

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St John's Pre-School
Playgroup, Belfast

Report of an Inspection
in January 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:	St John's Pre-school Playgroup
Address:	464 Falls Road BELFAST Co Antrim BT12 6EN
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	13 January 2010
Date of previous inspection:	13 October 2003

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	26	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	15	-
• funded by Department of Education (DE)	15	-
• 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	4	-
• with English as an additional language	3	-
• 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	84%	-

* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	3	1
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	3	0
New appointments within previous 12 months	4	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
3¾ hours	-	188

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	15
Percentage returned:	13.5%
Number of written comments:	1

ST JOHN'S PRE-SCHOOL PLAYGROUP, BELFAST, BT12 6EN (1AB-0003)

1. St John's Pre-school Playgroup is accommodated in a community building situated beside St Kevin's Primary School on the Falls Road. A significant number of the children are aged three years or under. Since the last inspection a new assistant has been appointed; another assistant has been acting as leader for a number of months. There have also been several changes of early years specialists (EYS) providing support.

2. The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents and the staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. The limited number of responses from the parents, management group and the staff were all positive. All of the responses have been shared with the staff and management of the pre-school centre.

3. The provision for pastoral care within the playgroup is good.

4. The playgroup has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department. The staff need to ensure that arrangements for toileting the children are reflected more clearly in the policies.

5. The playgroup gives good attention to promoting healthy eating, for example, fruit is provided on a daily basis. There are regular opportunities provided for physical activity.

6. The majority of the children make independent choices, are settled and appear happy. A few children were observed settling to sustained periods of concentrated play. Small groups of more mature children are beginning to engage in collaborative and imaginative play, particularly where stimulating resources are provided, while a significant number of children engage in solitary or parallel play. The different types of play observed reflect the very wide range in the stages of development which is represented within this group of children.

7. The staff are aware that many of the children require further support to develop their language and communication skills; they have, therefore, developed good links with the local SureStart speech and language therapist who is helping to provide support for a number of children both within the centre and in the children's own homes. The staff need to build on the best examples observed during the inspection visit and become consistently more involved in extended discussions with the children during all the activities.

8. The staff have worked hard in recent months to develop an attractive learning environment. This should be enhanced further with a wider range of natural materials, authentic items and books. The daily timetable includes a good period of extended play and provides opportunities for story and physical group sessions. Daily routines do not, as yet, support fully the differing needs of the children. The staff also need to plan and manage the physical play sessions more effectively to promote greater choice, exploration and energetic activity for all of the children.

9. The staff are making progress in planning and evaluating a broad pre-school programme and in assessing the children's progress. They are aware of those children who require adult support to improve their play sessions, develop their language, communication and social skills. Children who require additional support have been identified and the staff are making good efforts to liaise with relevant agencies. The staff need to continue to develop their skill in matching the pre-school programme to the needs of all the children and ensure there is sufficient challenge and progression for all the children.

10. The high turnover of staff, management committee and EYS support in recent years has impacted negatively on the steady and continuous development of the pre-school centre. The current acting leader and her recently appointed team are well motivated. They have worked very hard in recent months to bring about necessary and appropriate improvements. The new EYS has provided very good support and guidance which is valued by the staff. The staff, EYS and management committee need to continue to work closely together to build on this initial work and continue to raise standards.

11. The key strengths in this playgroup include:

- the generally contented and settled children;
- the improvements made to the learning environment in recent months;
- the good links being developed with other agencies; and
- the hard-working and committed staff and their developing team approach.

12. The priorities identified for further development include the need to:

- develop the quality of the staff interaction to promote language and learning; and
- ensure that the pre-school programme is more closely matched to meet the needs of the wide range of children within the group.

13. In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this playgroup is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in the children's achievements, learning and teaching, 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 will monitor and report on the playgroup's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

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