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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



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of an Inspection

**Gracehill/Galgorm Playgroup
Ballymena**

Inspected: October 2008

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Gracehill/Galgorm Playgroup
Address:	The Community Centre 3 Raphael Way Galgorm BALLYMENA Co Antrim BT42 1GQ
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	10 October 2008
Date of previous inspection:	2 December 2003

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	26	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	26	-
• funded by Department of Education (DE)	26	-
• qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	6	-
• with a statement of special educational needs	0	-
• without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	0	-
• 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	90%	-

* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	0	4
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	0	3
New appointments within previous 12 months	0	0

Number of: **	
Students	1
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
3 hours	N/A	188

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	25
Percentage returned:	84%
Number of written comments:	10

**GRACEHILL/GALGORM PLAYGROUP, BALLYMENA, CO ANTRIM, BT42 1GQ
(3AB-0111)**

1. The pre-school centre is situated in the Community Centre in Galgorm. The pre-school centre shares the accommodation with other community groups and the staff are required to set up and clear the playroom each day. The pre-school centre has access to a small enclosed outdoor play area which is well maintained by the local council.

2. The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents and the staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Most of the parents responded to the questionnaire and ten made additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaire indicated that almost all the parents regard the pre-school centre highly and appreciate that:

- staff are concerned for the well-being of the children;
- staff make time for the parents; and
- the pre-school centre is well thought of in the community.

The responses from the management group and the staff questionnaires were wholly positive and indicated a high level of satisfaction with the pre-school centre. All of the responses have been shared with the staff and management of the pre-school centre.

3. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the pre-school centre is very good. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place to ensure that the ethos is very positive and relationships at all levels are very good. The staff are very caring and supportive of the children and the parents; the children are settled, confident and happy, and their behaviour is very good.

4. The pre-school centre has very good, comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding the children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department.

5. The pre-school centre gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. The pre-school centre is involved in the “Boost Better Breaks” scheme, and parents receive regular information about the centre’s snack menus. There are regular opportunities for energetic physical play which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

6. The main strengths within the pre-school centre’s educational and pastoral provision are as follows:

- the staff work hard on a daily basis to create an attractive and stimulating learning environment for the children. Good use is made of the space, both indoors and outdoors, to provide a wide range of play activities and interest areas;
- the daily session is very well organised and provides a lengthy period of uninterrupted play, balanced with activities led by the staff. The routines and

transitions are well managed and the children have daily opportunities for stories, rhymes and songs;

- there are good opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum. Particular strengths are the promotion of the children's personal, social and emotional development, their physical development and their understanding of the world around them, including a good emphasis on early science and technology;
- the children respond very well to the activities provided for them. During the inspection, there were many instances of co-operative, purposeful play; the interactions of the staff help to motivate the children and encourage sustained interest and concentration;
- the staff have developed appropriate methods of planning the programme and assessing the children's development and achievement. This information is shared regularly with the parents and useful links have been established with the primary schools to which the children transfer; and
- the staff are very experienced and have shown a very high level of dedication and commitment to the development of the pre-school centre over many years.

7. The leader manages the pre-school centre very effectively. She is well organised and enthusiastic and is a very good role-model in her work with the children. The staff work very well as a team and have a good understanding of the pre-school curriculum. Roles and responsibilities are appropriately shared and the provision is regularly evaluated. The pre-school centre's early years specialist has made a very good contribution to the ongoing development of the pre-school centre and has worked with the staff to create a development plan which prioritises appropriate areas for review. The staff have recently identified physical play as a focus for self-evaluation and they have gathered valuable evidence of improvement in provision and practice in this area.

8. In the areas inspected the quality of education provided by this pre-school centre is very good. The pre-school centre is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

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