

A series of stylized, colorful paper figures holding hands in a line, set against a dark blue background with a light blue and purple gradient. The figures are made of cut-out paper and are arranged in a slightly curved line, creating a sense of movement and unity.

# Report of a Pre-school Inspection

Rainbow Child and Family Centre

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Education and  
Training Inspectorate  
Empowering Improvement

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Throughout the report the use of an asterisk \* denotes further information included at Appendix 2.

# **1. INTRODUCTION**

## **A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Rainbow Child and Family Centre is a community hub situated in an area with high levels of socio-economic need in Galliagh, Derry. Part of the provision within the hub is a Department of Education (DE) funded pre-school which has 23 children of pre-school age enrolled. Seventeen percent of the children have been identified as having special educational needs (SEN). There are various wraparound services available to the pre-school children in the community hub, including before and after school care and the option of a daily free hot lunch following the session.

Due to changes in staffing, a new team was appointed to the setting in September 2024, comprising a leader and three assistants. Prior to working in the setting, all of these staff worked in other capacities within the community hub. They are being supported in their new roles by the management team of the community hub which comprises a manager, a pre-school programme co-ordinator and an early year's co-ordinator. In recent months an Independent Early Years Specialist (IEYS) has been employed to support the new team. The setting takes part in the shared education initiative ASPIRE\* with Newtowncunningham Community Playgroup and is a member of the Greater Shantallow Area Partnership (GSAP)\*.

## **B. VIEWS OF PARENTS AND STAFF**

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) issued online confidential questionnaires to parents and staff in advance of the inspection.

Thirty-nine percent of parents/carers (9) responded to the questionnaire. All of the responses were wholly positive about all aspects of the provision within the setting including: their child's range of learning experiences; the help they receive from the staff to support their child at home; and, the information and communication from the staff which keeps them well informed about all aspects of their child's time in the setting. In a small number of additional written comments, the parents reported that the setting is helping their child to develop socially and they can see progress in their development, for example in their speech and language and fine motor skills. All of the staff team responded to the questionnaire, and they were also wholly positive in their responses. They reported that they feel valued, are respected in their job and are provided with the relevant professional learning opportunities that they need.

A summary of the questionnaire responses was shared with the setting's leader, the centre manager and the chair of the management committee.

## **C. THE PROCESS OF INSPECTION**

The ETI worked alongside the setting to consider how well the setting:

- has identified and articulates its vision;
- prioritises actions to achieve the vision;

- overcomes the main challenges it faces;
- monitors and reviews progression to identify, celebrate and embed success; and
- grows and develops an inclusive community of learning.

## 2. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- The longstanding vision within the setting “**Creating Positive Memories**” remains relevant and informs effectively the work of the committed staff team in their provision of positive learning experiences for the children.
- The recently appointed staff have prioritised appropriately building collaborative working relationships and using observations of the children’s learning to monitor their progression across the six areas of learning of the pre-school curriculum. They recognise that they are at the early stages of using self-evaluation to inform their planning.
- The staff engage collaboratively in detailed short-term planning which is responsive to the interests and needs of the children.
- Almost all of the children are making good progress across all of the areas of the pre-school curriculum.
- Early language is developing well for almost all of the children who can engage confidently with adults and their peers.
- Almost all of the children’s social and thinking skills are developing well as they engage in sustained and imaginative role play.
- The children identified with SEN benefit from early identification, effective additional support and reasonable adjustments which enables them to access all learning opportunities.
- The children’s health and well-being is a priority and they are supported well to recognise and manage their own emotions as well as respecting the feelings of others.

### Areas for action:

- to review the procedures for parents/carers to report a child protection concern; and
- to establish robust processes of self-evaluation to identify and inform appropriate key priorities for development.

### **3. MAIN REPORT**

#### **A. SETTING THE VISION**

The setting's vision is focused on "Creating Positive Memories" in relation to early learning experiences for the children. This vision has been effectively informed through consultation with parents and staff and, more recently, by ongoing staff in relation to the importance of positive early childhood experiences. Staff training in Trauma Informed Practice\* and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)\* supports the team in their understanding of the challenges faced by children and their families, has built their knowledge and understanding and enables them to work collaboratively towards achieving their vision. The staff work tirelessly to provide engaging learning experiences to build the resilience of the children and enable them to develop positive attitudes towards their learning. The wider management of the community hub support effectively the work of the setting and are committed to the vision to provide appropriate learning experiences for each child.

The recently appointed team are at an early stage of using self-evaluation processes. In the development plan they have prioritised appropriately: the building of the new team and the process of using observations of the children's learning to monitor their progression across the six areas of learning of the pre-school curriculum. The staff should now build on this work and establish robust processes of self-evaluation to identify and inform future appropriate priorities for development.

#### **B. IMPLEMENTING AND IMPROVING TO ACHIEVE THE VISION**

The established process in place for long, medium- and short-term planning is detailed and linked well to the pre-school curriculum. The short-term planning is responsive to the specific interests and needs of the children but too focused on activities and resources. Moving forward the staff aim to build on their current short-term planning to become more focused on the learning potential. The staff are at an early stage of using a new method of recording and monitoring observations of the children's learning. This should be evaluated to identify its effectiveness in supporting the staff to monitor the children's progression across the pre-school curriculum and to inform the short-term planning.

Almost all of the children's early language is developing well. All of the staff model language effectively in their social interactions with the children at snack time and during the well-embedded daily routines in which they also encourage the children to listen to others. In the more effective staff interactions, the children are supported to develop their thinking and extend their learning through the staff's use of effective questioning. To improve the quality and consistency of all interactions with the children, the staff would benefit from opportunities to observe and learn from one another, particularly in giving the children appropriate time to respond to questions.

The room in the setting is very well organised and resourced to provide learning opportunities across the pre-school curriculum. The children are supported well by all of the staff to discuss their emotions and how they are feeling. For example, the playroom has an area called the emotional check in station with pictures of different feelings. The children can look at themselves in the mirror, talk about how they are



feeling and are encouraged by the staff to use different strategies such as the use of sensory toys to manage their emotions. This helps the children relax and improves their focus which impacts very positively on their learning. The children have a healthy snack, take part in movement breaks and are encouraged to walk to school.

### **C. BUILDING EQUITY**

The staff have a very good understanding of every child's needs when they begin the setting as a result of the effective induction processes which include; a visit to the child's home, completion of an "All about me" booklet and the initial baseline assessments when the child starts pre-school. Almost all of the children have attended the community hubs 2-year and 3-year old programme which supports further the staff's understanding of each's child's specific needs and the support they have received to date. The staff use appropriate strategies such as visual timetables, photo labels for the placement of resources and a calm zone to provide an accessible learning environment for all of the children.

The pre-school programme co-ordinator, has completed a relevant range of SEN training and collaborates regularly with the Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) health visitor, speech and language therapists and the Education Authority (EA) Educational Psychology Service in relation to children who have been identified as having SEN. Appropriate referrals for the children are made efficiently and monitored closely with the staff. They are building well their professional knowledge and expertise on how to use appropriate teaching strategies with the children through observing allied health professionals, such as the speech and language therapist, supporting the children in the playroom. Individual Education Plans (IEPs)\* for children who have been identified as having SEN are in place and written in collaboration with the child's parent/carer. The recent review of target writing in the setting has resulted in the use of SMART\* targets to inform better the individual learning goals for each child.

### **D. DEFINING, CELEBRATING AND EMBEDDING SUCCESS**

The management team and the staff have high expectations for every child attending the setting. Guided and informed by research, they strive to provide high-quality early learning experiences for each child which is impacting positively on parental attitudes to learning. Their achievements are recognised and praised regularly, through for example, individual morning greetings and positive comments or gestures such as "thumbs up" or "high fives" in response to their creations and ideas. The children's artwork is centrally displayed in the room and entrance hall for everyone to see and the children's achievements are celebrated and shared with parent/carers through digital communication applications. All of these strategies are effective in motivating the children to engage in and enjoy their learning.

The use of Media Initiative for Children (MIFC)\* puppets by the staff is developing well the children's understanding and respect for difference. The children relish the opportunity to bring the puppets home for a visit and excitedly share this experience with their peers. This effective strategy is also successful in building further the children's language development, positive self-esteem and their wider knowledge of the "World Around Us". The children engage enthusiastically in sustained and

imaginative role play assuming the roles of the florist and customer in the flower shop. Alongside their personal, social and emotional development, the children are also developing well their early mathematical language through counting flowers, money and engaging in phone calls where they take orders. They are developing appropriately their early mark making through making lists, writing receipts and drawing pictures.

The outdoor area is used effectively to engage the children in sustained and imaginative play. The children enjoy planting and digging and are developing their co-ordination and fine motor skills through playing ball games with the staff. They play happily with their friends in role play and use their imagination to create their own games. The children's gross motor skills are well developed; they move confidently with control and co-ordination as they climb, balance, run and walk in the well-resourced playground. Almost all of the children are making good progress across all of the areas of the pre-school curriculum.

## **E. GROWING A COMMUNITY OF LEARNING**

The staff work tirelessly to assist parents and families, and they provide an extensive range of support including parenting programmes, health and wellbeing events, wraparound care, access to health services and financial assistance and advice. Their work in partnership with the GSAP has been crucial in providing vital support in an area where there are significant social challenges, for funded activities such as fundamental movement programmes. Parents are invited to visit the setting regularly and attend celebrations for Grandparent's Day, Graduation and the Christmas celebrations. Participation in the DE Getting Ready to Learn (GRTL)\*, Big Bedtime Read is enjoyed by the children and parents and has a high level of attendance and participation which is impacting positively on the children's love of books and their early language development.

The setting has developed effective links with Newtowncunnigham Playgroup through their participation in ASPIRE which provided the children with the opportunity to meet and play together and celebrate important events such as St Patrick's Day. The children take part in short online sessions where they say hello to their new friends in County Donegal and the partnership has been successful in the development of the children's personal and social skills.

## **F. CHILD PROTECTION**

At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by the setting demonstrates that the arrangements for child protection align to the current statutory guidance. The ETI will monitor the progress in addressing the following area for action:

- to review the procedures for parents/carers to report a child protection concern.

#### **4. GOING FORWARD**

Rainbow Child and Family Centre is fully committed to creating positive experiences of early learning for all of the children. The staff are dedicated to the children and the community as a whole and are successful in the provision of a learning environment where every child is valued and respected.

The setting is well placed to take forward the areas of action identified in the report. The ETI, through the engagement of the district inspector, will continue to work with the school as they address the identified areas for action.



## 5. APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1: 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%

## APPENDIX 2: NOTES

### Page 1

#### **Advancing Shared Partnerships through Inclusive Relationships in Education (ASPIRE)**

Advancing Shared Partnerships through Inclusive Relationships in Education is a programme offered by the Education Authority.

#### **Greater Shantallow Area Partnership (GSAP)**

A core community support organisation of residents, community & voluntary sector groups and statutory/private organisations whose aims is to improve the social, community, economic and physical environment within the Greater Shantallow / Outer North / Ballyarnett DE area of Derry City.

### Page 3

#### **Trauma Informed Practice**

Trauma informed practice is an approach that recognises the widespread impact of trauma on individuals and integrates this understanding into all aspects of service delivery. It focusses on creating a safe environment.

#### **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)**

Potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood such as experiencing violence, abuse or neglect and witnessing violence in the home or community.

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#### **Individual Education Plans (IEPs)**

An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is a document that outlines a child's learning goals and the support they need to achieve them. They are used to plan, teach, and review progress. IEPs are created by the staff to support children identified with special educational needs.

#### **SMART**

Targets that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timebound.

#### **The Media Initiative for Children (MIFC)**

An Early Years Organisation programme aimed at improving long term outcomes so that children, teachers, parents and communities become more aware of diversity and difference and positively change attitudes and behaviours to those who are different.

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#### **Getting Ready to Learn (GRTL)**

The Department of Education's Getting Ready to Learn project is focused on improving outcomes for children in pre-school by engaging and empowering parents to help them create and sustain positive home learning environments



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