

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Little Robins Pre-School,
Larne

Report of an Inspection
in March 2012



STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of playgroup centre:	Little Robins Pre-School
Address:	7 Whitla's Brae LARNE Co Antrim BT40 3BY
Management Type:	Private

Date of inspection:	5 March 2012
Date of previous inspection:	1 March 2005

1. Details of Children

	am session	pm session
Total number of children:		
attending the playgroup centre	33	-
in their immediate playgroup year	18	-
funded by Department of Education (DE)	18	-
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	**	-
with a statement of special educational needs	0	-
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	58%	-

* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

** Denotes a number less than 5

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	3	2
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	3	2
New appointments within previous 12 months	0	1

Number of: ***	
Students	1
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:	25
Percentage returned	72%
Number of written comments:	7

LITTLE ROBINS PRE-SCHOOL, LARNE, CO ANTRIM, BT40 3BY (3CA-0271)

1. Little Robins Pre-School is a private pre-school centre, comprising three playrooms; it is situated in the ground floor of a private dwelling in the town of Larne. A new assistant has been employed since the last inspection. Eighteen of the 33 children currently enrolled are in their pre-school year.

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

CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENTS

3. The children demonstrate good progress in their overall development commensurate with their age and the time of year. Most of the children engage well in collaborative, imaginative and purposeful play for sustained periods of time. Almost all the children behave well and are familiar with the daily routines; there is a need for the staff to have effective strategies in place to promote more settled play for a small number of the children.

4. The development of the children's language and communication skills is a key priority for the centre, and the majority of the children demonstrate good progress in their listening and conversational skills with the staff. The children show a keen interest in books, and the majority respond well to stories read to them in groups and individually during the course of their play. The children take part enthusiastically in the many mark making opportunities which are presented well by the staff. The staff have developed very good links with speech and language therapists in order to avail of advice and support.

THE PROVISION FOR LEARNING

5. The staff prepare a purposeful and stimulating environment which provides good or better opportunities for learning in almost all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The children's work is celebrated and displayed attractively throughout the centre playrooms and is annotated to take account of their responses. The quality of the interactions between the staff and the children is of a consistently high standard, and the staff build effectively upon the children's ideas to extend their language, learning and thinking skills. In the best practice, the staff were observed using mathematical language in a natural way during play activities to develop the children's mathematical skills of investigation and problem solving. The recently developed outdoor area provides very good opportunities for physical development and a wide range of resources for interesting play activities. The staff need to develop further the planning, particularly in the World Around Us area of the curriculum, to make best use of this area and to ensure a greater focus on the learning potential in the outdoor play activities.

6. The staff plan regularly and make good use of their weekly evaluations to respond to the needs of individual children. The staff need to review the current observation and assessment recording system in order to more effectively track the progress the children make across the year in all areas of learning. A strength of the centre is the effective early identification of those children with additional needs, and the focus on accessing appropriate external support and advice.

7. The staff have developed very good links with the parents, for example, through the monthly newsletter which outlines clearly how the parents can help and support their children's learning at home. The parents make good use of the newly established lending library. Some parents also volunteer to talk to the children about their professions, thus enhancing the children's learning experiences. The staff have developed very good links with the local special and primary schools.

8. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the centre is very good. Among the strengths is the thought given to providing the children with a stimulating learning environment, both inside and outside. The adults handle disputes between the children in a sensitive manner with a positive outcome for all; there are very good working relationships among the staff and between the children and the staff.

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

10. The centre gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. The children have access to healthy daily snacks and there are daily opportunities to play outdoors; these encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

11. The proprietor and the deputy leader work very well as a team to provide effective leadership; they are highly enthusiastic and motivated. There is a strong sense of team-work among all the staff who co-operate well to establish a stimulating learning environment within the centre; they are dedicated to improving the quality of the provision for all the children.

12. The development plan identifies relevant priorities for improvement. Self-evaluation is at an early stage, and the staff have begun recently to evaluate the quality of the provision; they have identified the further development of self evaluation as a priority.

13. The centre has received support from an independent early years specialist (EYS) for the last six years. The staff report that she provides good advice, support and guidance during her visits.

14. The key strengths of this centre include:

- the very good quality of the pastoral care;
- the well-behaved children, the majority of whom settle quickly to, and engage enthusiastically in, the play activities;
- the provision for special needs, and in particular the focus on early identification of children's needs;
- the very good links with the parents;
- the good or better opportunities for learning across almost all areas of the pre-school curriculum; and
- the consistently very good quality of the interactions between the staff and the children.

15. The area for improvement is the need:

- for the staff, with the support of their EYS, to continue to develop the processes for effective self-evaluation leading to improvement.

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

QUESTIONNAIRES

The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents and the staff to complete confidential questionnaires prior to the inspection. Eighteen of the parents responded to the questionnaire and seven made additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaires were very positive and indicated a high level of satisfaction with all aspects of the centre's work. The responses from the staff questionnaires were also highly positive. All of the responses have been shared with the staff and management of the centre.

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