

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Play-A-Way Childcare Centre,
Newtownards, County Down

Report of an inspection in
November 2015

eti

*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*

Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



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 continue to 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 continue to 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.

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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 discussion with the staff;
- a meeting with those involved with leadership and management including a representative of the Board of Directors; and
- the opportunity for the parents and staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Ten parents and six of the staff responded to the questionnaires. The responses to the parental questionnaires indicated very high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the life and work of the centre. In particular, the parents highlighted the friendly, approachable staff, the progress made by their children and their appreciation of the wrap-a-round care service available to them. The staff responses were wholly positive. The ETI has reported to the leader and a representative of the Board of Directors the main messages emerging from the questionnaires.

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

Play-A-Way Childcare Centre Pre-school is accommodated in Zion Hall, Newtownards. The centre has a large playroom and a small outdoor area; it operates also an after-school childcare service within the building. Three new assistants have been appointed since the centre was last inspected in 2008.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

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

5. Achievements and standards

- Almost all of the children are well-settled and engage in sustained play throughout the session. They are confident in approaching adults for help and support; a small number of them are beginning to engage in collaborative play. The children are independent in accessing the resources they require and follow well the routines of the setting. The centre has identified a significant minority of the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning, a small number of whom require additional adult support to engage purposefully and sustain their play.
- The children have a good interest in books and stories; they enjoy the opportunities to recall and re-enact familiar tales. They are developing their skills in drawing, painting and early mark-making and their own language is recorded and displayed prominently alongside their work.
- During the inspection, the children were observed engaging in a range of early mathematical activities including: sorting and matching; weighing with balance pans; and, counting and recognising numbers and shapes. The children have a very good interest in the World Around Us and are keen to observe, investigate and explore the very good range of natural and real resources available in both the playroom and the outside play area.

6. Provision for learning

- The playroom is well-organised and very good use is made of the available space to present the activities in an interesting and attractive way. The adult interactions with the children are of a consistently good and often very good quality. They model well both language and play that develops the children's vocabulary and language skills. In the best practice, the staff use effective questioning to develop the children's problem-solving and thinking skills.
- The broad and balanced programme presents very good opportunities for learning across almost all of the areas of the pre-school curriculum. The bi-weekly planning is of a very good quality and involves all of the staff thereby ensuring they have a clear understanding of the learning to be promoted. The planning is evaluated weekly and adapted, as necessary, to meet the needs and interests of the children. The staff use a key worker system to make regular observations of the children and make good use of their assessments of the children's learning to identify each child's strengths and inform future support. The staff have identified appropriately the need to ensure that the assessments for all children are shared more widely among the staff and reflected within the planning.
- The staff provide very good support, underpinned by professional knowledge and an awareness of individual children's needs, for those children identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning. The individual education plans are of a good quality; they highlight each child's strengths and interests which the staff then use well in planning appropriate learning opportunities. The recent training, through the Early Years Inclusion Project, has provided the staff with a wider range of intervention strategies and access to, and links with, outside agencies for additional support and advice.

- The pastoral care in the centre is of a high quality. There is a welcoming and inclusive ethos and the staff work diligently to ensure that each child is happy and secure in the setting and develops to his/her full potential. The voice of the child is valued and evident throughout the centre and is used well to inform the planning and practices.
- The centre gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, the healthy break and the good opportunities for energetic physical activity, which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- There are well-defined leadership roles for the centre's manager and playroom leader which complement each other to develop effectively the quality of the provision. The staff evaluate strategically the outcomes of ongoing developments, reflect on the impact and plan future actions. A key priority is placed on building the capacity of the staff through the use of staff appraisals that identify individual needs and additional training and support.
- The centre has received very good support and guidance from their independent early years specialist in developing the quality of the provision. The centre has achieved and maintained external accreditation through attaining a Gold Award from the Curriculum and Programme Support (CAPS) Agency.
- There are very good links with the parents who are provided with information on the life and work of the centre. A recent parental workshop on positive behaviour provided parents with behaviour strategies which can be used at home to reflect and support those used by the staff. The centre has well-established links with the local primary schools that enables them to evaluate and develop continuously their transition arrangements for the children.
- The centre has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Departments.

8. Overall effectiveness

The centre has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will continue to monitor how the centre sustains improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON PLAY-A-WAY CHILDCARE CENTRE PRE-SCHOOL

1. Details of children

Number of children:	Class 1
Attending full-time	
Attending part-time	26
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**	8
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.

*** Denotes a number less than 5

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	23
Average attendance for the previous year.	90%
Number of days open in previous school year	185

2. Duration of sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
	9:00-11:45	

3. Details of staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff including, Teachers/Leaders		6
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification		6
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification		0
New appointments within the previous 12 months		0

Number of: ***	
Students	1
Trainees	0

*** Total placements since September of current year

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