

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Mary's on the Hill Playgroup,
Glengormley, Co Antrim

Report of an Inspection in
March 2015

eti

*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*

Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

CUSTOMER
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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 settings, 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 and the staff to complete a confidential questionnaire or to meet with the inspection team.

2. Context

The playgroup is accommodated in a Parish Hall adjacent to St Mary's on the Hill Primary School, Glengormley. Since September 2014, the playgroup has been piloting the introduction of a part-time afternoon session with both funded pre-school children and younger fee-paying children attending, in addition to, the original part-time morning session which is attended by funded pre-school children only. At the time of the inspection, the playgroup was in the process of recruiting a leader and permanent staff for the afternoon session.

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.

4. Overall findings

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

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are making good progress in most areas of the pre-school curriculum. The children settle quickly to their own choice of play activities and most spend sustained periods concentrating and persevering at tasks. The children are respectful and helpful towards each other and are developing well their friendships and social skills. A small number of children still require help at times to share and take turns; they are supported sensitively to help them to resolve their differences. The staff need to encourage the children to take greater responsibility for tidying up and caring for their environment throughout the session.
- Most of the children are confident to talk to each other and the staff about their own experiences. A majority of the children can recall stories, ask questions and develop their collaborative and imaginative play to a mature level using well developed language and communication skills. There is a high level of interest in using the books incorporated into areas of play and most of the children are developing good listening skills during the group stories and rhymes. The girls, in particular, have an interest in print and enjoy mark making during contextual role play and at the creative and writing tables. The staff need to plan suitable experiences to encourage the boys in this area of development. The children with less well developed language and communication skills participate well with the group.
- The children are developing their fine motor skills and confident use of tools as they, for example, paint, draw, thread pasta and hammer at the tool bench. The children are developing appropriately their gross motor skills as they use a range of equipment and participate in action songs and rhymes in the hall or outdoors. The staff have identified appropriately the need to develop further the physical and outdoor play programme to ensure progression in the development of the children's skills.
- The children make independent use of the materials at the dough and creative areas to draw, make cards and collages. A small number of children are beginning to make simple representations of people and objects in their environment. The children have a high level of interest in the imaginary home and hairdresser role play areas; they collaborate very well as they explore roles, emotions and real-life experiences.
- A majority of the children are developing an early understanding of mathematical concepts as they sort, count and use timers during their play. A small number of children are beginning to use the associated mathematical language.

6. Provision

- The learning environment is laid out in richly resourced areas of play which are enhanced with natural materials that are easily accessible to the children and promotes their independent choice and use of equipment. The playgroup makes use of the school hall for physical play during inclement weather.

- The staff are all caring and supportive of the children and provide a positive and nurturing learning environment. They promote settled play, encourage the children's social skills and interest in books and, in the best practice, build effectively on the children's own ideas to promote language, thinking and learning.
- The staff plan an interesting range of activities to promote learning in all areas of the curriculum. The written planning needs to be developed further to ensure the planned activities match more fully the wide range of the children's stages of development, is detailed enough to guide all of the adults in their interactions with the children and indicates progression in all areas of the indoor and outdoor curriculum. The staff make regular observations of the children's responses and use this information for early identification of need and to provide information to parents. The staff need to develop further their assessment methods to build a systematic profile of the children's progress and use it to inform the planning process.
- The staff have benefited from their participation in the special educational needs capacity training pilot programme. They are in the process of finalising a new policy and developing their skills in using an increasing range of intervention strategies to meet the needs of children. The staff liaise appropriately with parents and other agencies.
- The quality of the pastoral care is very good. The children are well settled and respond well to the staff's expectations.
- The children have access to a healthy break and are learning about their dental health. They have regular access to energetic physical activities.

7. Leadership and management

- The staff are developing their capacity and processes for self-evaluation and development planning with the support of their early years specialist (EYS) from the Early Years Organisation and through the special educational needs capacity training. They have made a useful start to auditing aspects of their practice and have identified a number of relevant priorities on their action plans. The staff need to develop further their evaluations of the learning in their weekly planners and the extent of the improvement made through their development plans.
- The staff have a team approach to their work and they are committed to their ongoing staff development. The committee is working hard to support the group and minimise any negative impact on the staff turnover in the afternoon session. The leadership and management need to continue to plan strategically for future developments and support the staff during the current period of transition and change.
- There are good links with the parents and the adjoining primary school. The parents are encouraged to be involved in the playgroup and their contributions are valued by the staff. A range of visitors from the local community are invited to visit the playgroup session to enhance further the children's learning.

- The early year's specialist provides a range of relevant practical support, advice and guidance which is valued by the staff team.
- 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 the playgroup is good. The playgroup has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the playgroup has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the playgroup's progress on the areas for improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ST MARY'S ON THE HILL PLAYGROUP

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school setting	23	23
in their immediate pre-school year	23	11
funded by Department of Education (DE)	23	11
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	5	1
with a statement of special educational needs		
without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	2	1
with English as an additional language	1	
who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school		

* Special Educational Needs = fewer than five

Attendance** of funded children for the previous school year.	89%
Number of days open in previous school year	185

** Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Sessions

Duration of morning session	Duration of afternoon session
3 hours	2½ hours

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader		4
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification		4
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification		
New appointments within previous 12 months		

Number of: ***	
Students	
Trainees	

*** Total placements since September of current year

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