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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
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CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

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

Little Starfish Playgroup Ballywalter

Inspected: February 2008

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Little Starfish Playgroup
Address:	Ballywalter Village Hall 49-51 Main Street Ballywalter NEWTOWNARDS Co Down BT22 2PQ
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	21 February 2008
Date of previous inspection:	3 December 2002

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	26	10
• in their immediate pre-school year	25	-
• funded by Department of Education	23	-
• 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	2	-
• 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	87.2%	-

* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	3	2
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	2	0
New appointments within previous 12 months	0	2

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
2½ hours	2 hours	187

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	26
Percentage returned:	50%
Number of written comments:	7

**LITTLE STARFISH PLAYGROUP, BALLYWALTER, NEWTOWNARDS,
CO DOWN, BT22 2PQ (4AB-0432)**

1. The centre is situated in the new village hall in Ballywalter. Since the last inspection there have been several staffing changes and the playgroup has moved to the current location.

2. The parents, staff and management group were given opportunities to express their views about the centre through the inspection questionnaires. The responses have been taken into account as part of the inspection. A few parents included written comments praising the staff and work of the centre; the few issues raised have been shared with the staff.

3. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection has important strengths. The centre has some appropriate policies and procedures for child protection. The staff need to ensure that they are aware of all the procedures to deal appropriately with child protection matters.

4. The centre's programme for the promotion of health and well-being has important strengths, with attention paid to the development and implementation of healthy eating, which includes the promotion of a healthy break. There is a developing commitment to encourage the children to eat healthily. The areas for improvement identified include the need to develop the programme for energetic physical play in order to promote more fully the children's well-being.

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

- The staff create a friendly, caring atmosphere and have good working relationships with the children, the parents, management group and wider community.
- The staff make good efforts to identify and meet the needs of those children who require additional support with aspects of their learning.
- There is a developing sense of team-spirit among the hard-working staff who have to set up and clear the playroom almost every day. They co-operate effectively in the day-to-day running of the centre and display commitment to it and to the children.

6. The inspection identified areas for improvement. The following are the most important areas that need attention.

- The staff need to develop further the planning and assessment methods to meet the needs of all of the children, in order to identify the learning to be promoted and to guide the staff more effectively in their day-to-day work with the children and to ensure that their experiences progress steadily over the year.
- The staff need to ensure that the quality of their interaction with the children is consistently of a high standard.

- The staff should review the organisation of the latter part of the day in order to ensure that all the time is used effectively to promote learning.

7. The staff are at an early stage of developing methods of self-evaluation. The early years specialist has made a very good contribution to the overall development of the provision in this pre-school centre. The support provided is well focused, in particular the appropriate areas identified for improvement.

8. The pre-school centre has strengths in many aspects of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified a few areas for improvement in important areas which need to be addressed to meet effectively the needs of all the children.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the pre-school centre's progress in addressing these areas for improvement.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- During the inspection, the children used a communal bowl to wash their hands throughout the session. The staff need to review this practice in the best interest of the children's health and well-being.

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