

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Peatlands Playgroup,
Portadown

Report of an Inspection
in April 2010

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Peatlands Playgroup
Address:	c/o Birches Primary School 14 Clonmakate Road Birches PORTADOWN Co Armagh BT62 1LR
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	28 April 2010
Date of previous inspection:	11 June 2002

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	20	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	20	-
• funded by Department of Education (DE)	20	-
• 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	4	-
Attendance:		
• attendance* of funded children for the previous school year	90.5%	-

* 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	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
3 hours	-	187

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	20
Percentage returned:	50%
Number of written comments:	2

PEATLANDS PLAYGROUP, PORTADOWN, CO ARMAGH, BT62 1LR (5BB-0396)

1. Peatlands Playgroup is currently located in a classroom within the Birches Primary School. The children come mainly from the surrounding area. Since the last inspection a new leader has been appointed; she took up her position in February 2010.

2. In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this pre-school centre is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in standards, learning and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively. The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) will monitor and report on the pre-school centre's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENTS

3. Almost all of the children demonstrate high levels of independence and autonomy in their decision-making and use of materials. Most of the children are very well settled and engage in lengthy periods of sustained and concentrated play across a wide range of activities. A minority of the children, however, are less settled and their play, at times, is less purposeful and productive. There are good opportunities provided for the children to develop their language, creative and physical skills. The children handle equipment and resources with confidence and happily explore and investigate the different play areas available to them.

4. The children's language and communication skills are generally well developed. Although the staff are caring and supportive in their interactions with the children, and regularly engage them in valuable discussion about their play and experiences, there were a few occasions during the inspection when opportunities were missed to promote the children's learning further. There are daily opportunities provided for independent and group story sessions which the children clearly enjoy; nearly all of the children listen attentively to the stories and join in at appropriate times.

THE PROVISION FOR LEARNING

5. The staff have made good efforts to create a welcoming and inviting learning environment in the limited space available. Good use is made of the children's art work and displays to enhance the environment. Aspects of the daily timetable, in particular the snack time and the end of the session, need to be reviewed to ensure that all the time is used more effectively to promote learning and that the differing needs of all the children are met. There are good working relationships with the parents; however, the staff need to provide more formal opportunities to discuss, with the parents, the children's progress throughout the year.

6. The staff operate a key-worker system to monitor and record the children's development; good use is made of photographic evidence to support ongoing assessment of the children's progress. The staff are currently reviewing the written format for planning the pre-school programme; greater emphasis needs to be given to the learning to be promoted in the planned activities in order to guide the staff more effectively in their work with the children.

7. The provision for pastoral care within the pre-school centre is satisfactory. While the staff are caring and attentive to the needs of all of the children, they need to implement more effective behaviour management strategies for those children who engage at times in less purposeful play.

8. The pre-school has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Departments. The staff need to ensure that the procedures for the intimate care of the children are documented clearly and shared with the parents.

9. The pre-school gives good attention to promoting healthy eating, for example, through the provision of a daily healthy snack. There are regular opportunities to promote the children's physical development and the pre-school has access to facilities and resources within the primary school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

10. At the time of the inspection the pre-school leader had been in post for approximately three months. During this time she has worked hard to promote a strong team-spirit among the committed staff and has focused appropriately on getting to know the children and their parents. Both the early years specialists (EYS) involved with the centre have supported the staff well in bringing about improvements in the quality of the provision.

11. The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents, the management committee and the staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Ten of the parents responded to the questionnaire and two made additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaire were generally very positive about the provision and indicated that the parents appreciate the caring, friendly staff and the progress their children are making in their learning and development. A few indicated that they would like more regular information about their child's progress and how to become more actively involved in the pre-school centre and their child's education. The responses from the staff questionnaires and the management questionnaires were also generally positive. A summary of all of the responses has been shared with the staff and management of the pre-school centre.

12. The key strengths in this pre-school centre include:

- the good efforts made by the staff to create a welcoming and attractive learning environment for the children;
- the concentrated, sustained and collaborative play of the majority of the children;
- the varied programme on offer and the good opportunities to promote, in particular, the children's creative skills and their awareness of the world around them; and
- under the management of the recently appointed leader, the developing team-spirit and the commitment of the staff to bring about improvement in the quality of the provision.

13. The priorities identified for improvement are the need to:

- provide more challenging and productive activities for the children who engage in less purposeful and productive play;
- develop further the written planning and focus more on the learning to be promoted in the activities in order to guide the staff in their work with the children; and

- review aspects of the daily timetable to ensure that all the time is used more effectively to promote learning and that the differing needs of all the children are met.

14. In most of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided in this pre-school centre is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in standards, learning and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively. The Inspectorate will monitor and report on the pre-school centre's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- The space available to the children during the outdoor physical play session needs to be reviewed in order to ensure safe play and adequate supervision at all times.

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