Nicholas Pre-school  
Playgroup, Carrickfergus,  
County Antrim

Voluntary playgroup

Report of an inspection in  
May 2017



The Education and Training Inspectorate  
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education  
Department for the Economy  
and other commissioning Departments

CUSTOMER  
SERVICE  
EXCELLENCE



## CONTENTS

<b>Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. Context	1
2. Views of parents and staff	1
3. Focus of the inspection	1
4. Overall findings of the inspection	2
5. Outcomes for learners	2
6. Quality of provision	3
7. Leadership and management	4
8. Overall effectiveness	5

### **Appendices**

- A. Information on sessions and staff
- B. Inspection methodology and evidence base
- C. Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. Context

Mount St Nicholas Pre-school Playgroup is located on the top floor of the YMCA building in Carrickfergus. There is no dedicated outdoor space adjoining the building; the staff make daily use of a large sports hall within the building to provide energetic physical play activities. Since the last inspection, two new members of staff have been appointed and the playgroup re-located from the local school into the current premises in 2013. The number of funded places was reduced by four children to reflect the size of the new accommodation. There is an increasing number of children attending with additional needs.

Number of children:	Class 1
Attending full-time	19
Attending part-time	#
Funded by Department of Education	18
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	#

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	100%
Average attendance for the previous year.	152
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

### 2. Views of parents and staff

Thirty six percent of the parents responded to the confidential questionnaire. The responses were very positive about the overall quality of the provision and the work of the staff. In particular, they reported their appreciation of the care and support of the staff for the children and their families and the progress their children make. The staff responses were also highly positive about the work of the playgroup; there was reference made to the need to strengthen the role of, and enhance communication with, the management committee. All of the findings, including a small number of issues raised from the questionnaire responses have been shared with the leadership and management.

### 3. Focus of the inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all children, 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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Important areas for improvement
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Important areas for improvement
<b>Provision for learning</b>	Important areas for improvement
<b>Leadership and management</b>	Important areas for improvement

### KEY FINDINGS

#### 5. Outcomes for learners

- While most of the children make satisfactory to good progress in their learning across the pre-school curriculum, aspects of their play and development are not consistently at a high enough level or sufficiently productive and sustained throughout the sessions observed.
- A small number of children lose focus at periods during the day and still require adult support to make choices and participate fully. In contrast, most of the children are well settled and can focus for short periods of concentrated play when engaged in activities which interest them. They make choices, access play materials, take responsibility for their own snack routine and manage their personal care confidently and with independence.
- The strategies necessary to help all of the children to develop their attention and listening, language and communication skills during group sessions are underdeveloped. A majority of the children do, however, listen well and enjoy stories in larger groups.
- A majority of the children converse confidently with the staff and each other about their play activities and seek help when required. Small groups of children use their oral and communication skills to develop their play, and respond to appropriate questions from the staff to explain their thinking. The children refer to books during play, enjoy choosing books each week to take home and respond very well during small informal story sessions.
- The children experiment confidently in the junk art and painting areas to join materials together, and explore colour and texture. While a few children make detailed drawings and simple three dimensional models, overall, their creative and imaginative use of materials and representational work is underdeveloped for the time of the year. The staff have identified appropriately the further development of music, rhyme and rhythm as a priority area for future development.
- Most of the children are developing well their understanding of simple mathematical concepts and language relating to number, shape, size and measurement. They use simple tools and equipment independently and a number of children are beginning to develop emergent writing skills.
- On the day of the inspection visit there was limited interest by the children in the sand and water play. The children have high levels of interest and involvement when investigating through their senses, the properties of natural materials.

- The children with additional needs are building trusting relationships with the staff and are gradually making progress in the development of their emotional, social and communication skills with sensitive support.

## **6. Quality of provision**

- The range of learning experiences and aspects of the organisation of the day are not planned and implemented well enough to match the wide range of children's needs and promote challenging, productive and sustained play throughout the session.
- The staff are not consistent in setting high expectations. They need to implement effective strategies to promote attention and listening during group sessions, participation in tidying up and in the transitions between activities and focused play, both in the playroom and the hall.
- The staff have worked very hard to create an attractive learning environment with accessible resources within the playroom; it is enhanced with the addition of natural resources, a good range of books and distinct areas for different types of play.
- The daily routine provides an extended period of freely-chosen play, regular physical activity in the sports hall and the opportunity to take responsibility for their own snack. The staff are caring and supportive of the children's own ideas; in the best practice, in a majority of the interactions, they promote well the children's language and learning through sustained conversations.
- The staff plan extensively to provide the children with a wide variety of learning experiences across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. They record relevant observations of the children's responses to the play using a range of appropriate methods. The information is used for early identification of needs and to inform parents of their children's progress.
- The staff are not building on this work to match the assessment information effectively to the planning. They need to ensure that the daily provision is both challenging and differentiated appropriately to match more fully the range of children's needs, interests and stages of development.
- The special needs co-ordinator keeps detailed records and individual plans for children identified with additional needs and liaises closely with the parents and other professionals to provide an holistic approach to meeting their needs. There is evidence of children being supported and making progress. Staff members have benefited from training to support children with additional needs; they have identified that they need continued mentoring and support as they implement their training.
- The care and welfare helps the children to form relationships with other adults and one another and is evident in their developing social skills, good behaviour and the inclusion of others from a range of cultural backgrounds and needs.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- There is insufficient monitoring by the leadership and management at all levels to evaluate how effectively the extensive work being done on audits, action plans, assessments and reviews is improving the quality of the daily provision and the outcomes for the children.
- The leader and the staff have a strong team identity and effective working relationships.
- The leader has accessed funding, led and implemented very effectively a range of improvements and initiatives with parents and the local community including the Big Bedtime Read, a parents' workshop and a cultural inclusion day. There is positive feedback from parents about the benefits of these events in promoting an interest in books and equipping them to support their own child's learning and development.
- The links with local primary schools to which the children will transfer facilitate a smooth transition for the children.
- The early years specialist provides evaluative feedback and guidance which is focused on relevant priorities. The inspection findings indicate that the guidance and support is not helping the staff to link the extensive written documentation to the impact on the quality of the daily practice.
- The role of the management committee in monitoring the evidence of improvements in the quality of the provision is underdeveloped. They are, however, kept informed about the work of the playgroup through the leaders reports and they take responsibility for the financial sustainability of the playgroup.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding reflect broadly the guidance issued by the relevant Departments. The following areas need to be addressed:
  - the child protection training arranged for the deputy designated officer and the chair of the management committee needs to be completed in a timely way;
  - the complaints procedure needs modified to include names and contact details;
  - the policy for intimate care should include information on record-keeping;
  - the regular risk assessments need to be monitored by a named person; and
  - risk assessments for occasional outings need to be completed.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **8. Overall effectiveness**

Mount St Nicholas Pre-school Playgroup needs to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners.

The areas for improvement include the need to:

- ensure the planned programme progresses the children's learning at an appropriate pace across all areas of the pre-school curriculum;
- develop a more effective approach to managing the organisation of the daily transition points, group story and the activities in the large hall;
- build on the examples of best practice to provide a consistently high quality of staff interaction to promote sustained and challenging productive play and learning throughout the session; and
- monitor more rigorously at all levels of the leadership and management, how effectively the developmental work benefits the quality of the daily 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 12 to 18 months.

**Information on sessions and staff****Duration of sessions**

<b>Part-time: am</b>
9.00-11.45

**Details of staff**

<b>Number of:</b>	<b>Part-time</b>
Staff including, Teachers/Leaders	3
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification	3

<b>Number of: *</b>	
Students	1

**Source:** data provided by the setting.

\* Total placements since September of current year



### Inspection method and evidence base

The effective practice and self-evaluation questions which guide inspection and self-evaluation of pre-school settings, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the ETI publication *The Pre-school Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework* at: <https://www.eti.gov.uk>

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

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 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 the 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.

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