

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Mary's Pre-School Centre,
Cloughcor, Ballymagorry,
Co Tyrone

Report of an Inspection in
April 2014

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
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



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 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, staff and members of the management group to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	24	6	25% ¹	*
Staff	*	*	*	*
Management group	*	*	*	*

* fewer than 5

All of the responses and comments made in the confidential questionnaires were highly positive about all aspects of the life and work of the playgroup. The responses were shared with the leader and the chair of the management group.

2. Context

St Mary's Pre-school Centre operates within the premises of St Mary's Primary School in Cloughcor, Ballymagorry, near Strabane, County Tyrone. The playgroup operates a part-time session for 24 children who attend from the local and wider surrounding area. At the time of the inspection, the leader had been in post for less than two years and there were three temporary assistants.

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.

¹ The ETI is trialling a new range of methods to collect the views of parents/carers and, as a result, the percentage of questionnaires returned may be low.

4. Overall finding

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

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- The children come into the playroom calmly and settle enthusiastically to their chosen play activities. They are emotionally at ease in approaching adults and one another to talk about and exchange their personal stories and their thinking about aspects of their learning. The children's behaviour is very good; they respond very well to the standards the adults set to develop their early understanding of good listening, sharing their play resources and taking turns.
- Most of the children engage with good levels of interest in extended periods of concentrated and purposeful play, for example, in the craft, construction and imaginative play areas. Most of the children are beginning to play collaboratively and are confident in expressing their creative ideas freely and imaginatively.
- Overall, the children are developing well their language and communication skills; many are interested in looking at books, enjoying stories during the session and participating well in action rhymes and songs. Many children show an early understanding of and interest in number, counting and other mathematical concepts; this important learning and the associated early mathematical language should be planned for and included more robustly across the programme and within the context of the children's regular routines.
- For the time of year, almost all of the children display very good levels of independence and are developing confidence in many aspects of their free play. They move confidently around the playroom and make choices about, access and use appropriately a variety of resources and equipment, including books and art materials. The children are gaining familiarity with, and respond well to, their regular routines such as helping organise the snack time and knowing how to participate in the 'tag team' arrangements for tidying up.
- Overall, the children demonstrate very good progress in relation to the time of the year across all areas of the pre-school curriculum.

6. Provision

- The adults know the children's needs and interests well and all are fully involved and supportive in their approaches with the children. They value the children's own ideas and have a good level of skill in their interactions with them. To extend the children's language, thinking and learning more consistently as they work alongside them in their play, the staff need to maintain the best quality of interaction throughout the whole session by asking the children more questions focussed on expanding their learning and affording the children more thinking time before responding.

- The staff have constructed an attractive and child-centred learning environment which makes thoughtful use of all of the available space, offers the children choices and supports their growing independence. The children respond positively to the recently enhanced book area and engage well with and show pride in the appealing displays of their creative work in the playroom.
- Overall, the planned programme is broad and balanced providing good opportunities for learning in most areas of the pre-school curriculum. The staff are developing their assessment methods to record relevant observations of the children's progress and to integrate their interests into the planning. In improving the planning further in order to meet more effectively the children's individual needs, the staff need to ensure there is suitable progression across all the areas of learning and take closer account of the children's various stages of development.
- The playgroup provides the children with very good quality pastoral care and support. There is a warm, friendly and inclusive ethos built on very good working relationships at all levels. The staff have put in place effective and age appropriate initiatives to build the children's understanding of feelings and emotions and respecting the different lives and perspectives of others.
- The staff give very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity through the provision of a healthy snack and regular opportunities for energetic play and developing their physical skills outdoors.

7. Leadership and management

- The playgroup leader is highly committed to meeting the needs of the children well and is focused on improving further all aspects of the provision. She promotes a strong sense of teamwork and manages the playgroup effectively with the dedicated management committee providing effective, ongoing support.
- There is a good level of consultation with parents. The leader and staff are making sound, early progress in embedding self-evaluation into the development planning process to ensure continuous improvement. The development plan identifies a number of relevant priorities for improvement. More focus needs to be given to developing the progression in the children's skills across the six learning areas. The early years specialist advises and supports the work of the playgroup well and this is always valued and acted upon by the staff.
- The parents are welcomed into the playgroup and are given information regularly about the provision and how to support their children's learning at home. The playgroup has formed a good range of partnerships with the parents, the community and various external agencies to support and extend the impact of their work with the children.
- 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 department.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the playgroup is good and the pastoral care is very good. The playgroup has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified an area for improvement which the playgroup has demonstrated the capacity to address.

The key area for improvement is:

- to develop the planning further to ensure progression in all areas of the pre-school curriculum.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the playgroup's progress on the area for improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school setting:	St Mary's Pre-school Centre
Address:	20 Cloughcor Road Ballymagorry STRABANE Co Tyrone BT82 0BE
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	7 April 2014
Date of previous inspection:	April 2007

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school setting	24	-
in their immediate pre-school year	24	-
funded by Department of Education (DE)	24	-
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	0	-
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	82.2%	-

* 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		4
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification		4
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification		0
New appointments within previous 12 months		3

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	-	188

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