

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Playhouse Activity Centre,
Coleraine, County Londonderry

Report of an Inspection in
June 2016



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing Inspection Services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
Department for Communities



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.

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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; and
- the opportunity for the parents and staff to complete confidential questionnaires.

Twenty-eight percent of the parents responded to the questionnaire. All of the responses to the parental questionnaire indicated very high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the life and work of the playgroup. The very small number of written comments highlighted the approachable and dedicated staff. There were no staff responses. The ETI has reported to the playgroup leader and a member of the management committee the main messages emerging from the parental questionnaire; no issues or concerns were raised.

2. Focus of inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest 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

Playhouse Activity Centre playgroup is accommodated within Coleraine West Community Centre. The playgroup operates within a shared facility and has its own dedicated outdoor play area. The staff also facilitate an afternoon session for children in their pen-ultimate pre-school year. Since the last inspection, in 2007, the playgroup has moved from a pre-fabricated building into the newly-built Coleraine West Community Centre and two new assistants have been appointed. At the time of the inspection, one of the assistants was employed in a temporary capacity.

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 confident, well-settled and play purposefully for prolonged periods. They show high levels of independence in accessing the resources they need and in following the routines of the playgroup. Almost all of the children play collaboratively, are building friendships and have very good social skills. The children are keen, inquisitive learners and are well encouraged to investigate and problem solve.
- Almost all of the children have very good oral language and their representational drawings and paintings are of a very high quality. All of the children recognise their name and almost all can write independently their name. They have a keen interest in early mark making and engaged enthusiastically in writing notes to place inside miniature glass bottles. The children listen and respond well in the group story session and morning circle time. They enjoy browsing in books and can retell or create stories with very good imagination using the interesting range of books, toys and puppets.
- The children show a good interest in early mathematical activities and they engaged well in activities involving numbers and counting. They have a very good understanding of early mathematical language and can recognise and name a range of shapes.
- The children are highly creative and have excellent fine motor skills; handling well a range of very small items and engaging in activities requiring very good manual dexterity. They investigate and explore the properties of the wide range of real and natural resources provided and have a keen interest in the world around us.

6. Provision for learning

- The staff provide an exciting and stimulating learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, with a focus on providing as many real and natural resources as possible. They make very good use of the large hall space, with clearly defined areas of play and an area for the morning session of focused energetic movements as part of the 'be-active session'. The routines in the playgroup ensure very effective transitions across the day and develop well the children's independence. The broad and balanced programme presents very good and outstanding opportunities for learning across all of the areas of the pre-school curriculum.
- The staff interactions with the children are of a consistently high standard; effective questioning encourages creativity, open-ended investigation and a problem-solving approach. The staff plan for and evaluate the children's learning on a daily basis, allowing them to provide and plan for appropriate levels of support and respond to the interests of the children.
- The staff make excellent use of a daily, photographic book to record the children's learning, verbal responses and questions. The book assists the staff in assessing the children's learning by augmenting the ongoing written observations and enables them to plan a responsive curriculum which builds well on the children's prior learning. In addition, the book is available for parents and provides them with a very detailed and unique update on the activities and learning within the playgroup.

- The staff have taken part in training and capacity building for special educational needs through the Early Years Inclusion Service and have developed good links with a range of outside agencies. The individual play plans are of a very good quality with appropriate targets and are evaluated regularly to monitor the children's progress. The children identified with speech and language difficulties are provided with additional support through small group language work and have made good progress in their speech and language.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the playgroup is outstanding. There is a welcoming, friendly ethos with very high levels of mutual respect amongst the staff and children. The children's work is celebrated in attractive displays alongside their verbal responses. They respond well to the positive behaviour strategies implemented consistently by the staff and, as a result, they are very well-behaved, look after the equipment and resources well, and are very caring towards each other.
- The playgroup gives outstanding attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, the provision of a healthy snack, dental hygiene routines and the very good opportunities for energetic physical activity.

7. Leadership and management

- The leader and staff have a shared vision to ensure high quality provision in a multi-sensory and naturally creative environment. They work collaboratively resulting in highly effective teamwork, are proactive in researching and accessing innovative ongoing professional development opportunities and are well supported by the management committee. The focus on the development and support of all staff is evident in the consistently high quality of the adult interactions with the children. The development planning processes are very effective and are informed by detailed, continuous self-evaluation. Very good support is provided for the playgroup through their independent early years specialist.
- The playgroup has very good links with the parents and they are kept well-informed about their child's progress. Alongside the daily photographic book, a detailed and creative 'My Learning Story' book is kept for each child and provides parents with a visual record celebrating their child's progress across their pre-school year. The playgroup has very good links with the local Surestart group who assist with courses for parents on, for example, behaviour management. Educational trips are well used to enhance the children's learning experiences. The playgroup is involved with the Causeway Early Education Partnership and has developed shared education links with other settings through this association.
- The playgroup has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Departments.

8. Overall effectiveness

Playhouse Activity Centre 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 playgroup sustains improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON PLAYHOUSE ACTIVITY CENTRE PLAYGROUP, COLERAINE

1. Details of children

Number of children:	
Attending full-time	0
Attending part-time	24
Under 3 years of age*	0
Funded by Department of Education	24
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**	0
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	4
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.	100%
Average attendance for the previous year.	89%
Number of days open in previous school year	188

2. Duration of sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
	8:45 am-11:45 am	

3. Details of staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff including, Teachers/Leaders		3
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification		3
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification		0
New appointments within the previous 12 months		0

Number of: ****	
Students	2
Trainees	0

**** Total placements since September of current year

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