

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Mary's Playgroup,
Banbridge, County Down

Report of an inspection in
June 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 playgroup:

The playgroup has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the playgroup sustains improvement.
The playgroup demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the playgroup sustains improvement.
The 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 playgroup's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.
The 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 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 representatives of the board of governors of St Mary's Primary School and Nursery Unit who oversee the management of the playgroup; and
- the opportunity for the parents and staff to complete confidential questionnaires.

Fifteen percent of parents and seventy-five percent of staff responded to the confidential questionnaires; the responses from both the parents and the staff were wholly positive. In particular the parents appreciate the professionalism and kindness of the staff and the helpful information received about their child's progress. The outcomes of the questionnaires have been shared with staff and representatives of the board of governors of St Mary's Primary School.

2. Focus of inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interests 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 Mary's Playgroup is situated in temporary premises within the grounds of St Patrick's College in Banbridge, adjacent to St Mary's Primary School and Nursery Unit which is also in temporary accommodation within the grounds of the school while a new primary school is being built. The children in the playgroup come from the immediate vicinity of the town of Banbridge.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Achievements and standards	Very good
Provision for learning	Very good
Leadership and management	Very good

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are well settled and secure in the established routines of the day; their behaviour is exemplary. They engage in lengthy periods of purposeful play and co-operate well with each other and with the staff. The children demonstrate very good levels of independence when, for example, accessing resources during play, preparing for outdoor play and helping at tidy-up time.
- The children listen attentively to stories and show a keen interest in the wide range of books that are available both indoors and outdoors. They participate in the many opportunities to develop early writing skills and almost all are attempting to write their name. The children use a broad range of mathematical language during their play activities including number, shape and capacity.
- The children's representational paintings are detailed and annotated with interesting ideas about their work. They participate in imaginative role play for example, building a volcano in the sand tray and creating a road works scene in the large outdoor digging area. Of particular note is the development of the children's curiosity in the natural world; they grow and care for a range of flowers, fruit and vegetables with the support of the children from the primary school gardening club.

6. Provision for learning

- The quality of the pastoral care is very good. There is a high adult-child ratio and all of the staff contribute to the caring, happy and relaxed atmosphere. The playgroup has been in the temporary premises for just under a year and the staff have worked hard to create a stimulating, safe and spacious learning environment. There is a wide range of resources available for the children; of particular note is the use of authentic equipment in the role-play areas and the provision of multi-sensory materials in many of the play activities.
- The staff interactions with the children are of a consistently high quality; they respond skilfully to the children's ideas, model appropriate language and use questions sensitively to provide opportunities for the children to discuss their learning and develop their reasoning skills.
- The play programme is broad and well-balanced and provides high quality learning experiences across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The detailed evaluations, observations and assessments provide the staff with information on the children's progress and support the identification of additional learning needs. The staff have sourced a range of external agencies to support the children in their learning and actively implement recommended strategies. The staff have also undertaken additional training to build their capacity in identifying and supporting children with individual learning needs.
- The playgroup gives very good attention to healthy eating and physical activity, through for example, the use and recognition of real vegetables in the house corner, the propagation and care of a range of fruit and vegetable plants and opportunities for energetic play outdoors.

7. Leadership and management

- The playgroup has a long association with St Mary's Primary School and Nursery Unit; the board of governors are responsible for the management of the playgroup and the nursery unit teacher provides specialist support. The playgroup leader and her staff, along with the principal and the teacher in the nursery unit, have responded well to a significant period of transition and have worked hard to ensure the consistency of high quality provision for the children attending the playgroup. The three year development plan and yearly action plans identify appropriately the on-going and future developments of the playgroup. Detailed annual appraisals of the staff contribute to the self-evaluative process within the playgroup.
- The staff have developed effective links with parents including the provision of an informative monthly newsletter and parental workshops in association with the nursery unit. The playgroup has very effective transitional arrangements for the pre-school children transferring to foundation stage and through planned play activities the children are developing confidence and familiarity with the primary school routines.
- On the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the playgroup has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children and young people. These arrangements reflect broadly the guidance issued by the relevant Departments. There is a need to re-apply for updated safeguarding training for a member of the board of governors with responsibility for management of the playgroup.

8. Overall effectiveness

St Mary's Playgroup has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will continue to monitor how the playgroup sustains improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON ST MARY'S PLAYGROUP, BANBRIDGE

1. Details of children

Number of children:	Class 1
Attending full-time	0
Attending part-time	26
Under 3 years of age*	***
Funded by Department of Education	25
With statement of special educational needs	0
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	5
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	5
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	0
With English as an additional language	***
Who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	0

* 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

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	0
Average attendance for the previous year.	95%
Number of days open in previous school year	185

2. Duration of sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
	8:45 am- 12:40 pm	

3. Details of staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff including, Teachers/Leaders		4
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification		4
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification		0
New appointments within the previous 12 months		0

Number of: ***	
Students	0
Trainees	0

*** Total placements since September of current year

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