

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Ballycarry Playgroup,
County Antrim

Voluntary playgroup

Report of an Inspection in
November 2017



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments

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1. Context

Ballycarry Playgroup is accommodated in a church hall on the main street of Ballycarry village. The playgroup has been through a significant period of change during the previous year. A new leader took up post in June 2017 and a new staff member took up post in September 2017. A small number of younger fee-paying children attend the pre-school session. There is no registered outdoor play space available. The staff have to set out and put away the equipment on a daily basis and there are restrictions on important aspects of play such as the use of sand in the hall.

Number of children:	Class 1
Attending part-time	17
Under 3 years of age	0
Funded by Department of Education	11
With statement of special educational needs	0

Average percentage attendance for the previous year.	N/A
Number of days open in previous school year	N/A

Source: data provided by the setting.

* On 1 July.

** The stages refer to those set out in the Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs.

N/A not available

2. Views of parents and staff

The 10 responses from the parental questionnaires were positive about most aspects of the pre-school provision. The parents report that the children enjoy attending the pre-school, that they receive helpful information about activities and that the staff are caring and child focused in their approach. A small number of responses indicated less satisfaction with information about how to help their child's learning at home and referred to a lack of sufficient funding and external support. The staff questionnaires were positive about the work of the pre-school and also identified the need for further development in the role of the new leader, staff team and new committee.

3. Focus of the inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all learners, the inspection linked internal and external approaches to evaluate the:

- outcomes for the children;
- quality of provision for learning; and
- leadership and management.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Address urgently the significant areas for improvement
Outcomes for learners	Requires significant improvement
Quality of provision	Requires urgent improvement
Leadership and management	Requires urgent improvement

5. Outcomes for learners

- The children are not making sufficient progress in their learning across all aspects of the pre-school curriculum.
- The children's ability to make independent choices, concentrate, sustain and develop their play is not progressing well enough. The children appear happy and are generally well settled, they co-operate well with the snack and tidy up routines with adult support. There is limited collaborative play among the children and at times the noise level is too high.
- The children's language and listening skills are not developed sufficiently. A majority of the children have difficulty settling and responding in the large group session, their communication to staff and one another as they play is too limited. Most of the children engage well with the greeting song on arrival, label their own work and on a few occasions enjoy and respond to informal stories through the session. A small number of the pre-school children collaborate and communicate well together for short periods.
- The children enjoy making marks using the paint and easel, are beginning to explore simple collage work and manipulate the dough using the tools available. A small number of children make early representations of people and objects in their paintings and drawings and persevere to make models using the small construction materials.
- There is limited evidence of children developing their curiosity, exploring, observing, investigating or discussing natural materials.

6. Quality of provision

- The staff do not have a shared understanding of how to plan and implement effectively a high quality pre-school curriculum that meets the needs and interest of all of the children. They require further guidance and support to develop their skills in effective planning and assessment methods.
- The quality of the staff interaction is not of a consistently high enough quality to promote effectively the children's learning. The staff welcome the children warmly, are caring and respectful to them and in the best practice introduce key vocabulary, model the use of equipment and support well the children to follow the daily routines. In the less effective majority of the practice there is: an over emphasis on adult direction; insufficient awareness of the children who are not productively engaged; and missed opportunities to promote language and learning throughout the session.
- The learning environment is set up attractively on a daily basis by the staff and enhanced with information for parents and displays of the children's own work. The resources and layout require further improvement to sustain the children's interest and promote the children's learning.

- The staff have identified the need to update their policy and access further training and support in how to identify, plan and meet the needs of children with additional needs.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the pre-school's approach to care and welfare does not impact positively enough on the learning and teaching, and outcomes in promoting the children's personal and social development.

7. Leadership and management

- The leadership and management of the playgroup is not effective enough in working collaboratively to plan, implement and evaluate high quality pre-school education. The leader, staff, early years specialist and management committee need to work together to bring about the necessary improvements.
- The new leader, staff team and committee have been in post for a short period of time and the early year's specialist support is in a period of transition while responsibility transfers to new personnel.

8. Safeguarding

Based on the evidence at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding children in Ballycarry Playgroup reflect broadly the guidance from the relevant Departments. However:

- the designated committee member needs to complete their child protection training on the date identified;
- the risk assessment needs to be updated to be fit for purpose ; and
- the policies need to be reviewed, understood and agreed by the whole staff team.

9. Overall effectiveness

Ballycarry Playgroup needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all learners. It requires external support to do so. ETI will monitor and report on the playgroups progress in addressing the need to:

- develop the skill and understanding of the staff team to implement high quality learning in line with the pre-school curricular guidance;
- improve the processes for planning and assessment and match the learning experiences with the needs and interests of the children;
- improve the quality of the staff interactions to promote the children's language and learning;

- update the policy for special educational needs and provide training for the special educational needs co-ordinator and staff to enable them to implement the policy; and
- develop the skill of the staff, leadership and management at all levels and to work collaboratively with relevant support and guidance to develop their roles and bring about the necessary improvements.

There will be a formal follow-up inspection in 18 to 24 months.

Inspection methodology and evidence base

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework is available on the ETI website <https://www.etini.gov.uk/publications/inspection-and-self-evaluation-framework-isef-effective-practice-and-self-evaluation>.

Inspectors observed learning and teaching through play, the children's achievements, progression and standards, scrutinised relevant documentation, and held formal and informal discussions with staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a meeting with those involved with leadership and management, including the management group; and
- the opportunity for the parents and staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

Quantitative terms

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75% - 90%
A majority	-	50% - 74%
A significant minority	-	30% - 49%
A minority	-	10% - 29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

Performance levels

The ETI use the following performance levels when reporting on outcomes for learners, quality of provision and leadership and management:

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the school:

The school has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.
The school demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.
The school needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.
The school needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners. It requires external support to do so. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

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