

EDUCATION AND TRAINING
INSPECTORATE

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION

Kid's Kabin Cross-Community Playgroup,
Drumaroad, Castlewellan, County Down

Voluntary Playgroup, DE Ref No 4AB-0176

Report of a Follow-up Inspection in May 2024



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Follow-up to the inspection of Kid's Kabin Cross-Community Playgroup, Drumaroad, Castlewellan, BT31 9PQ (4AB-0176)

Introduction

Kids Kabin Cross-Community Playgroup is situated in the townland of Drumaroad, approximately seven miles from the town of Castlewellan. The 14 children attending the part-time session come from the townland of Drumaroad.

The playroom is in a modular unit classroom and has a fenced outdoor area. The staff also use regularly the local playpark which is adjacent to the playgroup to provide the children with additional space to engage in physical activities.

This follow-up inspection was carried out in May 2024 and provided the pre-school with the opportunity to demonstrate its progress in addressing the areas for action from the time of the last inspection in February 2023.

Views of parents and staff

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) issued online confidential questionnaires to parents and staff in advance of the follow-up inspection.

Sixty-four per cent (9) of parents responded to the questionnaire and just under one-half of the parents who responded provided additional written comments. All of the responses were very positive. The parents commented on: the warm and friendly staff who work well together to support the children; the monthly newsletter which provides helpful information on how they can support their child's learning; and, the safe and happy ethos of the playgroup.

All of the playgroup staff responded positively to the questionnaire and provided additional written comments. They commented on their reflective practice, their support for the children and their parents, and the very good links with the local primary school and the wider community.

Key actions

During this period, the key actions which affect the work of the pre-school include:

- the appointment of a new management committee;
- the introduction of weekly staff meetings;
- all staff participating in professional learning and development opportunities provided by an Early Years Specialist (EYS) from the Early Years Organisation, including, monthly support meetings;

- the staff visiting another playgroup to build their knowledge and understanding of planning, observation and assessment, and outdoor learning; and
- the leader participating in the ETI's Empowering Improvement 2 programme.

Key findings

- The staff have benefitted from professional learning and development opportunities provided by the EYS, including the introduction of weekly staff meetings, which have led to improvements in the quality of the observations of the children's learning, the short-term planning and the outdoor provision.
- The staff have an improved understanding of the process of self-evaluation and are able to articulate clearly the improvements they have made to the provision and the impact they have had on the children. The staff have identified appropriate priorities for improvement work going forward.
- As a result of the improvement work undertaken by the staff and management committee, the children are very well-settled, highly independent and engage enthusiastically in sustained and concentrated play. The children's behaviour is excellent.
- The staff have reviewed and implemented their long-term planning which outlines clearly progression in learning across all areas of the pre-school curriculum.
- The staff have a better understanding of what constitutes high quality observations of the children's learning which is reflected in the more succinct and insightful observations across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. They use these observations purposefully to inform future planning and acknowledge that this practice is yet to become embedded practice.
- The staff have improved significantly the provision for outdoor learning which now has clearly defined play areas and provides better opportunities for the children to develop their learning across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. Working in partnership with the management committee and parents, the staff have, for example, installed new planting areas and chalkboards, developed an area entitled "Our Reading Garden", and created a track for trikes in the nearby park. These enhanced play opportunities have impacted positively on the children's language and physical skills, and their interest in the world around them.
- The current planning for outdoor learning does not reflect the breadth of opportunities currently on offer to the children. The staff recognise the need to develop further the planning for outdoor provision, in particular the learning potential, to support them in their interactions with the children and to promote investigative play and problem-solving.

- Staff interactions with the children are underpinned by respectful and caring relationships.
- The leadership and management of the playgroup has been strengthened by the establishment of a new management committee. The staff report there is a better working partnership and improved communication between the staff and the management committee. The chairperson has a good understanding of the impact of the improvement work undertaken to date, particularly in relation to the children's observations, planning and outdoor learning.
- The management committee and staff are committed to working in partnership with parents and have begun to consult with parents to develop an agreed shared vision for the playgroup.

Areas for consideration:

- to develop further the intended learning within the outdoor planning to support the staff in their interaction with the children, and to promote more investigative play and problem-solving; and
- to embed the approaches to observation, planning and assessment.

Child Protection

At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by the pre-school demonstrates that the arrangements for child protection align to the current statutory guidance. The ETI will monitor the progress of the school in addressing an administrative element of the child protection arrangements.

Going Forward


The collaborative team in Kids Kabin Cross-Community Playgroup are dedicated to the welfare of all the children in their care and have addressed well the areas for action identified at the time of the last inspection. They provide a positive and safe learning environment and a balanced programme of learning experiences across all areas of the pre-school curriculum for all of the children.

ETI will continue to monitor the progress of Kids Kabin Cross-Community Playgroup in addressing the areas for consideration as laid out in this report. No further follow-up inspection is required.

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