



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education

Department for the Economy

Department for Communities



Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection

**St Bernard's Playgroup
Belfast**

April 2016

FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF ST BERNARD'S PLAYGROUP, BELFAST (4AB-0381)

The original inspection carried out in May 2014 concluded that in most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this playgroup was satisfactory; the inspection identified the following key areas for improvement which needed to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively; ¹

- a minority of the staff interactions did not develop all of the learning opportunities well enough;
- the education programme had a narrow focus and needed to reflect more fully the pre-school curricular guidance;
- the staff needed to link the observations of the children's responses to their play more clearly to the future plans, identify clear strategies for individual children and ensure sufficient challenge and progression for all of the children; and
- there was a need to employ the services of an external early years specialist to support the new leader and staff to further develop their practice.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out two monitoring visits during 2014-15 with a follow-up inspection on the 13 April 2016.

The action plans received by the Department of Education following the inspection were of a good quality. The school development plan was adjusted appropriately in light of the inspection findings.

In the interval since the initial inspection, the following key actions which affect the work of the school have taken place:

- the staff have engaged in a wide range of appropriate training relating to the development of their interactions with the children and the pre-school curriculum;
- an early years specialist from the Early Years Organisation was employed to support the staff in the development of their practice;
- the enrolment in the playgroup increased and the group now offers two sessions and all of the children attending are in their pre-school year;
- additional staff have been employed for the afternoon session;
- an audit of resources was undertaken;
- more rigorous risk assessments were put in place;
- the staff introduced a wide range of methods to encourage the parents to become more fully engaged in their children's learning;
- the methods of planning were reviewed;

¹ <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/inspection-reports/inspection-reports-pre-school-centre-and-nursery-school/inspection-reports-pre-school-2014/inspection-report-st.bernard's-playgroup-belfast.pdf>

- a key–worker system was introduced; and
- the staff introduced a new method of observing and recording the children’s progress.

Key Findings

- The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and action to promote improvement is now very good. Since the original inspection, the leader, supported by the staff, has worked tirelessly to improve the quality of the overall provision and the outcomes for the children.
- Self-evaluation is now very well embedded into the staff’s practice; there is very good evidence of improvement through rigorous evaluation of the children’s learning.
- All of the children are very well settled and engage purposefully in all of the activities; as a result, the achievements and standards of nearly all of the children are of a very high quality. In particular, the children’s creativity, language, communication and early mathematical skills are of a very high standard.
- The planned curricular programme, through the provision of a wide range of interesting activities and resources, now provides an appropriately stimulating, challenging and progressive curriculum that reflects fully the pre-school curricular guidance.
- The methods of planning have been revised; the planning is detailed and provides very good guidance for the staff in their work with the children. The learning potential of all of the activities has been identified and useful prompts are displayed throughout the playroom.
- As a result of the high quality planning, the quality of the staff’s interactions with the children is now consistently of a very high standard; the staff are skilful in identifying and promoting the children’s learning through appropriate questioning and discussions about their learning. The quality of learning and teaching is now very good.
- The playgroup’s new early years specialist has provided useful support to the staff. The leader will now become the playgroup’s early years specialist as the management group acknowledge that she has demonstrated a high level of capacity to manage and develop the significant improvements evident in the playgroup’s work.

Overall effectiveness

St Bernard’s Playgroup has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.

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