

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Bangor West Nursery
Playgroup, Co Down

Report of an Inspection
in May 2011

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Bangor West Nursery Playgroup
Address:	West Church Halls 91 Crawfordsburn Road BANGOR Co Down BT19 1BG
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	26 May 2011
Date of previous inspection:	25 May 2004

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	32	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	20	-
• funded by Department of Education (DE)	20	-
• qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	4	-
• with a statement of special educational needs*	0	-
• without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	2	-
• with English as an additional language	1	-
• 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	89.92%	-

* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	5	2
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	5	1
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	-	188

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	20
Percentage returned:	60%
Number of written comments:	6

BANGOR WEST NURSERY PLAYGROUP, BANGOR, CO DOWN, BT19 1BG (4AB-0164)

1. The Bangor West Nursery Playgroup is accommodated within the Bangor West Church complex, about one mile outside the village of Crawfordsburn, County Down. Since the last inspection in 2004, the playgroup has changed from private to voluntary status, two members of staff now share responsibility for the leadership and management of the playgroup and two new assistants have been appointed. The playgroup has also moved to the current purpose-built accommodation. At the time of the inspection, there were 32 children enrolled in the playgroup. Twelve of the children will have a further year in the playgroup before transferring to primary school and six of these younger children were present on the day of the inspection.

2. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this pre-school 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. The younger children are very well settled; they are familiar with the playroom routines, integrate appropriately with their peers and demonstrate independence in their personal care and choice of learning activities. All of the children engage enthusiastically in their learning; they are confident, well-motivated and inquisitive about the world in which they live. When given the opportunity, they demonstrate very good self-management skills. Their behaviour is excellent. During the inspection there were many examples of sustained, purposeful, collaborative play. The older children demonstrate a readiness to start school.

4. The children listen to and chat confidently with the adults and with their peers; many of them ask mature, well structured questions which lead to further enquiry, to the extension of their vocabulary and to the development of their language and communication skills. Most of the children demonstrate a keen interest in books, accessing and using them independently for reference and enjoyment. During the group story time all of the children listen with captivation and high levels of engagement. A majority of the children integrate early mark making naturally into their play; many of the older children demonstrate an interest in letters and sounds and can write their names independently. All of the children can recognise their own name in print. The staff have identified a small number of the children who are experiencing difficulties with aspects of their speech and language; they have consulted appropriately with the parents and relevant external agencies and have used the advice received to plan well-focused support for these children. The observation and assessment records indicate that the children are making good progress.

THE PROVISION FOR LEARNING

5. There is a relaxed, happy atmosphere within the playgroup; this is underpinned by the strong sense of community and by the adults' response to the children's individual needs. The daily routines are used effectively to promote and extend learning, particularly in the children's understanding of early mathematical concepts; nearly all the available time is used effectively for learning. The adult interactions with the children are consistently of a high quality; the adults respond skilfully to the children's sense of enquiry, building on their ideas and exploiting all the planned and incidental opportunities to extend their thinking. It will be appropriate for them to review the adult deployment arrangements within the playroom at this stage in the year, in order to support further the development of the children's independence. There are very good opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The use of music and role-play to develop the children's language, imagination and communication skills and the opportunities to develop the children's early mathematical language are particular strengths of the provision.

6. The written planning is consistently of a high quality; it outlines clearly the planned learning within each area of the pre-school curriculum, details progression for the differing age ranges within the playgroup and guides the adults effectively in their day-to-day work with the children. In addition, the collaborative approach to planning has ensured that the adults have a shared understanding of the pre-school curriculum. The staff carry out regular and detailed observations and assessments of the children's progress and needs. They have, appropriately, identified the need to review the recording procedures in order to avoid duplication and to facilitate tracking the children's progress.

7. The links with the parents to help them support the children's learning are outstanding. The parents are kept informed about the planned learning themes, songs and rhymes through a monthly newsletter. In addition, they are provided with the opportunity to stay through a play session to see what their children are doing and to understand how they can extend their children's learning experiences at home. Where appropriate, they are encouraged to contribute to the planned programmes by sharing with the children, information about their own role within the local or wider community. The parents are kept up-to-date about their children's achievements and progress through one meeting each term and through an informative written report at the end of the year. There are very good pastoral links with the primary schools to which most of the children transfer. It will be important for these links to be developed further and extended to include other local primary schools, as appropriate.

8. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the playgroup is outstanding. This is evidenced, for example, through the inclusive ethos, through the adults' sensitivity to the needs of individual children and through their skilful use of the media puppets to encourage the children to talk about their feelings.

9. The playgroup has very good 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 menus and routines and the opportunity for regular energetic play.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

11. The shared responsibility for the leadership and management of the playgroup is working very successfully. The Leaders have clearly defined roles which complement their strengths and which ensure the smooth administration, organisation and operation of the playgroup. They are supported very effectively by the skilful, dedicated and hard-working staff team who share their enthusiasm and commitment to meeting the needs of all of the children.

12. Reflection and self-evaluation to promote improvement form an integral part of the staff's day-to-day practice. It will be important for them to develop these procedures further and to use the outcomes to inform the planning for the continued long-term development of the playgroup. There is evidence that the recent consultation with the parents has led to an improvement in communication about the key worker responsibilities.

13. At the time of the inspection, the staff reported that the support from the Early Years Organisation had been inconsistent at the beginning of the current academic year but that it had improved more recently and that they had received good support for the implementation of the Media Initiative. During the inspection there was evidence that the introduction of this initiative had led to improvements in the provision for the children and their parents.

14. The key strengths of the playgroup include:

- the inquisitive, well-motivated children;
- the relaxed, happy atmosphere and strong sense of community;
- the outstanding links with the parents to help them support their children's learning;
- the comprehensive planning and very good learning opportunities in all areas of the pre-school curriculum;
- the consistently high-quality adult interactions with the children; and
- the very effective leaders and skilful, dedicated, staff team.

15. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this pre-school 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 of the pre-school children, the staff and the management committee to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Twelve of the parents (60%) responded to the questionnaire and six 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 playgroup's work; in particular the parents expressed their appreciation of the warm welcoming learning environment, of the caring staff and of the wide range of learning activities provided for the children. The responses from the management committee and the staff questionnaires were also very positive. All of the responses have been shared with the staff and management of the playgroup.

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