

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

O'Fiaich Playgroup, Armagh

Voluntary playgroup

Report of an Inspection in
December 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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CONTENTS

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

Appendices

- A. Inspection methodology and evidence base
- B. Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

1. Context

O’Fiaich Playgroup is located at Callenbridge Park, Armagh. The playgroup has a dedicated playroom and an adjoining, well-resourced outdoor space. The children attending the playgroup come mainly from the local surrounding area. Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes in staffing and a reduction in the number of funded pre-school places. At the time of the inspection, staff were in a temporary and acting capacity and there was no management committee. The playgroup are participating in the Big Bedtime Read and Healthy Happy Kids programme funded by the Department of Education.

Number of children:	Class 1
Attending part-time	10
Funded by Department of Education	9
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 1 or 2**	#
With English as an additional language	#

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	90%
Average percentage attendance for the previous year.	N/A
Number of days open in previous school year	N/A

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 minority of parents and most of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. The parental responses were extremely positive about the current leadership and the care for the children. The questionnaire responses were shared with 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	Address urgently the significant areas for improvement
Outcomes for learners	Very good
Quality of provision	Good
Leadership and management	Requires urgent improvement

5. Outcomes for learners

- The children are progressing well in their learning across the six areas of the pre-school curriculum. The children's behaviour is excellent, they follow routines with confidence, have good levels of independence and are highly motivated to learn. Most of the children are developing well-sustained concentration and attention at a range of play activities. They also are developing well their social skills and show respect to each other and for their environment.
- Most of the children communicate confidently with each other and the staff about their ideas and interests. They listen attentively during story time and are interested in books; a majority of the children are showing an interest in early mark making. All of the children participate enthusiastically in singing songs and action rhymes. Nearly all are making good progress in their understanding and use of early language associated with number, size, shape, colour and position, and are beginning to apply it during their play.
- The children explore the range of available art materials confidently to develop their own creative ideas. They spend sustained periods investigating the properties of natural materials such as sand and dough. A few children make representational paintings and drawings and a majority use construction materials imaginatively to build simple models. They use a range of tools skilfully, for example, brushes, rollers, hammers, rolling pins, tongs and toy hammers. In outdoor play, the children enjoy balancing, jumping, skipping and transporting blocks using wheelbarrows.
- The children's records indicate that those who require additional help with aspects of their learning are all making progress through sensitive adult support.
- The small number of pre-school children in the setting restricts the full development of the children's own social and imaginative play.

6. Quality of provision

- The staff provide a broad and balanced programme with good to very good opportunities for learning across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. Particular strengths are the promotion of the children's language and early mathematical ideas. However, the planned programme is not informed effectively enough by the assessment of the children's learning to match sufficiently the wide range of individual needs reflected in the children's ages and stages of development.
- The staff create a well-resourced attractive learning environment with materials that are accessible to the children. The outdoor provision provides different contexts and opportunities for the children to apply their learning. There is a good balance between free play and organised activities; routines and transitions are managed effectively.
- The staff have a very positive and nurturing approach as they work with the children and most of the staff interaction is very effective in promoting the children's language and learning. They model vocabulary, support the children's independence and social skills, and ask open-ended questions to extend their thinking. The children's work is praised and their achievements are valued in relevant wall displays.

- Children who need additional support with their learning are identified early and their progress is recorded regularly. There is close liaison with parents and other agencies to communicate effectively about the needs of the child. It is appropriate that the staff are due to attend training to further their skill in writing effective individual education plans. The provision for newcomer families is enhanced by collaboration with Barnardos to provide interpreters and support.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the pre-school's approach to care and welfare impacts positively on their learning and development. The children are developing positive attitudes to learning; they have well-developed social skills and are caring and respectful to each other and to the staff.

7. Leadership and management

- The leadership and management of the pre-school requires urgent improvement. At the time of the inspection there was no permanent suitably qualified leadership. In addition, there was no functioning management committee. The effective support of the early years specialist, during a challenging period of recruitment and staffing issues, is highly valued by the staff. However, the lack of strategic leadership and permanent staffing has impacted negatively on any self-evaluation and development planning and as a result these aspects of the work are underdeveloped.
- There is effective day-to-day management of the playgroup and the acting leadership which promotes an inclusive ethos for families representing a wide range of background and experiences. There are links with a range of health and other agencies which enhance the provision. There are good links with a local primary school, where the children participate in a joint physical play programme to enhance the transition process. The staff have established links with the local Sure Start to share information about the children who transfer from the Developmental Programme for 2-3 year olds.

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 staff need to update the safeguarding policy to reflect current guidance and develop further the risk assessments for activities which take place away from the playgroup premises.

9. Overall effectiveness

O'Fiaich Playgroup needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners. It requires external support to do so.

The areas for improvement are:

- to establish a suitably qualified and effective staff and leadership team;
- to make more effective use of the assessments of the children's learning to inform the planning and match more appropriately the ages and stages of the children; and

- to develop an effective process for self-evaluation and development planning that will lead to improvements in 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 the staff and 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 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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