

*eti*

*The Education and Training Inspectorate -  
Promoting Improvement*



*Providing Inspection Services for*  
**Department of Education**  
**Department for Employment and Learning**  
**Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

## **Education and Training Inspectorate**

### **Report of a Follow-up Inspection**

**First Steps Playgroup  
Belfast**

**March 2009**

## **FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF FIRST STEPS PLAYGROUP, BELFAST, BT11 9GS (1AB-0321)**

The original inspection in November 2007 highlighted strengths in the supportive ethos and the daily timetable. The inspection also identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- the development of the children's language, problem-solving and thinking skills;
- better challenge and progression in the pre-school curriculum;
- better use of assessment information to meet individual children's needs; and
- the need to update the staff's child protection training and include strategies for managing behaviour into the policy documents.

**In the interval since the inspection, the following action which affects the work of the pre-school centre has taken place:**

- the playgroup leader has returned from maternity leave;
- a temporary early years specialist is currently providing support;
- additional resources have been purchased for physical play;
- the staff have attended appropriate training courses;
- relevant policies have been reviewed and updated;
- a date has been agreed to update the leader's child protection training; and
- plans have been put in place to develop a small outdoor area.

The Education and Training Inspectorate carried out a monitoring visit in January 2009 as part of the follow-up process, and a follow-up inspection on 5 March 2009.

The action plan produced by the pre-school centre in response to the inspection findings was of a very good quality; it identified the key issues needing to be addressed and the actions to be taken.

The pre-school centre has a detailed and well-focused development plan which reflects the inspection findings.

Very good progress has been made in the areas of improvement identified during the original inspection.

**The following are the most important improvements since the original inspection:**

- the staff interactions with the children are of a consistently higher quality throughout the session; they effectively support the children's language and learning, promote settled play and generate a sense of fun and enjoyment;
- there have been improvements in all areas of the pre-school curriculum and better opportunities for the children to sing and make music, investigate natural materials and to concentrate and persevere at tasks;

- the written planning is well developed to provide a richer, broader and more balanced programme;
- the staff have worked hard to promote parental involvement in their children's learning through providing a lending library and organising a learning day for parents and children together;
- the assessment records are being used more effectively to enable support to be provided for specific children and there is evidence of improvements in their learning and development; and
- very useful links are being developed within the local community including local schools and Sure Start to foster collaborative working among early years providers in the area.

Since the inspection, the pre-school centre evaluated the progress made in the areas for improvement identified in the original inspection.

The staff, leader and centre manager have worked hard to promote a self-evaluative culture and identify appropriately priorities for future development. The inspection confirms that the pre-school centre demonstrated clear evidence of improvement. The Inspectorate recommends that the processes for self-evaluation now in place are further developed.

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this pre-school centre is now good. The pre-school centre has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The follow-up inspection has identified some aspects of the areas for improvement still to be addressed but equally the pre-school centre has demonstrated the capacity to address these.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2009

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 DE website: [www.deni.gov.uk](http://www.deni.gov.uk) or may be obtained from the Inspection Services Branch, Department of Education, Rathgael House, 43 Balloo Road, Bangor, Co Down BT19 7PR.