

# PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

St Colum's Playgroup,  
Portstewart, County Antrim

Report of an inspection in  
April 2016

*eti*

The Education and Training Inspectorate  
Promoting Improvement

**Providing Inspection Services for:**

Department of Education  
Department for the Economy  
Department for Communities



## Quantitative terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

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 when reporting on Achievement and standards, on Provision for learning and on 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 nursery school / playgroup has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the nursery school / playgroup sustains improvement.
The nursery school /playgroup demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the nursery school/ playgroup sustains improvement.
The nursery school/ playgroup needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the nursery school's/ playgroup's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.
The nursery school / playgroup needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all learners. It requires external support to do so. The ETI will monitor and report on the nursery school's / playgroup's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

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

Inspectors observed learning and teaching 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 meeting with those involved with leadership and management including the management group; and
- the opportunity for the parents and staff to complete confidential questionnaires.

A minority of the parents and all of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. The parental responses included positive written comments praising the staff and the quality of the provision for their children. The staff responses were also positive.

## 2. Focus of inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all children, the purpose of inspection is, through effective linking of internal and external approaches, to evaluate the:

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

## 3. Context

St Colum's Playgroup is situated in purpose built accommodation in the grounds of St Colum's Primary School in Portstewart. Since the last inspection, there has been a change in leadership and management. A new leader was appointed permanently in September 2015 and has worked hard to identify and bring about improvements in the provision.

## 4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Important areas for improvement
Achievements and standards	Good
Provision for learning	Important areas for improvement
Leadership and management	Good

## **5. Achievements and standards**

- The children are well settled and demonstrate good levels of independence. They talk confidently about their work and experiences and show a good regard for the opinions of others and respect for their environment. The children work well independently, in pairs and in groups and spend lengthy periods at play. They can produce representational work that is age and stage appropriate, however, on a few occasions, their work is overly directed by the staff.
- Almost all of the children demonstrate an interest in exploring the world around them, and have good talking and listening skills. They listen attentively to stories and, at times, refer to reference books located in areas of play to guide them in their work. In the imaginative role-play areas, they use the available resources to act out real-life scenarios that build on their own personal experiences and learning. The staff need to enhance the range of resources to develop further the children's imagination and creativity.

## **6. Provision for learning**

- The staff readily join with the children in their play. On occasions during the inspection valuable opportunities were missed to build on the children's responses to enhance learning, and the planned art activity was too adult-directed and restricted the children's own creativity. The Planning is not detailed enough to include the learning to be promoted in all of the activities, including the outdoor play, and guide effectively the staff in their work with the children. The methods of observation and assessment are progressing well.
- Although the indoor and outdoor learning environments provide good opportunities for the children to develop a range of learning across the curriculum they are not sufficiently exploited by the staff to develop the children's imagination or creativity.
- The daily timetable provides variety in the experiences for the children and a balance between free play and activities organised by the staff. The organisation of the snack routine needs to be reviewed to promote more opportunities for the children to develop their learning.
- The children in the group who require additional support with aspects of their learning are identified at an early stage. The staff have benefited from recent training in special educational needs and the individual education plans drawn up for particular children show good progress in their area of need.
- The quality of pastoral care is very good. There is a caring ethos in the playgroup and working relationships between the staff and the children are very good.
- The daily programme includes a healthy snack for the children and an appropriate period for energetic physical play.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The staff work well as a team. The leader has a vision for the playgroup which includes: ensuring progression in the children's learning; strengthening the links between the observations of the children's responses; and further developments to the outdoor provision. There is, however, a lack of focus on the development of planning for learning; this is an important priority for improvement.
- Effective links have been established with the parents, the local primary school and other early years' practitioners for the benefit of the children.
- The playgroup employs the services of an early years specialist from the Early Years Organisation to support the staff in their work. Both parties reported good working relationships.
- 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. Overall effectiveness**

St Colum's Playgroup needs to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the playgroup's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. The areas for improvement are:

- to develop the planning to include a clear focus on the learning to be promoted in the planned activities and to guide the staff more effectively in their work with the children; and
- to enhance and exploit all opportunities to develop the children's imagination and creativity.

There will be a formal follow-up inspection in 12 to 18 months.

## STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON ST COLUM'S PLAYGROUP, PORTSTEWART

1. Details of children

<b>Number of children:</b>	Class 1	Class 2
Attending full-time		
Attending part-time	16	16
Under 3 years of age*		
Funded by Department of Education	15	16
With statement of special educational needs	0	0
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	1	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	1	1
At CoP stages 1 or 2**		
With English as an additional language	0	1
Who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school		

\* On 1 July.

\*\* The stages refer to those set out in the Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs.

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	97
Average attendance for the previous year.	92.69%
Number of days open in previous school year	188

2. Duration of sessions

<b>Full-time</b>	<b>Part-time: am</b>	<b>Part-time: pm</b>
	09.00-11.30	12.30-3.00

3. Details of staff

<b>Number of:</b>	<b>Full-time</b>	<b>Part-time</b>
Staff including, Teachers/Leaders	1	3
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification	1	3
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification	0	
New appointments within the previous 12 months	0	

<b>Number of: ***</b>	
Students	
Trainees	

\*\*\* Total placements since September of current year

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