

EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSPECTORATE

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION

First S steps Playgroup, Ulster Hospital, Dundonald

Private Day Nursery Pre-school, DE Ref No 4CA-0638

Report of a Follow-up Inspection in November 2022



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Follow-up to the inspection of First Steps Playgroup, Ulster Hospital, Dundonald, BT16 1RH (4CA-0638)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a third follow-up inspection in First Steps Playgroup in May 2019¹, which concluded that the pre-school needed to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners, namely to:

- continue to develop the planning to bring about continuous progress in the children's learning both indoors and outdoors; and
- consolidate the impact of the improvement work on the children's outcomes.

The pre-school's action plans were adjusted in response to the feedback given by the ETI. The pre-school's development plan was also adjusted in light of the inspection findings.

The ETI carried out a monitoring visit in October 2021 and a fourth follow-up inspection in November 2022.

In the interval since the inspection, the pre-school has received external support provided by the Early Years Organisation in relation to self-evaluation, development planning and planning, observations, and assessment.

During this period, other actions or changes which affect the work of the pre-school include:

- staff participation in a range of online training;
- dedicated planning time for the staff; and
- the purchase of additional indoor and outdoor resources to extend the children's investigative play, creativity and levels of independence and resilience.

As a consequence of the external support and the key changes and actions taken within the pre-school, there have been improvements in the quality of education as reported in the key findings below.

Key findings

The outcomes for learners have improved and are now good.

Almost all of the children have good levels of independence, are familiar with the routines of the day, and take responsibility for and make choices about their learning. All of the children engage in sustained focused play and assume readily roles in imaginative play. Their fine motor skills are well developed through the wide range of

¹ [Follow-up Inspection - First Steps Playgroup, Ulster Hospital, Dundonald, ETI, May 2019](#)

opportunities for early mark making, painting and kneading and rolling dough. They are confident interacting with adults and peers and express their thoughts and ideas with ease. Most of the children are developing well their mathematical language; they are able to rote count and are beginning to recognise numerals and shape in the environment.

The quality of provision has improved and is now good.

All of the staff promote positive behaviour and encourage independence. They model well specific language, particularly mathematical terminology, and respond to the children's interests and needs to encourage their problem solving and resilience. The staff use open-ended questions to extend the children's language and thinking; consequently the majority of children are developing their ability to hold conversations. Through online training, staff have developed further their understanding of the pre-school curriculum. This has resulted in the development of clear long- and short-term planning for indoor play which supports the children's learning and progression. A systematic approach to observations has been established which charts the progress of children across areas of learning. The staff are not providing and developing sufficient outdoor learning opportunities for the children across all areas of the pre-school curriculum.

The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and action to promote improvement remains good.

The staff have developed a collaborative approach to planning. They utilise well the dedicated preparation time to review and evaluate the provision and learning, and work enthusiastically to enhance the learning environment for the children. The staff continue to receive external specialist support from the Early Years Organisation to develop their reflection of and further enhance their practice.

Overall effectiveness

First Steps Playgroup now demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interests of all the children. The ETI will monitor how the pre-school sustains improvement in:

- developing the planning for outdoor learning to ensure children avail of and maximise all learning opportunities in the well-resourced area.

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