

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Ardglass Community
Playgroup, Downpatrick,
Co Down

Report of an Inspection
in January 2012



STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school playgroup:	Ardglass Community Playgroup
Address:	21 Downpatrick Road ARDGLASS Co Down BT30 7SF
Management Type:	Voluntary
Date of inspection:	19 January 2012
Date of previous inspection:	27 May 2004

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school playgroup	21	-
in their immediate pre-school year	21	-
funded by Department of Education (DE)	21	-
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	7	-
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	**	-
Attendance:		
Attendance* of funded children for the previous school year	90.5%	-

* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

** Indicates a number fewer than five.

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	3	0
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	3	0
New appointments within previous 12 months	0	0

Number of: ***	
Students	2
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	-	172

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	20
Percentage returned:	60%
Number of written comments:	8

ARDGLASS COMMUNITY PLAYGROUP, ARDGLASS, CO DOWN, BT30 7SF(4BB-0158)

1. Ardglass Community Playgroup is situated in purpose-built accommodation located in the grounds of Saint Nicholas' Primary School, Ardglass. Since the last inspection, there has been a complete change of staff including a new leader and new playgroup assistants. Most of the children who attend the playgroup come from the local village and rural area.

2. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this playgroup is very good. The playgroup is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENTS

3. Almost all of the children engage in well-settled, purposeful play across a wide range of play activities. They are well motivated and respond positively to the staff's high expectations of learning behaviours. The children play imaginatively during role-play opportunities and most of the children are developing their skills of reasoning and logic through the constructional and scientific play activities. The majority of children are making good connections in their learning, as evidenced through their creative transfer of resources from one area of play to another.

4. The children's language and communication skills are well developed. The children who require additional support with their development of the English language receive sensitive and appropriate assistance from the staff. A majority of the children show a good interest in experimental writing as they explore the materials and the tools provided in the different areas of play.

THE PROVISION FOR LEARNING

5. There are very good learning opportunities in all aspects of the pre-school curriculum. The development of the children's personal, social and emotional well-being, their understanding of early mathematical concepts and their opportunities for physical play are significant strengths of the provision. The adult interactions with the children are of a very good quality; the staff extend the children's language and thinking skills, and develop their conversational skills. The daily timetable is well-organised and provides a very good balance of free play and adult-led activities. The routines are unobtrusive and used appropriately to provide choice and promote the children's independence.

6. The weekly planners provide good guidance for the staff and the four-weekly planners contain appropriate themes which develop a range of learning activities and experiences for the children. The staff are developing an effective system of assessing the children's learning and development. They are, appropriately, linking the observations more closely with the planning to develop further the children's learning experiences.

7. The staff report that they have established a good programme of liaison with the local primary schools. The children visit regularly the adjoining primary school for indoor games and special events. The parents receive appropriate information about the progress of their children through formal meetings and their child's transition report.

8. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is very good; there are very good working relationships at all levels. The staff are alert to those children who need additional support to develop their social skills and they offer appropriate guidance.

9. The playgroup has very good and comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department.

10. The playgroup gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, through the healthy snack routines and the very good opportunities for outdoor physical play, which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

11. The leader is well-motivated and she sets high standards for herself and the staff team. They display much commitment to the children's welfare and work tirelessly to improve the quality of the provision and to raise the profile of the playgroup in the local community. The leader and staff team have identified appropriately, through the action plans, the need to develop further the planning for outdoor physical play. The staff development programme has benefitted from the recent well-informed support and advice given by the Early Years Specialist from the Early Years Organisation.

12. The key strengths of the playgroup include:

- the very positive ethos, based on the very good working relationships at all levels and the children's behaviour;
- the very good opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum;
- the very good quality of the adult interaction with the children;
- the effective leader and the highly skilled staff team; and
- the stimulating learning environment, both indoors and outdoors.

13. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this playgroup is very good. The playgroup is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

QUESTIONNAIRES

The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents and the staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Approximately 60% of the parents responded to the questionnaires and eight made an additional written comment. All of the responses indicated a very good level of satisfaction with all aspects of the playgroup's work; in particular, they appreciated the approachable and dedicated staff and they valued the high level of care given to the children. There were five responses from the management group and the staff to the questionnaires; they were also very positive. The key messages from all of the responses were shared with the staff and the management group of the playgroup.

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