

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

First Steps Day Nursery,
Dundonald, Belfast

Report of a Follow-up inspection
in March 2017



The Education and Training Inspectorate
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FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF FIRST STEPS DAY NURSERY, DUNDONALD, BT16 1RH (4CA-0638)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out an inspection of First Steps Day Nursery (pre-school room), Dundonald in November 2015, which concluded that the school needed to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all learners.

The areas for improvement included the need to:

- develop effective, strategic leadership and management linked to systematic self-evaluation and development planning to promote continuous improvement; and
- continue to plan suitable progression in learning across all areas of the curriculum and use observations to meet the needs and interest of individual children.

The ETI carried out an interim follow-up visit in June 2016 and a follow-up inspection in March 2017.

In the interval since the initial inspection, changes which affect the work of the school include:

- a member of day-care staff moved to the pre-school room as an assistant in September 2016;
- a new early years specialist took up post in December 2016;
- an acting pre-school leader took up post in January 2017;
- an acting manager took up post in January 2017;
- the number of pre-school children at the time of the follow up inspection had fallen from nine in September 2016 to six which is below the minimum number required to be part of the pre-school programme.

Key Findings

The outcomes for learners are now an important area for improvement. The children's play is not sufficiently sustained and developed for the time of year particularly during outdoor play. The pre-school playroom is, however, attractively presented into well resourced areas of play. The children are well settled, enjoy exploring the range of activities provided and most communicate confidently with the staff and one another.

There is limited evidence of planned progression in the children's learning across the six areas of the pre-school curriculum. There are clear gaps in the written assessments of the children's achievements and parents have not been provided with the opportunity for a formal meeting with staff to discuss their child's progress.

The quality of provision remains an important area for improvement. The staff interaction to promote learning needs is not of a consistently high quality. The planning and assessment methods are not well enough developed to ensure planned progression across all areas of learning linked to the needs and interest of the children. The parents are not kept informed of their children's progress.

The staff have had insufficient opportunity to improve their skills and knowledge on the early identification, planning and records keeping for special educational needs.

The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and action to promote improvement requires urgent improvement. Roles and responsibilities have been poorly defined and ineffectively managed during the follow-up process. There has been no systematic self-evaluation, action planning or monitoring and evaluation; this has led to a deterioration in the quality of the provision since the original inspection.

While the recently-appointed acting pre-school leader has identified and started to address a number of areas requiring improvement there is no evidence of a strategic and joined-up whole staff approach to self-evaluation and action planning.

The outdoor learning environment is not resourced and managed effectively to promote high quality learning and interactions with the staff.

Staff have been more clearly identified as designated officers on the premises; the documentation for the parents needs to reflect the recent changes in staffing.

The new early years specialist has identified accurately the areas for improvement since taking up her post and has been providing relevant advice and guidance.

It continues to be important that the, leadership and management and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the pre-school due to the small number of funded places, in order to address the current and future needs of the pupils and the staff.

Overall Effectiveness

First Steps Day Nursery pre-school room, Dundonald, needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all learners. It requires external support to do so. The follow-up inspection has identified the following areas for improvement:

- the leadership and management need to establish a period of stability among the staff team at all levels, define clearly their roles and responsibilities and develop a collegial team approach to continuous improvement;
- the staff need to continue to develop their knowledge and skills to ensure a consistently high quality of interactions with the children to promote learning and ensure that the assessment of the children's progress is complete and is shared with parents;
- the planned programme needs to guide more effectively progression in learning across all areas of the curriculum both indoors and outdoors, linked to the needs and interests of the children; and
- effective systems for self-evaluation, development planning and action planning need to be developed.

The ETI will conduct a further follow-up inspection in 12 to 18months.

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