

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Kiddies Castle Early Years,
Magherafelt

Report of an Inspection
in March 2013



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

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



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In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school setting:	Kiddies Castle Early Years
Address:	Workplace Units 1-4 Parker Avenue Castledawson MAGHERAFELT Co Londonderry BT45 8AR
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	20 March 2013
Date of previous inspection:	24 January 2006

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school setting	24	23
in their immediate pre-school year	24	20
funded by Department of Education (DE)	24	20
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	3	3
with a statement of special educational needs	0	0
without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	5	*
with English as an additional language	0	*
who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	0	0
Attendance:		
attendance** of funded children for the previous school year	89.7%	

* Special Educational Needs = fewer than five

** Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	4	0
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification	4	0
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification		0
New appointments within previous 12 months	1	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
2½ hours	2½ hours	188

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	44
Percentage returned	36%
Number of written comments:	8

1. Introduction

Kiddies Castle Early Years is situated off the main street in Castledawson. The majority of the children come from the village and some travel from a wider catchment area. The setting operates in a converted building, which has recently undergone a programme of refurbishment. There is a morning and an afternoon part-time session; the same staff team works in both, including one new member of staff who was appointed this year.

2. Inspection methods and evidence base

The inspection evaluations are based on evidence gained from in-class observations and from a range of documentation provided by the playgroup.

The views of the parents and staff were sought through a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Out of 44 questionnaires issued to the parents, 36% were returned and 8 contained additional written comments. All of the responses indicated very high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the work of the playgroup. Amongst the strengths highlighted in the parents' written comments were the warm, caring and conscientious staff and the wide range of positive learning experiences provided for the children. All of the questionnaires issued to the staff and members of the management committee were returned. These also contained highly affirmative comments about the playgroup's provision.

3. Overall finding of the inspection

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this playgroup is outstanding; the quality of the pastoral care is also outstanding. The playgroup has demonstrated the capacity for sustained self-improvement.

Summary of key findings

Children's Achievements Quality of Provision Leadership and management	Outstanding Outstanding Outstanding
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KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

4. Children's achievements

The quality of the children's achievements is outstanding.

- During the inspection, all of the children settled quickly into their play activities and showed a highly positive disposition to all aspects of their learning. Their behaviour is excellent; they are friendly and co-operate well with the other children and the adults.

- All of the children are at ease in the playroom and move freely around the various play areas. They make a wide range of decisions confidently, persevere well in their chosen activities and respond positively to their regular routines; these aspects of the children's learning, guided by the skilful ways in which the adults focus on extending their independence, thinking and developing language are key strengths of their planned programme. Overall, the children take high levels of responsibility for their age and the stage of the year.
- Almost all of the children are making excellent progress in their development in relation to the time of year across all aspects of the pre-school curriculum. They express their thoughts and feelings and ask questions in articulate ways, and pay close attention during planned and incidental story sessions and learning conversations with the adults. The children explore and engage well with a wide range of man-made and natural materials, including the plants and herbs they are growing and using in their play; they show curiosity and good knowledge about their environment and living things.
- The children engage very well in, and enjoy, regular, high quality physical activities which include energetic action songs and planned sessions to build their physical skills progression. During the inspection, they used a very good range of mathematical vocabulary in the context of their physical activities and showed very good understanding of number, shape, space and measure concepts. Almost all of the children express their creative ideas skilfully using a wide range of well thought through materials, tools and equipment which develop well their manipulative skills in line with their stages of development.

5. Provision for learning

The quality of the provision for learning is outstanding.

- The adults have planned and resourced purposefully the rich and stimulating playroom; this enabling environment contributes highly to building the children's independence and enjoyment of learning. All of the staff's interactions with the children are consistently of a high standard; their carefully considered use of language is a key strength of the playgroup's provision.
- The children are provided with a wide and appealing range of high quality printed materials, books and writing resources in all of the play areas: as a consequence, the children are very interested in browsing stories and non-fiction books and a majority are making very good progress in their early mark-making and writing skills.
- The broad and balanced programme for learning takes very good account of the children's individual needs and stages of development. The staff respond flexibly and creatively in adjusting the programme to build further upon the children's interests and incidental opportunities to extend the learning.
- The adults know the children very well and observe, record and assess carefully each child's progress to inform the future planning. It is timely that the staff are currently reviewing the written planning so that all aspects of the children's progression in the pre-school curriculum are more clearly outlined.

- The quality of the pastoral care is outstanding. Among the strengths are the warm, inclusive and calm ethos; the excellent relationships at all levels; the happy, confident and highly motivated children and the very positive ways in which the adults engage with the children in their play.
- The playgroup gives outstanding attention to developing the children's early understanding of healthy lifestyles; the children are provided with healthy snacks and an excellent range of regular physical activities.

6. Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management is outstanding.

- The leaders provide very effective leadership and management in all aspects of the playgroup's provision. Together with the rest of the staff team and the management committee, they are fully committed to providing a high quality pre-school education for all the children and bringing about the excellent standards they achieve.
- The process of self-evaluation is developing well in the playgroup. The development plan outlines appropriate priorities for future improvements. It will be important for the staff to monitor more systematically the impact of the improvement actions on the standards the children attain and the overall quality of the provision.
- The staff are supported well in their work by an independent early years specialist. She makes regular visits and provides helpful ongoing guidance in relation to various aspects of the playgroup's provision that is used effectively by the leaders to inform improvement planning.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the playgroup has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department.

CONCLUSION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this playgroup is outstanding; the quality of the pastoral care is also outstanding. The playgroup has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

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