

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Atticall Pre-School Playgroup,
Kilkeel

Report of an Inspection
in April 2012



STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Atticall Pre-school Playgroup
Address:	Atticall Community Centre 140 Tullyframe Road Kilkeel Co Down BT34 4RZ
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	26 April 2012
Date of previous inspection:	26 April 2005

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	23	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	18	-
• funded by Department of Education	18	-
• qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	1	-
• with a statement of special educational needs*	0	-
• without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	1	-
• with English as an additional language	0	-
• who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	0	-
Attendance:		-
• percentage attendance* of funded children for the previous school year	92.5%	-

* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	4	0
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	4	0
New appointments within previous 12 months	0	0

Number of: **	
Students	0
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	N/A	184

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	18
Percentage returned:	50%
Number of written comments:	7

ATTICALL PLAYGROUP, KILKEEL, CO DOWN, BT34 4RZ (5AB-0232)

1. Atticall Playgroup is situated in the town land of Atticall, approximately five miles from Kilkeel, County Down. It is accommodated within the Atticall Community Centre. The playgroup shares the accommodation with other community groups and the staff is required to set up and clear the playroom, including the displays of the children's work each day. The playgroup does not have any outdoor play facilities. Since the last inspection in 2005, a new deputy-leader and one new member of staff have been appointed. At the time of the inspection, there were 23 children enrolled in the playgroup; eighteen of the children are in their immediate pre-school year.

2. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this playgroup is outstanding; the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. The playgroup has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENTS

3. All of the children are well-settled and keenly motivated to learn. They demonstrate high levels of independence in their personal care, in their choice of activities and in their creative use of the resources. They explore and experiment confidently with the wide range of natural materials available in the playroom, taking appropriate risks to solve problems and to find out about how materials can be used. They make well-reasoned decisions about the use of the space available and demonstrate a mature sense of responsibility for the learning environment. Many of the children are developing finely-honed observation skills which they draw upon in creating their models and art-work. During the inspection, there were many examples of collaborative and purposeful play.

4. The children engage confidently with the adults and with each other; they talk enthusiastically about their play, ask perceptive questions and listen attentively to each other during play and story-time. They know a broad repertoire of songs and rhymes which they enjoy reciting independently and as a group. They make very good use of the wide range of fiction and non-fiction books for reference and enjoyment and integrate early mark-making naturally throughout their play.

5. A very small number of children have been identified as having difficulty with aspects of their speech and language. The staff liaises effectively with the parents of these children and with the speech and language therapist to ensure consistent well-focused support for the children; the children's records indicate that they are making good progress.

THE PROVISION FOR LEARNING

6. The atmosphere in the playgroup is very welcoming, relaxed and purposeful. The playroom is presented attractively in clearly defined areas of play; the resources and activities are skilfully planned to stimulate the children's interest, to nurture their sense of enquiry and to ensure progression in their learning. The daily session is well-organised with the focused use of all of the time available for learning. The adult interactions with the children are consistently of a very high quality. The staff engages purposefully in the play with the children; they respond effectively to the children's interests and suggestions and achieve a skilful balance between guidance and support. There are very good to outstanding opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum; the development of the children's organisational skills, their independent decision making and their understanding of the natural world are particular strengths of the provision.

7. The planning has been reviewed recently and developed further to include detailed guidance for the adults in their day-to-day work with the children. The adults make very good use of the observations of the children at play to inform the planning; during the inspection, there were a number of examples of the planning being amended and used flexibly in response to the children's changing interests and needs.

8. The playgroup has developed very good links with the parents and with the main primary school to which the children transfer. The parents are kept well-informed about the planned learning programme and about important dates and events through the induction programme and through a comprehensive monthly newsletter. They are encouraged to express their opinions and suggestions for the playgroup's development during the scheduled progress meetings in terms 1 and 2, through a suggestion box and through questionnaires in terms 2 and 3. The parents have the opportunity to borrow books, games and resources from the playgroup to enable them to support their children's learning at home. The staff has developed a well-focused transition programme for the children which ensures their smooth transfer to the next stage of their education.

9. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the playgroup is outstanding. This is evidenced, for example, through the consultation with the children and parents about the provision within the playgroup and through the staff's spontaneous and discreet response to the children's interests and needs.

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

11. The playgroup gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, through the dental care programme, the healthy snack routines and the efforts made to ensure regular opportunities for physical play, which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles. The staff has also developed a cookery programme which encourages the children and the parents to consider healthy food options.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

12. The leader is an excellent role model in all aspects of the playgroup's provision; she sets high standards for herself, the staff and the children and is passionate about the continued development of the playgroup. She leads a highly effective and dedicated team who have a very good understanding of the pre-school curriculum and who share her enthusiasm and commitment to meeting the needs of all of the children.

13. The playgroup has a well-embedded culture of self-evaluation to promote improvement. This is evidenced through the staff's ongoing professional discussions, through the weekly evaluations of the appropriateness and quality of the planned learning activities and the regular review of the children's progress. It is also obvious through the staff's procedures for evaluating the overall quality of the provision in the playgroup and through their identification of appropriate priorities for future development.

14. The current early years specialist (EYS) from the Early Years Organisation (EYO) has been working with the playgroup staff and management committee for the past year. During that time she has provided very good, well-focused support, particularly in relation to playroom routines, behaviour management and the arts programme.

15. The key strengths of the centre include:

- the independent, confident and highly motivated children;
- the outstanding provision for pastoral care;
- the very good to outstanding opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum;
- the consistently high quality adult interactions with the children;
- the well-embedded culture of self-evaluation leading to improvement; and
- the very effective leader and the highly skilled and dedicated staff team.

16. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this playgroup is outstanding; the quality of the pastoral care is also outstanding. The playgroup 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, the staff and the management committee to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Nine of the parents (50%) responded to the questionnaire and seven made additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaire were wholly positive and indicated a high level of satisfaction with all aspects of the centre's work; in particular the parents expressed their appreciation of the very caring, helpful staff and the individual care and attention shown to their children. A small number of the parents expressed their regret at the lack of outdoor play facilities for the playgroup. The responses from the management group and the staff questionnaires were all very positive. All of the responses have been shared with the staff and management of the playgroup.

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