

# PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

St Louis Pre-School,  
Ballymena, County Antrim

Voluntary playgroup

Report of an Inspection in  
February 2018



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

St Louis Pre-School operates within St Joseph's Early Years Centre in Ballymena. The premises accommodate a number of playgroups and the local SureStart Centre. Since the last inspection, the number of children has fallen to 14 and a new member of staff was appointed. Just under 40% of the children do not have English as a first language and a small number previously attended the SureStart programme.

<b>Number of children:</b>	Class 1
Attending part-time	16
Under 3 years of age*	2
Funded by Department of Education	14
With statement of special educational needs	0
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	#
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	#
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	0
With English as an additional language	6

Average percentage attendance for the previous year.	94.2%
Number of days open in previous school year	185

**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

## 2. Views of parents and staff

A small number of the parents and all of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. The responses were very positive about all aspects of the life and work of the playgroup. The written comments praised the professional and caring staff and the stimulating, child-centred learning environment.

## 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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Important areas for improvement
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Good
<b>Quality of provision</b>	Good
<b>Leadership and management</b>	Important areas for improvement

## **5. Outcomes for learners**

- The children enjoy sharing and talking about their work and achievements. They choose the materials and equipment they need independently and take responsibility for various aspects of their regular routines such as labelling and organising their work.
- All of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning and the children whose first language is not English, are making good progress in most aspects of the pre-school curriculum.
- The children are well-settled, enthusiastic learners; they engage with curiosity for extended periods across a range of activities which mostly reflect their various needs and interests. Their independence and self-management skills are good; for example most respond to the regular daily routines and the staff expectations positively. The children behave very well and are friendly towards one another and adults. For the time of year, a minority of the children could achieve better learning outcomes and would benefit from further progression and challenge in the planned activities.
- The children browse story and fact books with interest; a significant minority are developing their early mark-making skills. A majority understand some early mathematical concepts including number, measures and shape. The children's detailed representational artwork and the shared topic books they produce help them to develop their understanding of the world around them.

## **6. Quality of provision**

- Both indoors and outdoors, the staff provide an attractive, child-centred learning environment, making effective use of all the available space and resources to extend the children's learning and foster their growing self-reliance. Appropriately, the staff are developing the children's physical play.
- The staff make regular observations of the children's responses and supplement these with relevant photographic evidence and attractive samples of the children's work. Not enough use is made of this valuable to work to inform and modify the future planning.
- The quality of the staff interactions with the children promotes and extends the children's language and understanding and develops in context their interest in books, printed materials and writing. The staff do not develop the children's mathematical and science language sufficiently with regular opportunities for problem-solving and investigative activities.
- The staff take appropriate account of the children's individual needs and where necessary, recommendations of outside agencies. There is regular communication with the parents in relation to the progress the children are making.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the playgroup's approach to care and welfare impacts positively on all aspects of the children's learning and well-being. The child-centred ethos and positive working relationships create a nurturing environment for the children.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The playgroup's approaches to self-evaluation and shared reflection are not well-embedded into practice and do not inform systematically the strategic improvement work. The leader and chair of the management committee acknowledge the need to improve and embed the processes for self-evaluation and development planning within the playgroup. The current action plans do, however, contain a number of relevant priorities for improvement.
- The leader and staff operate well as a practical team in responding to the children's needs and interests. Their day-to-day work focuses on bringing immediate benefit to the children's learning, personal and emotional well-being and development. They are supported well in their work by the chair of the management committee.
- The work of the playgroup is supported by an early years specialist; however, the staff do not take sufficient account of the guidance given to effect continuous improvement in the provision for the children.
- There are beneficial working links and positive communication with the parents, several local primary schools, the adjacent playgroup and SureStart.

## **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, there is a need:
  - to ensure that all key policies are reviewed, ratified and signed annually; and
  - for the chair of the management committee to complete the registration process in a timely manner.

## **9. Overall effectiveness**

St Louis Pre-School needs to address important areas for improvement which include the need:

- to use the staff's observations and assessments more systematically to inform the planning for learning;
- to take greater account of and build effectively on the guidance and support provided by the early years specialist; and
- for the leadership and management to develop and embed the self-evaluation and development planning to bring about further improvement.

There will be a formal follow-up inspection in 12-18 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 chairperson of 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

### 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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