

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

First Steps Playgroup,
Dundonald, Belfast

Private Day Nursery Pre-school room

Report of a Second Follow-up
Inspection in April 2018



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SECOND FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF FIRST STEPS DAY NURSERY PRE-SCHOOL ROOM, DUNDONALD, BELFAST, BT16 1RH (4CA-0638)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a follow-up inspection (FUI) of the pre-school room, First Steps Day Nursery, Dundonald in March 2017, which concluded that the pre-school needed to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all learners and required external support to do so.

The areas for improvement included the need for:

- the leadership and management to establish a period of stability among the staff team at all levels, clearly define roles and responsibilities and develop a collegial team approach to continuous improvement;
- the staff to continue to develop their knowledge and skills to ensure a consistently high quality of interactions with the children to promote learning and ensure the assessments of the children's progress are complete and shared with parents;
- the planned programme 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 to be developed.

The ETI carried out an interim follow-up visit in January 2018 and a second FUI in April 2018.

In the interval since the first FUI, the following changes which affect the work of the pre-school have taken place:

- the acting pre-school room leader remains in a temporary capacity;
- a new nursery lead manager, was appointed in December 2017;
- the staff have attended a day's training focusing on special educational needs;
- the number of pre-school children at the time of the second FUI was 7 which remains below the minimum number required to be part of the pre-school programme.

Key Findings

The outcomes for learners remain an important area for improvement. Important aspects of the children's learning are not sufficiently developed for the time of the year, including, for example, their involvement in the outdoor play activities and the development of their own creative ideas and representational art work. The children are well-settled, enjoy exploring the range of activities provided in the playroom and most communicate confidently with the staff and one another.

The quality of provision remains an important area for improvement. A lack of continuity in staffing and the continuing ambiguity of roles and responsibilities at all levels continues to impact negatively on improvement in the quality of the provision. The staff have attended a short course on special educational needs; however, their skills and knowledge on the early identification, planning and records keeping for special educational needs remains an important area for improvement. While aspects of the outdoor learning environment have been more richly resourced, the lack of planning, poor management and inconsistent staff interactions with the children have impacted negatively on the improvement of the quality of the children's learning.

The playroom is attractively presented into appropriate areas of play with additional real and authentic items. The parents now receive regular newsletters, written reports and attend meetings to be informed of their children's progress.

During the inspection visit there were examples of effective interaction by the staff, however, the staff interactions are not of a consistently high quality; too often the staff are unable to build on the children's own ideas. The planning and assessment methods are not developed sufficiently to ensure planned progression across all areas of learning linked to the needs and interest of the children.

The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and action to promote improvement continues to require urgent improvement. The roles and responsibilities of all staff require further clarification and a stable team has yet to be established. The staff require sufficient time to be allocated for them together on regular a weekly basis to plan together a suitable programme for learning across all areas of the curriculum. There has been no systematic self-evaluation, action planning or monitoring and evaluation to bring about the improvements outlined in the previous inspection visit.

Since the initial follow-up inspection the early years specialist has provided extensive support and guidance to the staff and the management group which has not been acted upon to bring about the required improvements identified in the original inspection.

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

Based on the evidence available at the time of the FUI, the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect broadly the guidance from the relevant Departments. The management needs to ensure that a named deputy designated officer is on the premises during any absences of the named designated officer.

The management group and staff now need to develop an action plan that clearly outlines how the staff will address the areas for improvement identified in this report.

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 FUI 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 approach to continuous improvement;

- the staff, at all levels, need to continue to develop their knowledge and skills to ensure a consistently high quality of provision to promote the children's learning across all areas of the pre-school programme;
- the planned programme needs to guide more effectively progression in learning across the curriculum both indoors and outdoors linked to the interest and needs of the children;
- the staff need to improve their knowledge and expertise of how to identify and plan for children with special educational needs;
- effective systems of self-evaluation, development planning and action planning need to be developed and implemented to guide the necessary improvements; and
- the leadership and management at all levels need to improve their knowledge and expertise of quality pre-school education to be able to monitor effectively the improvements required across all aspects of the setting's work.

Further action will be considered by DE.

Health and Safety

The staff need to undertake regular rigorous risk assessments to ensure that all resources used, and activities undertaken by the children, are safe for their age and stage of development.

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