

Education and Training Inspectorate PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Strawberry Tree Playgroup, Newry, County Down

Voluntary playgroup DE Ref No: 5AB-0191

Report of an Inspection in October 2019



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1. Context

Strawberry Tree Playgroup is located in purpose-built accommodation situated within the townland of Saval, near Newry in County Down. The children enrolled are from the surrounding rural area. There has been a change in leadership since the last inspection.

Number of children:	Class 1
Attending part-time	26
Funded by Department of Education	26
With statement of special educational needs	#
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**	#

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	#
Average percentage attendance for the previous year.	N/A
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

N/A not available

2. Views of parents and staff

A small number of the parents and all of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. All of the responses were positive regarding the work and life of the playgroup. In written comments, the parents highlighted their appreciation of the staff's work to meet the needs and interests of the children. The staff emphasised their collaborative approach and the support of the management committee in all aspects of their work. All of the responses were shared with the leadership and management.

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

Overall effectiveness	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Outcomes for learners	Very good
Quality of provision	Very good
Leadership and management	Very good

5. Outcomes for learners

- All of the children are well-settled in the playgroup. They are very independent as they, self-manage their snack routine, access the resources they need for their play, and put on their own gloves for play in the outdoor mud kitchen.
- The children listen attentively to stories, expanding their vocabulary, making predictions and articulating their feelings. They engage enthusiastically in well-planned singing and music-making opportunities which are embedded within their regular routines. A majority are developing well their early-mark making and representational drawing.
- Almost all of the children engage in activities within the construction area. They use design boards and work collaboratively to plan, draw and produce imaginative structures relating to the world around them.
- The children's physical development is a key strength. During the inspection, a majority of children engaged safely in adventurous outdoor play, demonstrating balance, control and co-ordination. The children have well-developed personal, social and emotional skills. They approach the staff and visitors with confidence and show care and respect for one another and their resources.
- The children who require support with aspects of their learning are making good progress across all areas of the pre-school curriculum.

6. Quality of provision

- The indoor and outdoor learning environments are very well-structured and include a wide range of resources which the children access independently. There is an effective routine for the day which enables the children to develop their learning through a good balance of freely chosen play and group activities.
- The staff have a good understanding of the pre-school curriculum. They observe the children regularly and record the information in a systematic and manageable way. These observations are used effectively to plan for appropriate progression in the learning experiences for the children.
- The staff provide an interesting and varied programme to encourage learning across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. A wide range of visitors to the playgroup enrich greatly the children's language experiences, for example, the 'secret readers' who include parents and staff from the local primary school.
- The quality of the interactions between the staff and the children is very good. The staff know the children well, engage positively with them, and use effective strategies to promote and maintain positive behaviour within the setting.
- The staff implement a range of effective strategies to support well the small number of children who have additional medical or learning needs.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the pre-school's approach to care and welfare impacts positively on learning and teaching, and outcomes. The children's health and well-being is given high priority on the development plan and the staff's emphasis on developing the children's understanding of feelings and emotions is impacting positively on their relationships with each other.

7. Leadership and management

- The playgroup is led, organised and managed very effectively. Following consultation with the management committee and parents/carers, the staff have implemented recent changes to reduce the intensity of noise and colour within the playroom and ensure a more welcoming setting that meets the needs of every child.
- The staff are well-supported by a knowledgeable and experienced management committee. There is a collaborative approach with a shared vision to provide high quality child-centred provision and a carefully-considered plan is in place to ensure a smooth transition between those in officer roles.
- The early years specialist, from the Early Years Organisation, works effectively in partnership with the staff and provides very effective advice guidance, challenge and support.
- The development plan is devised and informed by consultation with parents/carers, staff, the early years specialist and the management committee. As a result, the priorities identified are appropriate and focus specifically on effecting improvement in the children's learning experiences and the quality of the provision. The staff employ a good range of self-evaluation processes to monitor the impact of the improvement processes.
- There are very effective partnerships with the parents and the wider community; including a grandparents' day and an evening programme focusing primarily on the health and well-being of parents. The parents are kept well informed about the playgroup and their child's progress. There are close links with the local primary school which help the children to make smooth transitions into their next stage of education.

8. Safeguarding

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect the guidance from the relevant Departments.

9. Overall effectiveness

Strawberry Tree 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.

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 chair 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 management¹:

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on governance:

High degree of confidence
Confidence
Limited confidence

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on safeguarding:

Reflects the guidance
Reflects broadly the guidance
Unsatisfactory

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on care and welfare:

Impacts positively on learning, teaching and outcomes for learners
Does not impact positively enough on learning, teaching and outcomes for learners

¹ And the overall provision in a subject area or unit, as applicable.

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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