

# PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Ballycarry Playgroup,  
Carrickfergus

Report of an Inspection  
in January 2011

## STATISTICAL INFORMATION

<b>Name of pre-school centre:</b>	Ballycarry Playgroup
<b>Address:</b>	Old Presbyterian Church Hall Main Street Ballycarry CARRICKFERGUS Co Antrim BT38 9HG
<b>Management Type:</b>	Voluntary

<b>Date of inspection:</b>	17 January 2011
<b>Date of previous inspection:</b>	18 May 2004

### 1. Details of Children

<b>Total number of children:</b>	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	16	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	10	-
• funded by Department of Education (DE)	10	-
• qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	0	-
• with a statement of special educational needs	0	-
• without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	3	-
• with English as an additional language	0	-
• who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	3	-
<b>Attendance:</b>		
• attendance* of funded children for the previous school year	91%	-

\* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

## 2. Details of Staff

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

<b>Number of: **</b>	
Students	1
Trainees	0

\*\* Total placements since September of current year

## 3. Details of Sessions

<b>Duration of morning session</b>	<b>Duration of afternoon session</b>	<b>Number of days open in previous year</b>
3 hours	-	188

## 4. Parental Questionnaires

<b>Number issued to parents:</b>	10
Percentage returned:	60%
Number of written comments:	3

## **BALLYCARRY PLAYGROUP, CARRICKFERGUS, CO ANTRIM, BT38 9HG (3AB-0116)**

1. Ballycarry Playgroup operates within the premises of the Old Presbyterian Church Hall, Ballycarry which accommodates a number of other organisations. Since the last inspection in 2004 a new leader has been appointed.

2. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the playgroup is good. The playgroup has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the playgroup has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) will monitor the playgroup's progress on the areas for improvement.

### **CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENTS**

3. The children are well settled; they enjoy making independent choices and are familiar with the daily routines. Most of the children are showing independence in their personal hygiene, self-registering and in tidying the play activities into appropriate areas. Approximately, a quarter of the children have limited attention spans, are dependent on the adults for support in relation to aspects of their social skills, resolving conflicts and taking turns. The majority of children were observed playing independently and collaboratively with the dough creating a variety of cakes and buns, creating models in the creative area, and making good attempts at putting on aprons and imaginative dressing up clothes. The children enjoyed singing along to the taped action songs moving different parts of their body appropriately to the music and accompanying their singing of rhymes and jingles with a variety of musical instruments.

4. The staff engage in beneficial discussion and develop oral language appropriately throughout the session. The majority of children are able to engage in conversations, participate in making decisions, are developing their vocabulary and talk clearly and confidently about their play. The staff encourage the children to talk to one another, develop their listening skills, read stories on request and promote their enjoyment in books. The majority of the children listen attentively and were interested to talk about aspects of the story during the group story and in particular, responded with great enthusiasm to the props around the theme of 'Weddings'. A few of the children still require adult support and attention encouraging them to develop their attention and listening skills, and to use clearer and longer phrases and sentences. The staff plan to attend training in the Eiklan Speech, Language and Communication Programme in order to develop their skills further.

### **THE PROVISION FOR LEARNING**

5. The staff give much thought to preparing a welcoming and inviting learning environment for the children each day. The staff make good use of all of the available space indoors as there are limited opportunities to play outdoors other than walks around the locality. They do their best to display the children's work, photographs and visual illustrations to promote the children's language and learning. The daily timetable includes a valuable period of extended play and provides regular opportunities for story, rhyme and physical play sessions. The pre-school children are aware of the daily routines and transitions run smoothly. The staff demonstrate a skilful approach in promoting language and learning naturally through the play activities and are quick to focus on developing the children's thinking spontaneously and appropriately. During the inspection, using a book about mini beasts, the adult effectively developed meaningful conversation about the size and shape of individual spiders using different sized plates for comparison.

6. The staff are currently developing their approach to planning and evaluating a broad and balanced programme. They write detailed evaluations of the children's responses to the play activities. The staff are aware that one-third of the children require further support to develop their communication, language and social skills. The staff have individual educational plans drawn up which are used to guide the work of the staff. Good links have been established with the relevant agencies, health professionals and the local primary school to support the children. The staff need now to focus more sharply on the learning potential of the activity, link the observations of the children's responses to the future plans more clearly in order to demonstrate evidence of progression and challenge throughout the year for the children and within the programme.

7. The provision for pastoral care within the playgroup is very good. Among the strengths are the very positive working relationships at all levels, the staff's commitment to the care and well-being of the children, in promoting their independence and self-management skills, and the friendly and welcoming atmosphere that permeates the playgroup.

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

9. The playgroup gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, the daily opportunity for the children to receive a healthy snack, and the efforts by the staff to provide regular physical play opportunities.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

10. The leader is very enthusiastic, motivated and provides effective leadership for the staff. She is a good role-model, is committed to continued professional development and sets high standards for herself and others while supporting and encouraging her staff. The staff are hard-working and reflective in their own practice; they have initiated an evaluation of their provision and in particular their planned programme. The development plan identifies appropriate priorities for improvement including provision for children with special educational needs, planning for the children's progress, staff training and extending parental involvement. The playgroup has begun to receive support from a new early years specialist employed by the Early Years Organisation since October 2010.

11. The key strengths in this playgroup include:

- the happy, caring ethos based on very good relationships at all levels;
- the progress made by the children, in particular, their personal, social and emotional development, decision-making skills, mathematical and communication and language skills;
- the quality of the interaction observed between the staff and all of the children in promoting their emotional development, behaviour and thinking skills;
- the smooth organisation of the day with a good balance between free play and organised activities;
- the effective procedures for early identification of need and the implementation of effective strategies which enable these children to manage and make progress in their development; and

- the effective leadership and management of the leader and her work to date in developing aspects of the provision.

12. The area for improvement is the need:

- to develop further the planning and assessment methods in order to focus more sharply on the learning potential of the activity, link the observations of the children's responses to the future plans more clearly in order to demonstrate evidence of progression and challenge throughout the year for the children and within the programme.

13. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the playgroup is good. The playgroup has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the playgroup has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Inspectorate will monitor the playgroup's progress on the areas for improvement.

## APPENDIX

### 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. Six of the parents responded to the questionnaire and three made additional written comments.
- The responses from the parents were very positive and indicated a high level of satisfaction with many aspects of the playgroup's work; in particular the parents praised the caring and friendly staff, commented on the staff's encouragement for the parents to become actively involved in various activities throughout the year, and the effective links established with the local primary school.
- The responses from the management group and the permanent staff questionnaires were also very positive. All of the responses have been shared with the staff and management of the playgroup.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2011

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the ETI website: [www.etini.gov.uk](http://www.etini.gov.uk)

