

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

See-Saw Playgroup, Mosside,
Ballymoney

Report of an Inspection
in March 2012

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of playgroup centre:	See-Saw Playgroup
Address:	The Community Centre 250 Moyarget Road Mosside BALLYMONEY Co Antrim BT53 8QU
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	8 March 2012
Date of previous inspection:	21 May 2005

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the playgroup centre	22	-
in their immediate playgroup year	22	-
funded by Department of Education (DE)	22	-
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	0	-
who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	*	-
Attendance:		
attendance** of funded children for the previous school year	91.8%	-

* Fewer than five

** Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	3	1
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	3	0
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
2½ hours	-	181

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	22
Percentage returned	90.9%
Number of written comments:	6

REPORT ON THE INSPECTION OF SEE-SAW PLAYGROUP, MOSSIDE, BALLYMONEY, CO ANTRIM, BT53 8QU (3AB-0124)

1. The See-Saw Playgroup is situated in the village of Mosside and is accommodated in a community hall which is shared with other organisations. The playgroup has daily access to a large hall, a secure garden area and an adjoining public play park. The playgroup operates one part-time funded pre-school session each day; all of the children who attend are in their immediate pre-school year. The children come from a wide catchment area. Since the last inspection there has been a change of leader and early years specialist (EYS).

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 the capacity for sustained self-improvement.

CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENTS

3. The children are highly motivated and engaged and almost all are making good progress in their learning and development. They select and use materials with confidence and imagination and show good levels of independence during snack time and in the daily routines. Almost all of the children concentrate and persevere at tasks and activities and can play collaboratively.

4. Most of the children talk confidently about their ideas to staff and one another during their play; they ask questions and respond with enthusiasm to songs and story sessions. The children refer to information books and show a high level of interest in mark making.

5. The children make independent and imaginative use of the materials in the creative area to make models and many enjoy drawing and painting. During the inspection, many children spent sustained periods of time in the home area exploring the real vegetables provided and pretending to make soup.

6. The children's interest in mathematical concepts and their good use of mathematical language is a particular strength within the playgroup. Many of the children can count, sort and discuss capacity, shape and size. A few children also show an interest in representing their mathematical ideas through pictures and marks on a page.

7. The children enjoy exploring the properties of sand, water and dough and are developing a good awareness of environmental issues through, for example, their recycling and composting of materials.

8. Almost all the children are able to use tools and smaller equipment with increasing dexterity and control. They can climb, balance and throw balls with accuracy. A small number of children would benefit from simpler tasks and equipment which are better matched to their earlier stage of development.

PROVISION FOR LEARNING

9. The staff plan, on a weekly basis, to provide a stimulating and attractive learning environment within the playroom. They make very good use of all of the space available to them in the building and the developing outside garden. Imaginative use is made of natural and recycled materials to add to the children's learning experiences.

10. The daily timetable generally provides a good balance between extended periods of freely chosen play and group activities. The children would benefit from more extended periods of physical activity and outdoor play during the weekly programme.

11. A key strength in the playgroup is the skill of the staff to interact effectively with the children. Their caring, calm and supportive approach promotes settled and productive play. They listen to the children's ideas and build on them to promote a good range of vocabulary, problem solving, thinking and language.

12. The staff are making good progress in developing their written planning to provide a broad and balanced curriculum. Their records of the children's achievements are increasingly being used to inform their planning and to match activities to the children's needs and interests. The staff have appropriately identified planning for the outdoor area as their next stage of development. They also need to work together with their EYS to identify, plan and provide for the few children who would benefit from more focused interventions.

13. The playgroup is well supported by the parents, who are kept informed through a newsletter and relevant meetings. The playgroup staff plan to develop these links further.

14. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is very good. The strengths in the pastoral care include the inclusive ethos and the full integration of children identified with special educational needs.

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

16. The playgroup gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, introducing dental hygiene, a fruit break and regular physical activities, which encourages the children to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

17. The playgroup leader is well organised and is effective in her role. She is reflective in her practice and promotes a collaborative approach with her hard working staff.

18. The independent EYS has provided very good support and guidance which is valued by the staff. While the development plan is in the early stage of development, there is evidence of ongoing self-evaluation and improvement in recent months.

19. The key strengths of this playgroup include:

- the stimulating and well resourced learning environment;
- the very good quality of the staff interactions with the children to promote learning;
- the broad and balanced pre-school curriculum which provides good, or very good, opportunities for the children to learn in most areas of the pre-school curriculum;
- the promotion of early mathematical language and concepts;
- the very high levels of engagement and motivation by the children in their learning; and
- the effective leadership and management and hard working team.

20. 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 the capacity for sustained self-improvement.

QUESTIONNAIRES

The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents, the management group and the staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Twenty of the parents responded to the questionnaire and six made additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaire indicated a very high level of satisfaction with the quality of the children's experiences and appreciation of the care and attention provided to the children by the staff. The responses from the management group provided a strong endorsement for all aspects of the playgroups work. The staff returns were all positive about their shared level of involvement in developing the work.

All of the key messages from the responses have been shared with the staff and management of the playgroup.

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