

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Bernard's Pre-School
Playgroup, Newtownabbey

Report of an Inspection in
December 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 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 a confidential questionnaire.

All of the parents and all of the staff who responded to the questionnaire were wholly positive about all aspects of the life and work of the playgroup. They praised the support and care all of the staff give to their children, the professionalism of the staff and the progress their children are making in their learning.

2. Context

St Bernard's Pre-school Playgroup is located in St Mary's on the Hill Pastoral Centre on the Antrim Road, Newtownabbey. The leader was appointed in the interim period after the last inspection. The remaining staff were in post at the time of the last inspection.

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	Very Good
Achievements and Standards	Very Good
Provision	Very Good
Leadership and Management	Good

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are very well settled and are secure in the routines of the day, such as snack, story time and during transitions. Almost all of the children engage in purposeful, sustained play both in the playroom and in the outdoor learning environment. They are forming friendships and are developing effectively their social skills as they share resources and take turns while playing collaboratively with each other.
- Almost all of the children have very good language and communication skills and engage in meaningful conversations with their peers and with adults. They express their own opinions, listen well to each other and participate willingly during story time. The children's early mark making and representational drawings and artwork are of a high standard and are displayed attractively throughout the playroom.
- The children use mathematical language effectively and are developing well their understanding of mathematical concepts such as number, patterns, sorting and shape and space.
- The children are developing well their physical fine motor skills through activities such as threading, cutting, moulding and shaping and also during their snack routine as they independently prepare and serve their own food.

6. Provision

- The staff have created an attractive and stimulating learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, with a range of interesting resources and materials that meet very well the needs of the children. The ease of access the children have to the extensive range of appropriate resources, which include many natural resources, provides the children with opportunities to develop well their independence and self-management skills. The outdoor space, although limited in size, is utilised well. A particular strength of the provision is the attention given to the World Around Us curriculum area and the development of the children's investigative skills and sense of curiosity in their environment.
- The daily routine is well organised and ensures that the children are engaged purposefully at all times during the day. All transitions throughout the day are smooth and effective; the children move freely between the indoor and outdoor environments. A particular feature of the day is the relaxed and welcoming arrangement for parents to join their children in play at the end of the session.
- The quality of the interactions between the staff and the children is consistently of a good to very good standard. The staff are caring in their approach and respond sensitively to the individual needs of all of the children.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the playgroup is very good. There is a positive, warm and inclusive ethos and the staff treat the children with care and respect.

- The pre-school programme is well balanced and provides very good opportunities for learning across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The staff plan together and evaluate the quality of the provision and the children's achievements regularly. They know their children well and collate useful observations and assessments of their progress. To improve the provision further, the staff need to continue to refine the detail in their planning to identify the specific learning potential of each activity.
- The playgroup gives very good attention to healthy eating and to physical activity both in the indoor and outdoor learning environments.

7. Leadership and management

- The leader is an effective role model and is supported well by the management committee and her staff in all aspects of the life and work of the playgroup. The staff have made a good start to the process of self-evaluation and development planning; it will be important for the staff to continue to develop further the processes for self-evaluation leading to improvement.
- There are good links with the parents and effective links, both pastoral and curricular, with the local primary school. The parents are kept informed about the life and work of the playgroup through an informative monthly newsletter, regular meetings and also informally when they avail of the welcoming, open-door arrangement at the end of the session.
- The early years specialist from the Early Years Organisation provides effective support to develop the provision in the playgroup and this informs well the staff's improvement planning for the playgroup.
- 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 reflect the guidance issued by the relevant departments.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this playgroup is very good. The playgroup is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school setting	24	-
in their immediate pre-school year	17	-
funded by Department of Education (DE)	17	-
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	-	-
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	-
Attendance:		
attendance** of funded children for the previous school year	91%	-

* 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	0	3
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification	0	3
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification	0	0
New appointments within previous 12 months	0	0

Number of: ***	
Students	0
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
3 hours	-	185

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