

Education and Training Inspectorate

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Playaway Playgroup, Islandmagee, County Antrim

Voluntary playgroup DE Ref No (3AB-0576)

Report of an Inspection in January 2019

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1. Context

Playaway Playgroup is located in a shared community building on Islandmagee. The playgroup have access to a small outdoor area and garden. Almost all of the children attending the playgroup come from the immediate local area. Since the previous inspection in 2013 the number of funded pre-school places has increased from 9 to 19. A small number of younger children attend on a part-time fee-paying basis; two new members of staff have been appointed and a new early years specialist took up post in September 2018. The staff are in their second year of the Big Bedtime Read as part of the 'Getting Ready to Learn' programme funded through the Department of Education.

Number of children:	Class 1
Attending full-time	19
Attending part-time	13
Under 3 years of age*	#
Funded by Department of Education	19
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	#
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	#

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	100%
Average percentage attendance for the previous year.	20
Number of days open in previous school year	186

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

A minority of the parents and almost all of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. All of the responses were highly positive about the quality of the provision and in written comments the parents highlighted the caring and professional staff, the effective links with parents and the good progress the children make in their learning and development. The questionnaire responses were shared with the leader and a representative from the management committee.

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	Good
Quality of provision	Good
Leadership and management	Good

5. Outcomes for learners

- The children are making good to very good progress across almost all aspects of the pre-school curriculum and are developing very positive attitudes and dispositions for learning.
- The children are confident to make independent choices and decisions about their play and resources; they have good social skills and show respect for others. They spend sustained periods initiating and developing their own ideas in collaborative play and persevere to complete tasks.
- Most of the children are confident to communicate their own ideas and experiences with the staff and one another using an increasingly wide range of vocabulary. They refer frequently to books for reference in many areas of play throughout the session and listen attentively to larger group stories. As an integral part of their play and routines, a majority of the children sort, match, make patterns, count and make comparisons of size.
- The children experiment with colour and pattern and use a wide range of materials to express their own creative ideas; a few are beginning to make simple representations of people and familiar objects. They play imaginatively as they initiate and act out roles in the doctor's surgery, kitchen and floor play areas. The children are very curious and engaged as they watch birds through the binoculars, investigate melting ice or explore how the wheels move on a range of toy vehicles.
- The children's play across the six areas of learning is not as well developed outdoors. There is limited evidence of them using language to express emotions and feelings and there is a lack of sufficient progression in their use of a range of construction materials to problem solve and make models.
- The children who require support with aspects of their learning are integrated well into the group and with the sensitive support and guidance of the staff, they are making steady progress in their social and communication skills.

6. Quality of provision

- The staff create an inviting and stimulating learning environment within the hall which has to be set up, cleared away and stored on a daily basis. A section of the hall is used effectively for physical play during inclement weather.
- The high quality of almost all of the interactions between the staff and the children is a key strength of the provision. The staff encourage, support and extend the children's own ideas, language and thinking through sustained conversations during play activities and daily routines such as snack and tidy up time.

- The staff plan a varied and interesting programme across the year with good to very good opportunities for learning in almost all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The weekly planning guides the staff effectively in their day to day work with the children. The evaluations of learning are used effectively to amend aspects of the planned programme. The medium and longer term planning is not sufficiently focused to guide progression in learning and the effective use of the outdoor areas for learning. The staff know the children well and gather a range of photographic and written evidence of the children participating in activities. They are aware of the need to evaluate and refine further the new methods of assessment. The systematic tracking of progress across each area and the use of information to inform the next stage of learning require further development.
- The children who have additional learning needs are identified early and are given caring and sensitive support to access the curriculum. The staff liaise with parents and other relevant professionals; individual plans are drawn up to set and review targets for each child. The staff have not had sufficient training and guidance on how to set and implement specific, measureable and achievable targets and as a result they are not always as effective as required. The staff have identified this as a priority area for further development.
- 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 caring and positive approach to children and families fosters a positive climate for learning and co-operation.

7. Leadership and management

- The leadership, management and staff work well as a team in the management and organisation of the playgroup. The staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and are deployed effectively within the playroom.
- The early year's specialist from the Early Years Organisation provides relevant and practical guidance and advice which is valued by the staff. The management group are very supportive of the ongoing improvements and report their observation of improvement and development in recent years. The need to dismantle and store all equipment and signage on a daily basis, in addition to the lack of a dedicated facility for staff team meetings impacts negatively on the time available for planning and assessment work.
- The staff, management committee and early year's specialist can identify the strengths of the setting and have prioritised a range of relevant areas for further development. They can demonstrate the impact of improvement in a number of areas including a more effective room layout, the development of an outdoor area, increased integration of music and the engagement of parents in the Big Bedtime Read. The documentation for action planning requires further development with the support of the early year's specialist.
- The close links and effective communication between the main feeder primary school and the playgroup help to provide smooth transitions for the children. The primary school to which most of the children transfer reports the children are well prepared for the next stage of their education. The parents contribute to the maintenance of the outdoor areas and report benefits to themselves and their children as a result of being involved in the Big Bedtime Read.

8. Safeguarding

- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect the guidance from the relevant Departments.

9. Overall effectiveness

Playaway Playgroup demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvements in the interest of all the children. There are areas for improvement that the playgroup has demonstrated the capacity to address.

The areas for improvement are:

- develop further the quality of the outdoor play to provide greater progression in their learning across the breadth of the pre-school curriculum;
- continue to develop a systematic approach to tracking the children's progress across each area of the pre-school curriculum and use the information to plan for the next stage of their learning; and
- improve the action planning process including a clearer baseline of the priority area, and linking the action, targets and impact of improvement more fully.

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 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

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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