

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Springhill Playgroup,
Belfast

Voluntary playgroup

Report of an Inspection in
November 2017



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments



CONTENTS

Section	Page
1. Context	1
2. Views of parents and staff	1
3. Focus of the inspection	1
4. Overall findings of the inspection	1
5. Outcomes for learners	2
6. Quality of provision	2
7. Leadership and management	3
8. Safeguarding	4
9. Overall effectiveness	4

Appendices

- A. Inspection methodology and evidence base
- B. Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

1. Context

Springhill Playgroup is accommodated within two classrooms in Springhill Primary School in Belfast.

The playgroup has a new purpose-built outdoor learning area. Since the last inspection in 2010 three new members of staff have been appointed. At the time of the inspection there were a small number of children attending who were in their penultimate pre-school year.

Number of children:	Class 1
Attending part-time	25
Under 3 years of age*	7
Funded by Department of Education	18
With statement of special educational needs	0
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	7
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	5
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	#
With English as an additional language	0

Average percentage attendance for the previous year.	88.1
Number of days open in previous school year	178

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

Twenty-eight per cent of the parents responded to the confidential questionnaire. Most of the responses were positive about almost all aspects; there were no additional written comments. There were no questionnaire returns from the staff.

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	Important areas for improvement
Outcomes for learners	Important areas for improvement
Quality of provision	Important areas for improvement
Leadership and management	Good

5. Outcomes for learners

- The children are settled and play purposefully, but this is mostly in solitary play and the level of social interaction and engagement between the children is limited. They understand and follow well the routines in the playgroup and are confident in approaching adults for help and support. It is important that these routines should allow suitable flexibility so that they do not impact negatively on the children's creativity and curiosity.
- The children's use of early maths language for position or measures is limited. During the inspection there were many missed opportunities for staff to develop these naturally within the play and the daily routines.
- The majority of the children make choices, access play materials, take responsibility for their own snack routine and manage their personal care confidently and with growing independence. They listen attentively and with enjoyment during the group story time and join in the rhymes enthusiastically. They enjoy browsing in books and can label their work independently. Their interest in early mark-making and representational drawings is under-developed.
- The children use small tools with confidence and engage in a range of art activities including printing, collage and junk modelling. Their work is celebrated well in attractive displays in both playrooms.
- The children who require support with aspects of their learning are making good progress. The small group story time provides them with good opportunities to develop their listening, attention and language skills.

6. Quality of provision

- The quality of the interactions between the staff and the children is an important area for improvement. All of the adults engage regularly and appropriately with the children and, on occasions, use effective questioning to develop the children's thinking and to extend their vocabulary. This good practice is not well developed and consequently is not enhancing the children's creativity, alongside their thinking and problem-solving skills, well enough. The staff make regular observations of the children's play; however, these are used mostly to report rather than evaluate the children's learning. In the best practice, which is insufficiently common, the staff, for example, link well the assessments of the children's learning in using scissors to inform their planning. They also made good use of the parent newsletters to provide the parents with suggestions about how they can support the children's scissor skills at home.
- The small number of children who are in their penultimate pre-school year is set to increase in the near future. Although these children do not attend for the full length of the session, the staff do not plan an appropriately differentiated programme to meet their needs.

- The staff provide an attractive and well-organised learning environment. They focus on the establishment of routines and the personal, social and emotional development of the children. The children's independence, perseverance and attention skills is being developed successfully. The planned programme indicates the intended progression across the majority of the areas of the pre-school curriculum. There are insufficient opportunities for the children to develop their interest in the World Around Us with limited use of the available natural resources both indoors and during outdoor play. The area of the World Around Us has been identified by the staff as an area for improvement; the inspection endorses this as appropriate.
- Through the use of external funding and careful planning the staff have created a large, stimulating outdoor learning area. During the outdoor play session the staff were mostly supervising, rather than supporting, the children's learning through play; they need to review the use of the outdoor area to maximise its benefits to the children. It is appropriate therefore, that the staff have identified the need to develop planning for learning outdoors.
- The children who have additional learning needs are provided with good support through the range of strategies and positive reinforcement of success used consistently by all of the staff.
- 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 in particular on the children's personal, social and emotional development.

7. Leadership and management

- The staff are beginning to work well as a team under good strategic leadership. A three year development plan is in place and has been informed well by self-evaluation. The current action plans outline appropriate areas for development; however there is a need to review and refine the number of targets to ensure they are manageable and to monitor the impact of development. Staff development is aligned to the priorities of the development plan and is informed by the identified needs of the children. The leader has made very good use of external funding to access funds to pay for all staff to engage in training opportunities.
- The playgroup had no early years specialist (EYS) support from the Early Years Organisation in past school year and have only been supported by the current EYS since September.
- The management committee support the staff well with additional preparation time and in the provision of a new parent room which will be available shortly when the current building work in the school is completed.
- The playgroup has good links with the primary school and the children attend various events in the school throughout the year. The links with parents are developing well with a planned programme of parental workshops and stay and play opportunities throughout the year.

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

Springhill Playgroup needs to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners.

The areas for improvement are to:

- develop the quality of the adult interactions with the children to enhance the children's creativity, thinking and problem-solving skills and their social interactions with their peers; and
- continue to develop the educational use of the provision for outdoor learning and the planning and provision for World Around Us.

The ETI will monitor and report on the playgroup's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection in 12 to 18 months.

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 chair of the management group and the early years specialist; 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

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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