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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*

**Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure**



Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection

of

Round Tower Community Playgroup Antrim

March 2015

SECOND FOLLOW-UP REPORT TO THE INSPECTION OF ROUND TOWER COMMUNITY PLAYGROUP, ANTRIM

The first follow-up inspection of Round Tower Community Playgroup in 2013, evaluated the provision overall as satisfactory. The inspection identified the need:

- to continue to develop the staff's understanding and implementation of the planning and assessment procedures;
- to develop further the children's programme for physical play both indoors and outdoors; and
- for leadership and management at all levels to ensure that the progress made since the last inspection is sustained and effectively built upon.

The Education and Training Inspectorate carried out interim follow-up visits in January and October 2014, and a second follow-up inspection on 4 March 2015.

During the follow-up inspection, the outdoor area was unavailable and the normal entrance area for parents was out of use due to building work.

The action plan received by the Department of Education (DE) following the inspection was of a good quality.

The following are the most important improvements that have taken place since the original inspection:

- the staff's interaction with the children is more consistently of a high quality to promote settled play and develop effectively the children's language and learning;
- the planned activities on the day of the visit were generally well matched to the children's needs promoting a good level of engagement from most of the children;
- the staff are developing a more collegial team approach to planning and assessment by meeting together weekly for professional discussion;
- the children have more regular opportunities for physical play throughout the session;
- the smaller group stories are more effective in promoting the children's concentration skills and language;
- the staff have benefited from participating in the Early Years Special Educational Needs Capacity Building pilot;
- an appropriate range of policies have been updated and shared with parents; and
- the independent early years specialist has continued to provide effective support appropriately focusing on improving the quality of the children's learning experiences.

During the period of the follow-up inspection process, there have been ongoing difficulties in establishing and maintaining effective leadership and management of the playgroup including an effective working management committee. Despite the staff receiving intensive and appropriate support from an independent early years specialist over a prolonged period of time, the rate of progress on improving key aspects of the provision including the planning and assessment and the leadership remains too slow. This needs to be urgently addressed.

Conclusion

Overall, the quality of education provided by this playgroup remains satisfactory. The second follow-up inspection has identified continuing areas for improvement in teaching and learning and leadership and management which need to be addressed if the playgroup is to meet the needs of all of the children.

The most important areas for improvement include the need to:

- plan for further progression in the children's learning experiences across the curriculum and, in particular, the physical play and outdoor learning;
- develop the skill and understanding of the leader and staff team in developing a systematic and effective approach to assessing the children's progress and matching this information to inform the planning process;
- develop effective links and good working relationships with the adjoining primary school; and
- identify and develop the necessary leadership skills of the leader and deputy leader and establish a robust management structure which is well informed and focused on effective strategic self-evaluation leading to the necessary improvements.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will carry out a further follow-up inspection within 12 months and a report will be published.

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