

Education and Training Inspectorate

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Saul Playgroup, Downpatrick, County Down

Voluntary playgroup DE Ref No (4BB-0474)

Report of an Inspection in May 2019



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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1. Context

Saul Playgroup is accommodated in the former building of St Patrick's Primary School, Saul. The playgroup facilitates both a morning and an afternoon session. All of the children attending the playgroup come from Downpatrick and the surrounding rural area. In September 2018, new leadership and early years' specialist (EYS) took up post. A new management committee has been appointed.

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending part-time	21	16
Under 3 years of age*	0	16
Funded by Department of Education	21	0
With statement of special educational needs	#	0
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	#	N/A
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	#	N/A
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	#	N/A

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	N/A
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 majority of the parents and all of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. The parental responses were very positive about almost all aspects of the life and work of the playgroup. One third of the parents provided written comments highlighting: the courteous and welcoming staff; the very good levels of communication between staff and parents; and, the children's enjoyment of pre-school. In written comments the staff highlighted their commitment to providing a high standard of learning and teaching for the children through effective teamwork. A summary of the questionnaire responses was shared with the staff and 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

- All of the children settle quickly to purposeful play and their behaviour is very good. Most of the children are highly independent; they self-register, manage their own snack and choose the resources they need to enhance their play.
- Most of the children have a very good understanding of early mathematical concepts and use a range of appropriate mathematical language during their play. They display high levels of interest in the world around them and use their senses to explore and experiment, for example, when making dough and constructing and testing boats and cars. They show respect for living things, tending to vegetables in the outdoor area and looking after their goldfish.
- Almost all of the children sustain very good levels of concentration at story time and join in with repetitive parts of the story. They participate enthusiastically when reciting rhymes and singing songs linked to the playgroup's current theme. A significant minority of the children engage in purposeful mark making in the role-play and junk modelling areas and when playing outdoors.
- While the children enjoy role-play and take on and sustain roles at, for example, the ticket office and the train station, other aspects of their creativity are less well-developed. In particular, the children's representational artwork and experimentation with a wide range of media and tools is underdeveloped.
- The children who require support with aspects of their learning are well-integrated and are making good progress.

6. Quality of provision

- The indoor and outdoor learning environments are well-resourced with a good range of authentic and natural resources. However, the current layout of the playroom is not facilitating well enough the development of the children's creativity.
- A recent focus on improving the quality of children's observations has resulted in the staff: having a deeper understanding of the pre-school curriculum; recording the information in a more systematic and manageable way; and, planning more meaningful learning experiences for the children. The staff and the EYS have identified appropriately the need to improve further the intended outcomes and the role of the adult within the short-term planning.
- The staff provide an interesting and varied programme with good to very good learning experiences for the children across almost all areas of the pre-school curriculum. Regular planned visits to places of local interest and a wide range of visitors to the playgroup enrich greatly the children's learning. The provision for the world around us and early mathematical experiences are particular strengths of the provision; the provision for the arts is less well developed.

- The quality of the interactions between the staff and the children is very good. The staff know the children well, engage positively with them, and use effective strategies to promote and extend the children's language and develop their curiosity.
- The staff implement a range of appropriate strategies to support those children who have additional learning needs.
- 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. There are very good working relationships between the staff and the children. Consequently, the children appear happy, well-settled and are respectful towards the adults and each other.

7. Leadership and management

- The staff team are collegial and reflective. They work collaboratively with the EYS from the Early Years Organisation who provides a very good level of support to the setting. Together, they have identified appropriate priorities that are outlined clearly in the well-constructed development plan. Recent improvement work on developing the construction and music areas outdoors, creating a story corner and strengthening home school links through the 'Big Bedtime Read' initiative have impacted positively on the outcomes for the children.
- The management committee meets regularly and is supportive of the staff team; however, they are not yet well enough informed about current priorities within the development plan.
- Parents are kept well-informed about the progress of their children and the work of the playgroup through recently reviewed and improved communication arrangements at the beginning and end of each day, regular meetings and informative newsletters. There are regular and very effective links with the local primary school through, for example, the shared snack time and classroom buddies in the third term; this supports the children very well in their transition to the next stage of their learning.

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, Saul Playgroup needs to:

- access child protection training for the designated person on the management committee;
- update the anti-bullying policy and procedures to reflect current guidance; and
- update the behaviour policy to reflect the practice of the setting.

9. Overall effectiveness

Saul Playgroup demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the children.

There is an area for improvement that the playgroup has demonstrated the capacity to address. The area for improvement is:

- to improve further the provision and outcomes for the children in the arts.

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 management:

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 impacts positively enough on learning, teaching and outcomes for learners

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the school:

<p>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.</p>
<p>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.</p>
<p>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.</p>
<p>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.</p>

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