

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Poyntzpass Community
Playgroup, Newry, Co Down

Report of an Inspection in
January 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

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 in reports:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

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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 centres, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the ETI's publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self evaluation* at: [Together Towards Improvement Pre-school | Education and Training Inspectorate](#)

Inspectors observed teaching and learning 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, staff and members of the management group to complete a confidential questionnaire.

The parents and staff who responded to the questionnaire were wholly positive about all aspects of the life and work of the playgroup. They particularly value the work of the staff and the contribution made by the cross-community playgroup within their local area.

2. Context

Poyntzpass Community Playgroup is situated in purpose-built accommodation within a community building located on the main street of the village. The staff are new in post since the last inspection in 2007. The leader is in post over one year and a new assistant was appointed in October 2014.

3. Focus of the inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards;
- the quality of provision; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

4. Overall findings

Overall Performance Level	Good
Achievements and Standards	Good
Provision	Good
Leadership and Management	Good

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are well-settled, eager to play and independent. They have developed very good social skills. They have a good awareness of the rules and routines of the playgroup and show care for one another and their environment. A majority of the children sustain concentrated and collaborative play for lengthy periods and use a range of self-help skills to access resources to extend their play.
- The children have good to very good language and communication skills. They can share and turn-take during play and snack-time and readily engage in conversation often turning to the adults to extend their play with additional resources. They enjoy listening to and dramatising stories and often transfer their knowledge of familiar stories into their outdoor play. The children's early mark making and writing is developed effectively and almost all of them are able to creatively express their ideas through representational drawings and paintings which are celebrated in colourful displays by the staff.
- The quality of most of the children's mathematical language is good and their associated mathematical concepts of number, sorting and matching are well-developed by the staff through play.
- The children's physical fine motor skills are mainly developed through manipulating tools and toys during play, cutting and drawing using an appropriate range of tools. The staff have appropriately identified the need to develop further the progression in the development of the children's gross motor skills.

6. Provision

- The staff have created a welcoming and secure learning environment for the children. There is a supportive and caring family ethos in the playgroup based on positive relationships at all levels. The staff readily praise the children and develop their confidence and self-esteem. There is a consistent approach to implementing effective conflict resolution strategies and the children's behaviour is excellent.
- The daily timetable provides a lengthy period of free play and includes good opportunities for outdoor play. The children can self-register for example, during the snack; this effective strategy should be deployed to develop further the children's learning and self-management in the other areas of learning. The snack and transitions between the activities are developed effectively to provide good learning opportunities about healthy eating and mathematical awareness. The story session provides a valuable learning experience for the children as a whole group.
- The interaction between all of the staff and the children is often of a good to very good standard. The staff listen effectively to develop the children's thinking by adding new resources or developing ideas to extend their language and thinking. During the inspection there were a few missed opportunities to extend the children's learning or to fully utilise the potential of the learning from the activities.

- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the playgroup is very good. The children's attendance is very good and they enjoy excellent relationships with the staff. The staff treat the children with care and respect and provide a secure and inviting environment that helps the children to grow in confidence and independence.
- The staff have developed the planning for progression in learning well and implement an effective assessment approach using the key-worker system to track the children's progress and development. They work effectively as a team to plan together and evaluate the quality of the provision. There is a need to develop further the planning and assessment in order to identify more clearly the potential learning to be promoted from the activities and the resources.
- The staff have benefitted from the training and participation in the Early Years Special Educational Needs Capacity Building pilot in the Southern Education and Library Board area. The provision for the children with additional needs is meeting well the children's behavioural and developmental needs. The staff record the children's progress, use this information effectively to identify their needs, and then deploy appropriate strategies to support the children's full inclusion in the playgroup and their access to learning.
- The playgroup gives very good attention to healthy eating through the provision of healthy foods. When the weather permits, the children engage in outdoor physical activity which effectively promotes energetic play.

7. Leadership and management

- The leader has overseen significant developmental processes since her appointment and has a clear vision for the strategic development of the playgroup. The leader and the staff know the children very well and implement a range of effective strategies to meet their individual needs. There is a three-year development plan and the staff and management group need to ensure that the related action plans include a greater focus on monitoring and evaluation of the children's learning. Self-evaluation is appropriately focused on key priorities for improvement to establish a secure foundation for ongoing developmental work which is effectively supported by the management group. The policies and procedures which guide the development work are kept under review by the management group and shared regularly with the parents.
- The parents are fully involved in the life and work of the playgroup and contribute to the fundraising events. The staff provide informative newsletters and three progress meetings per year to engage the parents in their children's education. Most of the children transfer to the local primary schools and relevant information about the children's progress is available to the schools.
- The early years specialist (EYS) from the Early Years Organisation is recently appointed and effectively supports the development of the playgroup. The development of the 'world around us' area of learning is appropriately identified as a key area for improvement. The EYS cluster support is effectively building the capacity of the staff in the local pre-school sector to sustain ongoing improvement.

- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the playgroup has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Departments.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the playgroup is good. The playgroup has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified an area for improvement which the playgroup has demonstrated the capacity to address.

The area for improvement is the need to:

- develop further the links for planning, assessment and staff interaction to support more consistently the children's learning across all areas of the curriculum.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the playgroup's progress on the areas for improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION POYNTZPASS COMMUNITY PLAYGROUP, NEWRY

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school setting	24	-
in their immediate pre-school year	24	-
funded by Department of Education (DE)	24	-
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	0	-
with a statement of special educational needs	0	-
without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	*	-
with English as an additional language	0	-
who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	0	-

* Special Educational Needs = fewer than five

Attendance** of funded children for the previous school year.	91%
Number of days open in previous school year	188

** Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Sessions

Duration of morning session	Duration of afternoon session
3.2 hours	-

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	3	
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification	2	
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification	1	
New appointments within previous 12 months	1	

Number of: ***	
Students	0
Trainees	0

*** Total placements since September of current year

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