

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Sleepy Hollow Playgroup,
Dundonald, Belfast

Report of an Inspection
in April 2010

eti

*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*

Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Sleepy Hollow Playgroup
Address:	c/o Dundonald Primary School 10 Church Green Dundonald BELFAST BT16 2LP
Management Type:	Private

Date of inspection:	29 April 2010
Date of previous inspection:	N/A

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	16	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	13	-
• funded by Department of Education (DE)	10	-
• qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	2	-
• 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	6	-
• 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	N/A	-

* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	0	3
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	0	2
New appointments within previous 12 months	0	1

Number of: **	
Students	0
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	-	N/A

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	16
Percentage returned:	37.5%
Number of written comments:	1

SLEEPY HOLLOW PLAYGROUP, DUNDONALD, BELFAST, BT16 2LP (4BA-0555)

1. Sleepy Hollow Playgroup is accommodated in a unit within the grounds of Dundonald Primary School; the centre is a privately operated pre-school centre. The inspection is part of a programme to ensure that appropriate standards of education are provided in centre's receiving funding as part of the Government's expansion of pre-school education. Since joining the programme in 2008 there have been a number of changes in staffing, including the appointment of the current leader. There have also been several changes of early years specialists (EYS) providing support to the staff. The current leader was employed, and took up post, in January 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 and learning and teaching and leadership 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. The children are generally well settled. Most demonstrate confidence and can independently choose their activities. Many of the children engage in purposeful play and sustain good levels of concentration. Most of the children co-operate readily with the staff, who provide appropriate support for the small number who have difficulty sharing and taking turns.

4. During the inspection, there were occasions when the children browsed in the book area and made use of reference books during their play. The staff often engage the children in useful discussions about their play; they ask open-ended questions extending the children's language and learning, and often provide the children with new vocabulary and ideas. The staff are particularly skilful at introducing mathematical and positional language naturally through play. The provision of paper and writing tools generates the children's interest in experimental writing.

PROVISION FOR LEARNING

5. The staff are hard-working and committed to providing quality educational experiences for the children. They have made good efforts to create an inviting and colourful learning environment: good use is made of the children's own art work, photographs and posters to enhance the learning environment. During the inspection, a member of staff used some of the photographs displayed to encourage effectively a child to recall past experiences. The daily timetable is well-organised to provide a good balance of free play and activities organised by the staff. The daily snack, and other necessary routines, are organised well, and provide opportunities to develop the children's mathematical language, independence, social and conversational skills.

6. Useful informal links have been established through the contact with the parents at the beginning and end of the session. The new leader has identified appropriately that the links with parents now need to be strengthened to include a more systematic approach to sharing information about their children's progress and information about the centre's programme, and to encourage the parents to become more involved in their child's education.

7. The centre's curriculum offers satisfactory opportunities for learning in all the areas of the pre-school curriculum. Particular strengths of the programme are the promotion of the children's personal, social and emotional development, and the good opportunities for the children to develop early mathematical ideas.

8. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the pre-school centre is good. There are very good working relationships between the staff and the children. The staff treat the children with care and respect, and provide a secure, supportive environment which is helping the children to grow in confidence, independence and in consideration for the needs and wishes of others.

9. The centre has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department but the following area needs to be addressed:

- the centre needs to ensure that parents are provided with information relating to child protection matters.

10. The pre-school gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity; for example, as part of the snack routine, the children are encouraged to try a range 'healthy' foods; they also have regular opportunities to engage in physical activity.

11. A useful start has been made to planning the educational programme. The planning outlines an interesting range of activities and experiences for the children throughout the year. The leader regularly plans the educational programme. There is a need, however, for the staff to plan the programme collaboratively in order to identify clearly the learning inherent in the activities, to use the information gained through the children's observations of take account of the children's differing needs, and to outline progression in the use of resources throughout the year.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

12. The newly appointed leader manages the centre efficiently; she brings a high level of skill and commitment to her work, and has an appropriate vision for the future development of the centre. She displays a high level of enthusiasm and promotes a strong sense of teamwork.

13. The pre-school centre has a development plan with some appropriate targets for improvement. The proprietors of the centre need to ensure that adequate resources are available to allow the staff to plan a progressively challenging programme throughout the year. The staff are aware of the need to develop further their methods of self-evaluation.

14. Since joining the programme, two years ago, the centre has had a number of EYSSs offering support. Another temporary EYS has been appointed to the group; the staff value her support and recently and she has helped the staff to develop important aspects of their work. However, it is important, that the pre-school staff are provided with more regular, consistent and targeted support if the necessary improvements required within the pre-school centre are to be met effectively. The staff, EYS and proprietors now need to work closely together to build on the recent improvements and continue to raise standards.

15. The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents, the staff and the management team to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Six of the parents responded to the questionnaire and one made additional written comments. The majority of the parents

indicated that they are satisfied with almost all aspects of the centre's provision; a minority of the parents indicated that they would welcome more information about the centre's educational programme, their children's progress and child protection matters. One staff questionnaire was received and was generally positive; no response was received from the management group. The analyses of the questionnaires and all of the responses have been shared with the staff and management of the pre-school centre.

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

- welcoming atmosphere and the care and respect shown to the children by the staff;
- organisation of the daily timetable which provides a lengthy period of free play;
- purposeful and productive play when the children sustain good levels of concentration in their play;
- many instances of good interaction between the staff and the children;
- satisfactory opportunities for learning in all areas of the preschool curriculum; and
- effective leader and the team spirit among the hard-working and dedicated staff.

17. The priorities identified for improvement are:

- the further development of the planning and assessment methods to ensure that the learning inherent in the activities is identified and that the children's differing needs are met;
- the range and quality of the resources to ensure that the activities are progressively challenging throughout the year; and
- more regular, consistent and targeted support by the centre's early years specialist.

18. 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 and learning, teaching and leadership 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.

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