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CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

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**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

**Killean Playgroup
Newry**

Inspected: May 2008

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Killean Playgroup
Address:	2 Kelly's Road NEWRY Co Down BT35 8RT
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	7 May 2008
Date of previous inspection:	N/A

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	24	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	15	-
• funded by Department of Education (DE)	15	-
• qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	0	-
• with a statement of special educational needs	0	-
• without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	1	-
• with English as an additional language	0	-
• who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	5	-
Attendance:		
• attendance* of funded children for the previous school year	87%	-

* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

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

Number of: **	
Students	2
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:	22
Percentage returned:	64%
Number of written comments:	6

KILLEAN PLAYGROUP, NEWRY, CO DOWN, BT35 8RT (5AB-0541)

1. Killean Playgroup is situated six miles south of Newry. The pre-school centre is accommodated in new purpose-built premises. The children come from the surrounding area. During this year, five children have transferred from the pre-school centre to a reception class in a local primary school.

2. The parents, staff and management group were given opportunities to express their views about the pre-school centre through the inspection questionnaires. A majority of parents responded to the questionnaire and almost all indicated a high level of satisfaction with the overall provision of the pre-school centre. The written responses from the parental questionnaire highlighted the friendly and caring staff and the safe and stimulating environment. The responses from the management group and the staff were positive about the overall provision of the pre-school centre.

3. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection is very good. The pre-school centre has appropriate policies and procedures for child protection. The inspection evidence indicates that the staff implement these policies and procedures effectively and consistently to safeguard the children. Among the strengths are the caring and friendly atmosphere which promotes the children's confidence and self-esteem and the climate of mutual respect.

4. The pre-school centre gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, and has effective policies and programmes in place to encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

5. There is a happy and relaxed atmosphere within the playroom. The children's behaviour is excellent and they settle to purposeful, concentrated periods of play. Relationships at all levels are excellent and the staff are responsive to the needs of the children.

6. The staff have worked hard to provide a bright and stimulating learning environment. The spacious playroom has been organised to accommodate a range of play activities and areas of interest which encourage the children to observe, explore and investigate. The children's individual art work is prominently displayed and imaginatively annotated. Resources are appropriately stored, labelled and easily accessible to the children.

7. The daily timetable is organised so that there is an appropriate balance between freely chosen play and adult directed activities. Transitions between activities are smooth and effective use is made of all the time available to promote positive learning experiences for the children. Snack time is unobtrusive and encourages the children to develop independence and acquire social skills. There are daily opportunities for outdoor play and the use of natural resources has greatly enhanced the learning experiences for the children. The staff have appropriately identified the need to develop further the outdoor provision in order to extend and enhance opportunities for energetic play.

8. The staff interact with children in a purposeful, skilful and sensitive way. In particular they promote effectively the children's oral language, listening, observational and social skills and their emotional well-being. The staff engage children in discussion and extend their learning and language through the use of open-ended questions.

9. The staff have made a good start to developing the written planning. It identifies clearly the relevant themes and topics and provides a broad and balanced programme for the children, with evidence of progression in all areas. Regular assessment of the children's development is used to inform future planning and the staff have begun to take account of the children's individual interests and abilities and to appropriately evaluate the programme.

10. The centre's educational programme offers good opportunities across the pre-school curriculum. During the inspection the children demonstrated high levels of enjoyment, motivation and independence. The points which follow illustrate specific aspects of the programme:

- Careful attention is given to promoting the children's personal, social and emotional development. The children are encouraged to make independent choices, take turns and share. The staff use effective strategies to encourage the children's co-operation and sense of responsibility for their environment.
- The staff provide the children with a range of stimulating, creative activities. There is a wide selection of imaginative resources which are clearly labelled and easily accessible to the children. Outdoors there are opportunities for creativity using natural resources. During the inspection the children became involved in spontaneous singing and dancing activities in response to their individual interests.
- The staff develop the children's language and communication skills through discussion, stories, rhymes and puppetry. The quiet room is an inviting area where children have access to a range of story and topic-related books. The children pay close attention during story sessions and explore a range of books during their play. There are good opportunities within activities to experiment with mark-making and to develop appropriate writing skills.
- The activities offered to the children provide suitable opportunities for the development of mathematical language and concepts. In particular staff interactions promote an interest in one-to-one correspondence, counting, matching and making comparisons. The staff need to exploit further these opportunities as they develop the programme throughout the year.
- Early scientific ideas are developed effectively through a range of activities, relevant resources and stimulating displays; for example, the nature corner has seedlings growing in a variety of conditions along with living plants, fish and natural materials which arouse interest and curiosity. The use of authentic resources in the 'house corner', for example real fruit and vegetables, encourages the development of the children's senses and their identification skills.

11. The staff operate a key worker system to observe and record the children's responses to play. These observations are appropriately linked to the planned programme in order to support the learning needs of individual children. The staff have developed detailed child profiles; this information is shared with the primary school to which they transfer.

12. The staff provide valuable support for those children identified with special educational needs. There are detailed records of planned intervention and progress. Close links with parents and other professional bodies have been established. The staff recognise the need to continue their professional development through training in special education needs provision.

13. Communication with parents has been effectively established. There are daily opportunities for informal progress updates and parents are invited into the centre on two occasions throughout the year to discuss their child's progress. Appropriate information on the curriculum is shared with parents; an informative monthly bulletin is designed to encourage them to play a full role in the education of their children. Close links have been established with the local primary schools, neighbouring pre-school centres, local businesses and other external agencies.

14. The staff have worked hard to develop the new premises and there is a strong sense of team-spirit. The leader and staff are motivated and committed to the future of the playgroup. The staff, supported by the early years specialist (EYS), have made a good start to self-evaluation. They have identified appropriate priorities for further improvement in detailed action plans, including staff training needs. The staff should now draw up a structured development plan to promote further provision and practice. The EYS has made a very good contribution to the overall development of the provision in the pre-school centre. The support is well focused and matches effectively the needs of the pre-school centre.

The strengths of the pre-school centre's educational and pastoral provision include:

- the very positive ethos which helps promote the children's independence, confidence, self-esteem and excellent behaviour and the stimulating and welcoming learning environment;
- the instances of staff interaction which extend the children's language and thinking;
- the very good learning opportunities provided across all the pre-school curriculum areas;
- the progress made in developing appropriate planning and assessment methods;
- the committed and dedicated leader and deputy leader and hard-working staff who are fully committed to the development and welfare of the children and pre-school centre; and
- the very good links established with the parents and the wider community.

16. The quality of education provided in this pre-school centre is very good. The educational and pastoral needs of the children are being well met. The parents can have confidence in the pre-school centre's capacity for sustained self-improvement.

No follow-up inspection is required.

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