

Summary of key findings from inspection - March 2025

- ❏ Nippers Alley Playgroup's shared vision "to enable all children to learn and grow to their full potential", is informed by all of its key stakeholders. It is realised through the creation of a safe, caring, stimulating and inclusive learning environment which is underpinned by effective working relationships within the whole school community.
- ❏ The management committee and the staff engage in robust and effective self-evaluation through which appropriate key priorities for development have been identified. These include: reviewing the outdoor learning environment; developing the children's language and communication skills; and reviewing the planning and progression for all of the children across the pre-school curriculum. The management committee use appropriately their wide range of expertise to support the staff with the development work.
- ❏ The successful focus on curriculum planning has resulted in an evolving planning, observation and assessment cycle, which is informed more clearly by the needs and interests of the children. Consequently, the children are making progress across all areas of the pre-school curriculum.
- ❏ The children's early language development is developing well across the pre-school curriculum. The staff use effectively open-ended questions to challenge the children's thinking and appropriately give them time to respond. Their skilful interaction with the children provides many opportunities to extend their learning. Consequently, the children have a wide vocabulary and speak confidently when expressing their interests and views.
- ❏ All of the staff model the use of specific mathematical language which is developing successfully the children's understanding of early mathematical concepts as well as their exploratory, investigative and problem-solving skills.
- ❏ The children enjoy and have an appreciation for music; they engage enthusiastically during song and rhyme sessions and many use Makaton (a communication programme) to 'sign the words'. The provision of a weekly musical programme, delivered to the children by staff from the Education Authority, is developing the confidence and capacity of the staff to use music successfully during the children's play and daily routines.
- ❏ The children make appropriate use of a variety of tools and materials such as sequins strips, paper and feathers to produce their own unique creative pieces of work which are displayed attractively in the playroom.
- ❏ The staff prioritise the early identification of children with special educational needs and engage well with the parents. Through the staff's effective use of baseline assessments and their responsiveness to the children's individual needs, all of the children are enabled to participate meaningfully in their learning. The staff collaborate appropriately with allied health professionals to source suitable opportunities for professional learning and to develop effective teaching strategies. This commitment to continuous development is supporting them well in meeting the needs of each child.
- ❏ The children's learning experiences are increased through the staff's effective partnerships with parents. The well attended "Stay and Play" sessions provided through the Department of Education's Getting Ready to Learn Programme, is impacting positively on the involvement of the parents/carers in their child's early learning experiences. The children's understanding and use of Makaton is improving their communication with others and is reinforced by parents who receive a weekly Makaton sign or symbol. The children are developing well their listening skills and show interest in their peers as they learn about their friend's adventures with the school teddy, "Adventure Ted", on his home visits.

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- ✚ The many opportunities afforded to the pre-school children to visit the local primary school, which is on the same site as the playgroup, through for example, regular use of their playground facilities and attendance at various events during the year, is familiarising them with the primary school's environment, staff and children. As a result, this is supporting smooth transitions for the pre-school children to year one.
- ✚ At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by the school demonstrates that the arrangements for child protection align to the current statutory guidance.

Going forward

- ✚ Nippers Alley Playgroup is highly committed to their shared vision, "to enable all children to learn and grow to their full potential", by providing a safe, caring, stimulating and inclusive learning environment in which each individual child's qualities and talents are recognised, developed and valued.

Next Steps

- ✚ Nippers Alley Playgroup is well placed to take forward their key priorities for development, identified through their own self-evaluation processes and endorsed by this inspection.