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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
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Providing Inspection Services for
**Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure**



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Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of an Inspection

**St Finian's Pre-School
Newtownards**

Inspected: February 2009

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	St Finian's Pre-School
Address:	St Finian's Primary School Ann Street NEWTOWNARDS Co Down BT23 7AD
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	19 February 2009
Date of previous inspection:	14 May 2003

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	29	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	21	-
• funded by Department of Education (DE)	21	-
• qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	1	-
• with a statement of special educational needs	0	-
• without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	0	-
• with English as an additional language	1	-
• 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	82%	-

* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	0	4
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	0	4
New appointments within previous 12 months	0	0

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
3 hours	N/A	188

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	29
Percentage returned:	44.8%
Number of written comments:	8

ST FINIAN'S PRE-SCHOOL, NEWTOWNARDS, CO DOWN, BT23 7AD (4BB-0469)

1. The pre-school centre is situated in St. Finian's Primary School. Since the last inspection the leader has remained in post. The children attending the centre come from the local area.

2. The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents, the management group and the staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Most of the parents responded to the questionnaire and eight made additional written comments. The responses from the parents indicate high levels of satisfaction with the quality of the provision and they appreciate:

- the supportive and encouraging staff;
- the good liaison with the primary school; and
- the varied and interesting curriculum.

The responses from the management group and the staff were also very positive and supportive of the work of the centre. All of the responses have been taken into account as part of the inspection and were shared with the staff and management group.

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is very good. The staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the welfare of the children. The working relationships at all levels are good and there are close links with the parents.

3. The centre has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding the children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department, but the following minor areas need to be addressed:

- to ensure all procedures are appropriately updated, fully understood by the staff and shared with the parents; and
- to ensure that the policy is shared with, and ratified by, the management group.

4. The centre gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, which encourage the children to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

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

- the centre has a very positive ethos based on good working relationships at all levels. The staff are caring and supportive and display respect for the children's ideas and foster their self-esteem;
- the environment is stimulating and well-organised; good use is made of the children's art work, posters, and interest areas to create colourful displays around the playroom;

- the thoughtful organisation of the daily timetable allows the day to flow smoothly and provides a balance of free play and activities organised by the staff. The necessary routines are managed unobtrusively and used effectively to promote learning;
- the staff are supportive and clearly enjoy participating with the children in their play. They frequently engage the children in discussion and they regularly praise and encourage the children's efforts. During the inspection, the staff's interactions were consistently of a high standard;
- the centre's programme provides good opportunities for the promotion of the children's personal, social and emotional development, early language and mathematical skills and satisfactory opportunities for learning in all other areas of the pre-school programme; and
- during the inspection, there were many instances of concentrated play when the children showed interest in their chosen activities; there is evidence that most of the children are making steady progress in their learning.

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

- The early years specialist (EYS) needs to work more effectively with the staff and the management committee to plan their priorities for action and improvement over the next few years, and to use the process of development planning to monitor and evaluate the centre's provision, and the outcomes for the children.

7. The staff have not yet started to develop methods of self-evaluation. The contribution made by the centre's EYS has a few strengths in developing the centre's work. The centre's EYS needs to provide better support and guidance for the staff to ensure there is a continual focus on the improvement of practice.

8. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the pre-school centre is good. The centre has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the organisation has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the pre-school centre's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

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