

EDUCATION AND TRAINING
INSPECTORATE

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION

Peatlands Playgroup, The Birches,
Portadown, County Armagh

Voluntary Playgroup, DE Ref No 5AB-0396

Report of a Follow-up Inspection in June 2024



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Follow-up to the inspection of Peatlands Playgroup, The Birches, Portadown, BT62 1LR (5AB-0396)

Introduction

Peatlands Playgroup is situated in The Birches, a small village located approximately six miles from the town of Portadown. The 21 children attending the part-time session come from the village of The Birches and the surrounding rural area. The playroom is in a modular classroom and has a fenced and spacious outdoor area.

This follow-up inspection was carried out in June 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 December 2022.

In the interim, an assistant has been appointed to a permanent position within the staffing team and the leader has completed postgraduate study in special education needs, specifically autism.

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.

A small number of parents and all of the playgroup staff responded to the questionnaire. Their responses were wholly positive.

Key actions

During this period, the key actions which affect the work of the pre-school are set out below.

- A new framework to monitor and evaluate planning, observation and assessment has been developed and applied.
- All staff and the management committee have participated in a wide range of professional learning and development opportunities provided by the Independent Early Years Specialist (IEYS), allied health professionals, and the local Health and Social Care Trust.

Key findings

- The staff work collegially to take regular, focused and spontaneous observations of the children's progress in their learning. They use this information very effectively to personalise the planning and provide a tailored learning experience that meets the needs of all of the children.

- Weekly staff meetings are used purposefully to review the children's progress in their learning, share ideas and plan collaboratively.
- The quality of the medium- and short-term planning for indoor play has improved significantly. Through self-evaluation, the staff have identified appropriately the need to improve further the planning for outdoor play.
- The staff understand the importance of and are committed to their own professional development and learning. Consequently, they have extended their knowledge of a wider range of teaching strategies, such as communicating using pictures and sensory play activities, which the staff use well to support all of the children, including those with special educational needs.
- As a result of the improvement work undertaken by the staff, the children are enthusiastic about their learning, engage in purposeful and sustained play, and are making good progress from their individual starting points across most areas of the pre-school curriculum. The staff's proactive approach to self-evaluation has led to the appropriate identification of the Arts and World Around Us as areas of the curriculum that require further development to foster the children's language, exploration and creativity.
- The monthly support visits and professional learning provided by the IEYS has empowered the staff and management committee to have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and establish a shared vision for the playgroup.

Area for consideration:

- to develop further the intended learning, particularly within the outdoor play planning to promote the children's language, and investigative and imaginative play.

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.

Going Forward


Through active engagement in professional learning and development opportunities, the staff of Peatlands Playgroup have enhanced, through reflective and collaborative practice, their knowledge and skills which has led to improved learning experiences for all of the children. The staff and management committee have addressed well the areas for action identified at the time of the last inspection.

ETI will continue to monitor the progress of Peatlands Playgroup in addressing the area for consideration as laid out in this report. No further follow-up inspection is required.

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