

# PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Tir-na-Nog Playgroup,  
Ballyclare, Co Antrim

Report of an Inspection in  
March 2015

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*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:

<b>DESCRIPTOR</b>
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.

The parents who responded to the questionnaire were highly positive about all aspects of the education and pastoral provision within the playgroup. In particular, they appreciate the caring staff team, the wide range of pre-school experiences provided in the playgroup and the progress their children make in developing their learning and social skills. The staff who responded were wholly positive about their work within the playgroup.

## 2. Context

The playgroup is accommodated in a classroom within Tir-na-Nog Primary School in Ballyclare. In addition, the playgroup use a covered area adjoining the classroom, the school hall, the school grounds and the Parish Hall. It operates one part-time morning session; almost all of the children who attend are in their immediate pre-school year. Since the last inspection, there has been a complete change of staff and an increasing trend in children attending who are identified with more complex special educational needs.

## 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

<b>Overall Performance Level</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>Achievements and Standards</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Provision</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>Leadership and Management</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>

## **Key findings of the inspection**

### **5. Achievements and standards**

- The children are developing very positive attitudes and dispositions for learning and enjoy clearly their pre-school experiences.
- The children co-operate well with the daily routines, manage their own personal care and access resources independently. They settle quickly to play and almost all spend sustained and focused periods at activities and collaborating well with each other.
- The children are developing well their language and communication skills. They are confident to talk to each other and the staff about themselves and their learning, express their needs and contribute their ideas which are valued by the staff. The children enjoy exploring both non-fiction and story books with each other and the staff; most of the children listen attentively during the group story sessions. The children enjoy mark making at the construction and writing tables and a few children are beginning to show an interest in emergent writing.
- The children showed confidence and dexterity in using smaller tools, for example, at the tool bench area, the painting easel, play dough and when cutting vegetables in the home role play area. On the day of the inspection, the opportunities for energetic play were limited; the staff have identified the need for further planning and development of the programme for physical and outdoor play.
- The children participate well in imaginary play at the construction, small world and home play areas to take on roles, re-enact their daily experiences and explore their environment. They have regular access to creative materials and enjoy painting, drawing and making models. The staff need to plan further progression in the children's creative development and display and celebrate their current work on a more regular basis.
- The children explore a wide range of mathematical concepts through their play and a few of them are using the correct associated language. They sort, count, make comparisons and use positional language.
- The children investigate the range of natural materials provided with interest and curiosity. They problem solve and make decisions at the junk art and explore growth, planting and building through appropriate play activities. They are beginning to understand simple safety rules through, for example, the use of safety goggles at the work bench and the visitors who talk about stranger danger.

### **6. Provision**

- There is a well resourced, stimulating learning environment in the playrooms. The provision of a wide range of natural materials and real items enhance the learning opportunities.

- The staff interaction and engagement with the children is of a good quality. The staff, who are caring and nurturing in their approach, all have good, relaxed working relationships with the children who respond well to them. They promote settled play, listen to the children and give positive and appropriate praise. In the best practice, the staff extend effectively the children's language and thinking through effective open-ended questioning and sustained interactions. The staff should review aspects of the transition points in the daily routine to ensure that all of the opportunities are used effectively to promote learning. They implement effective strategies and provide good support for children who have specific learning needs.
- The staff plan a broad pre-school programme which covers all areas of the curriculum. They need to develop further their skill and understanding of how to plan for appropriate progression in learning across all aspects of the pre-school curriculum. They make regular observations of the children's responses to play and use this information to advise their parents about the children's progress. The staff have identified the need to develop further this work by ensuring the processes for assessing progress are more systematic and are used more fully to plan for the individual needs of the children.
- The staff have benefited from special educational needs training provided by the North-Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB). They are more confident to identify need early and to use a wider range of intervention strategies to support these children and are making good progress, with support, in developing individual education plans.
- The quality of the pastoral care is good. The children appear happy and secure and are well behaved and respectful to the staff and each other.
- The children are encouraged to eat a healthy break and are learning about their dental care. They have regular access to indoor and outdoor physical activities which encourages them to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The leader and whole staff team are clearly committed to the care and welfare of the children and are motivated to continue to learn and improve further the provision.
- The staff's understanding of self-evaluation, development planning and action-planning for improvement is at an early stage of development.
- While the early years specialist from the Early Years Organisation has provided an extensive range of training and advice, this guidance needs to be understood more fully by the staff and tailored more specifically to their developmental needs.
- The management committee has a good range of relevant experience and expertise and are supportive of the future development of the playgroup within the local community.

- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the playgroup has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department but the following area needs to be addressed:
  - the designated and deputy designated persons need to complete appropriate child protection training, as soon possible.

## **8. Conclusion**

In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this playgroup is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in standards, learning and teaching and leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively.

The most important areas to be addressed are:

- to identify more clearly the full range of learning potential in the play activities and ensure sufficient and systematic progression in the children's learning across all aspects of the pre-school curriculum;
- to develop a more systematic approach to assessing the children's progress and use this information to meet their needs more fully; and
- the leadership and management need to develop more effective self-evaluation, action-planning and associated staff development to inform continuous improvement.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the playgroup's progress in addressing the areas for improvement, over a 12 -24 month period.

**Accommodation**

- The roof of the covered play area leaks water when it rains.
- The covered play area has no heating and was very cold on the day of the inspection visit.
- Storage space is very limited.



## STATISTICAL INFORMATION TIR-NA-NOG PLAYGROUP 3BB-0250

1. Details of Children

<b>Total number of children:</b>	<b>am session</b>	<b>pm session</b>
attending the pre-school setting	22	
in their immediate pre-school year	22	
funded by Department of Education (DE)	22	
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	1	
with a statement of special educational needs		
without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs		
with English as an additional language		
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.	
Number of days open in previous school year	

\*\* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Sessions

<b>Duration of morning session</b>	<b>Duration of afternoon session</b>
2¾ hours	

3. Details of Staff

<b>Number of:</b>	<b>Full-time</b>	<b>Part-time</b>
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	1	

<b>Number of: ***</b>	
Students	
Trainees	

\*\*\* Total placements since September of current year

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