

EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSPECTORATE

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION

Little Ones Playgroup, Downpatrick,
County Down

Voluntary Playgroup DE Ref No 4CA-0657

Report of a Follow-up Inspection in November 2022



Providing Inspection services for:
Department of Education
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Follow-up to the inspection of Little Ones Playgroup, Downpatrick, BT30 6PU (4CA-0657)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out an inspection of Little Ones Playgroup in February 2020¹, which concluded that the pre-school needed to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners, namely to:

- develop the children's understanding of early mathematical concepts and their use of mathematical language;
- improve the staff interactions to promote progression in the children's learning; and
- develop the action planning process to improve the quality of the provision and the outcomes for the children.

The pre-school's action plans were adjusted appropriately in light of 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 April 2022 and a follow-up inspection in November 2022.

In the interval since the inspection, the pre-school has received external support from the Early Years Organisation (EYO) through regular online and face-to-face visits to the setting. The pre-school was unable to access a 12-week intensive support programme from the Early Years Specialist because the pre-school left the funded programme in 2020.

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

- re-entering the pre-school PEAGS programme in September 2021 after a break of one year;
- the appointment of a new leadership team and changes in the roles and responsibilities within the staff team; and
- staff participation in the ETI Empowering Improvement programme and accessing a wide range of professional development opportunities.

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.

¹ [Pre-School Inspection - Little Ones Playgroup, Downpatrick, County Down 4CA-0657 \(etini.gov.uk\)](#)

Key findings

The outcomes for learners have improved and are now good.

Most of the children, including those who have additional needs, are making good progress for the time of year. All of the children enjoy experimenting with the wide range of natural and authentic resources available to them, both indoors and outdoors. They are developing well their early understanding of mathematical language and concepts, and were observed counting, sorting, matching, measuring, weighing and exploring space through the various play activities. Most of the children are confident in the routines of the playgroup and show increasing independence; a small number of children are beginning to work well collaboratively. The positive behaviour strategies employed by the staff are impacting positively on the children's ability to self-regulate.

The quality of provision has improved and is now good.

Through the significant improvement in the quality of the indoor and outdoor learning environment, the staff now provide good learning opportunities across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The new learning spaces and well-chosen resources are impacting positively on the development of the children's independence, curiosity and problem-solving skills. The quality of the staff interactions with the children are now consistently good. The staff model well language and respond to and exploit incidental opportunities for learning, such as changes in the weather. Transitions between activities are used very effectively to develop the children's early understanding of mathematical concepts, personal, social and emotional skills, and language. The staff have identified appropriately the need to develop the effective use of assessments of the children's learning in order to inform better the planning for progression.

The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and action to promote improvement have improved and are now good.

The staff team work collegially and can articulate clearly the impact of the improvement work undertaken on the provision and outcomes of the children. Through accessing and participation in a wide range of professional learning opportunities, the staff are more reflective in their practice. The staff have moved beyond addressing the areas from the original inspection and, through their use of self-evaluation, have effected improvement in other aspects of the provision, including in outdoor learning. The current development plan does not fully reflect ongoing quality improvement work and should be updated.

Overall effectiveness

Little Ones Day Care now demonstrates capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the pre-school sustains improvement in:

- the effective use of assessments of the children's learning in order to inform better the planning for progression.

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