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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
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Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



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Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of an Inspection

Ballykinlar Cross-Community Playgroup Downpatrick

Inspected: May 2007

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Ballykinlar Cross-Community Playgroup
Address:	The Playing Fields Marion Park Ballykinlar DOWNPATRICK Co Down BT30 8DJ
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	14 May 2007
Date of previous inspection:	24 April 2001

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	18	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	9	-
• funded by Department of Education	9	-
• qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	0	-
• with a statement of SEN*	0	-
• without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for SEN	1	-
• with English as an additional language	0	-
• who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	0	-
Attendance:		
• attendance** of funded children for the previous school year	88%	-

* Special Educational Needs

** Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	0	2
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	0	2
New appointments within previous 12 months	0	2

Number of: ***	
Students	3
Trainees	0

*** Total placements since September of current year

3. Details of Sessions

Duration of morning session	Duration of afternoon session	Number of days open in previous year
2¾ hours	-	188 days

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	9
Percentage returned:	33.3%
Number of written comments:	1

**BALLYKINLAR CROSS-COMMUNITY PLAYGROUP, DOWNPATRICK,
CO DOWN BT30 8DJ (4AB-0374)**

1. The playgroup has recently moved to a new purpose-built centre; the quality of the accommodation is excellent. There is a good range of resources to promote the children's learning. The staff and Board of Directors have had to devote much effort to fund-raising in order to acquire the new building and support the day-to-day running of the centre.

2. The parents, staff and Board of Directors were given opportunities to express their views about the centre through the inspection questionnaires. The responses received were taken into account as part of the inspection. The parents who completed the questionnaire were satisfied or very satisfied with all aspects of the centre's provision.

3. The centre implements appropriate procedures for child protection, in line with the relevant Department of Education Circulars, to safeguard the welfare of the children. The policy is shared with the parents. The leader has identified, appropriately, the need to update the child protection training for two members of staff and the Chairperson of the Board of Directors.

4. The centre demonstrates a strong commitment to promoting healthy eating habits and a healthy lifestyle among the children.

5. **The main strengths within the centre's educational and pastoral provision are as follows.**

- The centre has a very positive ethos based on good working relationships at all levels. The children are friendly and are at ease with the staff and turn to them confidently to meet their needs, to share in their play and for reassurance and support. The staff need to promote more purposeful activity for the few children who find it difficult to settle and ensure that appropriate time is given to meet the differing needs of both the pre-school children and those in their penultimate pre-school year.
- The staff have worked hard, in a short period of time, to create a bright and stimulating learning environment; examples of the children's paintings, photographs and topical displays arouse the children's curiosity and enhance the playroom.
- The daily timetable provides a good balance of free play and activities organised by the staff. The snack routine allows opportunities for the children to take responsibility and develop independence. Appropriate time is given to story-telling and physical play sessions which the children clearly enjoy.
- There are good learning opportunities in most areas of the pre-school curriculum; the promotion of the children's appreciation of the environment and language are particular strengths. During the inspection, the story-telling session and discussion with the children and use of rhymes helped to develop appropriately the children's language skills. The useful range of creative activities encourages the children to explore and experiment with art media and techniques in two-and-three dimensions.

- A significant strength of the centre is the good quality of the planning and assessment procedures. The staff monitor and evaluate regularly the children's play and record many of their achievements and needs. The information gained is shared with the parents and is used purposefully to plan the programme of activities. There is valuable co-operation with the parents and the health professionals.
- The staff report that valuable links have been established with the local primary school. Transition records are completed for all the primary schools to which the children transfer.

6. The centre is well organised and managed effectively. The leader brings a high level of skill and enthusiasm to her work and promotes a strong sense of team-work among the staff. They plan and evaluate the weekly programme together and both contribute to the effective operation of the centre. It is appropriate that the staff have identified the need to develop the provision of outdoor physical play as a consequence of acquiring an outdoor area in the new facility. The inspection findings concur with this. In addition, it would be opportune for the staff, with guidance from the early years specialist, to develop their approach to self-evaluation in relation to the outdoor physical play programme.

7. The inspection identified areas for improvement. The following is the most important area that needs attention:

- the development and organisation of the outdoor play provision.

8. The pre-school centre has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified minor areas for improvement which the pre-school centre has the capacity to address.

The pre-school centre's progress on the areas for improvement will be monitored by the District Inspector.

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