

# PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

## Our Lady's Pre-School Playgroup, Belfast

Voluntary Playgroup

Report of a second Follow-up  
inspection in December 2016



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## **FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF OUR LADY'S PRE-SCHOOL PLAYGROUP, BELFAST (1BB-0012)**

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a follow-up inspection in October 2014<sup>1</sup> which evaluated the quality of provision overall in the playgroup as satisfactory.<sup>2</sup>

The areas for improvement were:

- to continue to link the assessment of the children's progress to the planning in order to identify actions required to support their needs;
- for the staff to build further their capacity to meet the wide range of needs within the group including children with special educational needs and those from newcomer families;
- for the leader to continue to develop her leadership and management skills; and
- for the leadership and management to develop further the processes for effective monitoring and self-evaluation.

The ETI carried out interim follow-up visits in September 2015, December 2015 and January 2016 and a second follow-up inspection in December 2016.

In the interval since the first follow-up inspection, actions or changes which affect the work of the playgroup include:

- the playgroup moved premises to a room on the top floor of Sacred Heart Boys' Primary School;
- having opened initially without the required registration certificate by the Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT), the playgroup operated at a reduced day of two hours for four months during the follow-up period;
- a third member of staff was employed initially in line with a registration certificate and to minimise risk due to the nature of the accommodation;
- there have been several changes of chairperson, including a period of several months with no chairperson; the current chairperson took up post in November 2016 at which time a new early years specialist from the Early Years Organisation was appointed;
- at the time of the second follow-up inspection visit the playgroup had been operating with only two staff since April 2016; and
- the number of funded children has declined to nine, resulting in an increase in younger children being enrolled.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.etini.gov.uk/publications/follow-inspection-%E2%80%93-our-lady%E2%80%99s-pre-school-playgroup-belfast>

<sup>2</sup> From September 2015 the number of possible inspection outcomes was reduced from six to four. 'Satisfactory' is now reported as 'needs to address important areas for improvement' in the interest of all the learners.

## Key Findings

The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and action to promote improvement requires urgent improvement. There has been insufficient improvement in all of the areas identified during the first follow-up inspection visit. The lack of consistent permanent chairing of the management group, challenges in recruiting committee members, poor management of the transition to new premises and the lack of capacity for effective leadership and management within the playgroup have resulted in earlier improvements not being sustained and built upon.

The quality of learning and teaching requires significant improvement. While the staff have improved the room layout and their interactions with the children are less directed by the adults than previously, overall, the pre-school programme is not effective.

The planning lacks sufficient detail to guide the staff and ensure progression in learning across all areas of the curriculum for children at different ages and stages of development. The links between the assessment of the needs of individuals and the planned programme are not implemented effectively enough to meet the real needs of the children.

The staff interaction is not consistently at a high enough level to promote learning. On too many occasions, the staff do no more than manage daily routines, such as the arrival and the collection of children. As a result in the staff/children ratios are ineffective and staff interactions are mainly supervisory in nature.

The arrangements for the early identification and intervention for children with special educational needs need urgent improvement.

The standards and achievements require significant improvement. The children's social development, language and communication skills and ability to develop their ideas with other children are insufficiently developed. The small number of pre-school children and the staffing arrangements limit these aspects of their development.

During the visit the children showed a good level of interest in books and stories and engaged well with painting activities.

Based on evidence available at the time of the inspection the arrangements for safeguarding are unsatisfactory. The staff need to:

- ensure children's records are stored correctly and securely;
- improve their awareness of how to minimise potential risk during the playgroup session;
- implement their safeguarding policies and procedures more rigorously;
- maintain staff ratios that are in line with the current registration through the Health and Social Care Trust; and
- update their policies and risk assessments to reflect the current staff ratios.

The leadership and management need to plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the playgroup's provision and budget in order to address the current and future needs of the children and the staff.

## **Conclusion**

Our Lady's Pre-school Playgroup needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all learners. It requires external support to do so.

The follow-up inspection has identified the following areas for improvement:

- to develop and implement effectively a rich pre-school programme which is linked to the needs and interests of all of the children;
- for the staff to build further their capacity to meet the wide range of needs within the group, including younger children, those with special educational needs and those from newcomer families;
- for the leader to continue to develop their leadership and management skills;
- for the leadership and management to develop further the processes for effective monitoring and evaluation; and
- to address the unsatisfactory safeguarding issues raised.

The ETI will return to the playgroup within six weeks to monitor and report on progress in addressing the safeguarding issues.

Further action will be considered by the Department of Education.

## **ADDENDUM TO THE REPORT ON THE INSPECTION OF OUR LADY'S PRE-SCHOOL PLAYGROUP**

### **SAFEGUARDING**

In line with its child protection/safeguarding procedures, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) returned to Our Lady's Pre-School Playgroup on Monday 23 January 2017 after a follow-up inspection which took place on 7 December 2016; the purpose of the visit was to monitor and report on the safeguarding issues, evaluated as unsatisfactory in the inspection.

On the basis of the evidence available, the revised arrangements were evaluated as satisfactory.

During the interim period, the playgroup has received support from the Early Years Team within Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

The safeguarding follow-up inspection has identified that the playgroup still needs to:

- complete the review and implement the revised policy for intimate care;
- ensure that the information identifying the designated person is clearly displayed;
- update the information about the safety of the children and ensure that it is specific to the playgroup;
- update the safeguarding flowcharts for the benefit of providing clear information to parents and carers;
- complete the remaining work in progress on reviewing child protection policies and practices;
- confirm the dates for outstanding training for the acting leader; and
- implement the hard-backed book for record keeping.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will continue to monitor and report on the quality of the playgroup's pastoral provision, and the associated areas for improvement, as part of the follow-up inspection process.

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