

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Bernard's Pre-School
Education Centre, Belfast

Report of an Inspection in
May 2014

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.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents ¹	*	*	*	*
Staff	*	*	*	*

* fewer than 5

Almost all of the returns from the questionnaires indicated high levels of satisfaction with nearly all aspects of the work of the playgroup.

2. Context

St. Bernard's pre-school education centre is located on Wynchurch Walk, Belfast. Since the last inspection there has been a change of leader; the current leader is also the centre's independent early years specialist. The playgroup operates within a purpose-built room attached to the parish hall and has access to the large hall within the parish centre for physical development and an enclosed garden area within the primary school grounds.

3. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

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

¹ The ETI is trialling a new range of methods to collect the views of parents/carers and, as a result, the percentage of questionnaires returned may be low.

4. Overall finding

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

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- Most of the children are well settled, enjoy making independent choices and are familiar with the daily routines. Most of the children are developing good levels of independence in a range of areas including; their personal hygiene, self-registration for snacks and in tidying the play activities into appropriate areas. The majority of children were observed playing purposefully both independently and collaboratively. They engage well in imaginative role play and most are confident in using a range of both small and large tools and equipment. Most of the children are able to make good representations of people and objects. The children participate in a range of creative activities including painting, collage work and junk modelling; it will be important however that the children get more opportunities to explore the materials available to create their own models.

6. Provision

- There is a friendly and welcoming atmosphere in the playgroup and relationships between the staff and the children are very good. Often, the staff engage effectively with the children, promoting their self-esteem, and developing their language and thinking skills. In the best practice observed, the adults responded effectively to the children's interests, suggestions and needs and used skilful questioning to promote the children's thinking, to encourage them to provide extended responses and to promote their levels of independence. The remaining minority of the staff interactions with the children do not develop all of the learning opportunities well enough and are in need of improvement.
- The education programme has a narrow focus and needs to be reviewed to reflect more fully the pre-school curricular guidance.
- The staff plan together and are beginning to evaluate the quality of the provision. They know the children very well and collate some useful assessment information for each child. The staff now need to link the observations of the children's responses to their play more clearly into their future plans, identify clear strategies for individual children and ensure there is sufficient challenge and progression for all of the children.
- The staff provide the parents with useful information about the curriculum. In addition, the parents receive regular information about their child's progress during the year. The setting also maintains very good links with the local primary school to which most/all of the children progress.

- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the playgroup is very good. The strengths include the very positive working relationships at all levels, the high priority given by the staff to the care and well-being of the children and the friendly and welcoming atmosphere within the playgroup.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection the playgroup has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding the children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Departments.
- The playgroup gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity; for example the children have access to a healthy snack and regular opportunities for physical play.

7. Leadership and management

- The new leader is well-organised and is effective in promoting a strong team-spirit among the hard-working staff. All of the staff have a caring approach to the children and are highly committed to the development of the playgroup.
- Although the staff are at an early stage in the process of self-evaluation, the development plan identifies appropriate priorities. It will be important for the management group to employ the services of an external early years specialist to support the new leader and staff to further develop their practice to reflect more fully the provision outlined in the Curricular Guidance for Pre-school Education document.

8. Conclusion

In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this playgroup is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in learning and teaching, and leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12-24 month period.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school setting:	St Bernard's Pre-school Education Centre
Address:	c/o St Bernard's Primary School Wynchurch Walk BELFAST BT6 0JS
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	29 May 2014
Date of previous inspection:	

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	24	-
with a statement of special educational needs	0	-
without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	0	-
with English as an additional language	*	-
who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	0	-
Attendance:		
attendance** of funded children for the previous school year		-

* Special Educational Needs = fewer than five

** Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	3	
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification	3	
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification	0	
New appointments within previous 12 months	1	

Number of: ***	
Students	2
Trainees	0

*** Total placements since September of current year

3. Details of Sessions

Duration of morning session	Duration of afternoon session	Number of days open in previous year
2½ hours	N/A	

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