

# PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Ballymacward Pre-School,  
Stoneyford, Lisburn, Co Antrim

Report of an Inspection in  
March 2015

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*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

CUSTOMER  
SERVICE  
EXCELLENCE



## 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 Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels in reports:

| <b>DESCRIPTOR</b> |
|-------------------|
| Outstanding       |
| Very Good         |
| Good              |
| Satisfactory      |
| Inadequate        |
| Unsatisfactory    |

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## 1. Inspection method and evidence base

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of pre-school centres, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the ETI's publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self evaluation* at: [Together Towards Improvement Pre-school | Education and Training Inspectorate](#)

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

The arrangements for this inspection included:

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

Thirty-seven percent of the parents responded to the questionnaire and four provided additional written comments. All of the staff also completed the on-line questionnaire. All of the returns from the questionnaires indicated very high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the work of the playgroup. The written responses were very positive.

## 2. Context

Ballymacward Pre-school is located within the grounds of Ballymacward Primary School, on the Rock Road, on the outskirts of Lisburn. Since the last inspection, a new leader has been appointed and the group have moved to new purpose -built accommodation. At the time of the inspection, twenty two children were enrolled in the playgroup; fourteen of whom were in their pre-school year. The children come from a very wide catchment area.

## 3. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards;
- the quality of provision; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

## 4. Overall findings

|                                   |                  |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Overall Performance Level</b>  | <b>Very good</b> |
| <b>Achievements and Standards</b> | <b>Very good</b> |
| <b>Provision</b>                  | <b>Very good</b> |
| <b>Leadership and Management</b>  | <b>Very good</b> |

## **Key findings of the inspection**

### **5. Achievements and standards**

- The children are confident, well motivated and have a very positive attitude to their learning; they are respectful to the staff and one another. They are making very good progress in nearly all areas of the pre-school programme; many of the children articulate their understanding of early mathematical concepts and use naturally mathematical language when engaging in their play activities. The children can make independent choices and decisions; they show high levels of concentration and perseverance when engaging in the activities and co-operate well with one another in purposeful and productive play. All of the children understand well the daily routines in the playgroup, and show increasing independence and a growing sense of responsibility as they access the resources and attend to their own needs.
- The children's oral language is developing very well as they engage confidently with the staff in conversations about their play experiences. They show a great interest in, and enjoyment of, the many books on display around the playroom and in the well-stocked book area; they listen attentively during the group story-time. The children enjoy mark making; the majority can recognise and are beginning to write their own names; in particular, the boys use well the writing materials in the areas of play to plan and design their models and constructions.
- The children are developing their capabilities to use various techniques to produce interesting representational pictures and models. They are provided with a wide range of materials which they are encouraged to explore freely; their paintings, drawings and model-making show close attention to detail and good control of tools.
- Most of the children have a very good understanding of early mathematical concepts, and show an awareness of, for example, time, shape, capacity, position and number.

### **6. Provision**

- The new purpose-built accommodation has enhanced the overall quality of the provision; the room is well laid out into distinct areas for learning. The displays of the children's art work and interest areas create colourful and stimulating learning opportunities which arouse the children's interest and stimulate discussions. The staff have a very good understanding of the pre-school curriculum and provide a wide range of effective learning opportunities for the children. The daily routines are well-organised and managed providing very good opportunities for the children to develop their independence and language skills.
- The staff spend extended periods of time with groups and individuals, promoting the children's language and thinking and participating skilfully in the play. The very good involvement of all the staff in the children's play activities is a key strength of the provision.

- The staff plan regularly the programme; the activities provide a range of stimulating and varied learning experiences for the children. They should continue to consolidate and refine their methods for planning. The staff need to ensure that the planning outlines how the activities will provide increased challenge and progression over the year. They know the children well and often use the information collated in the observations to inform future learning.
- The playgroup gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity through the provision of a healthy snack and the opportunities for energetic play.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The leader of the playgroup is an excellent role model and is supported well by the other members of staff. She promotes a culture of continuous improvement. The working relationships are excellent and the staff work very effectively and collaboratively for the benefit of all the children. The early years specialist has provided the staff with very good support and guidance.
- The staff have developed very good and effective links with the parents. They seek their views, welcome them into the playroom and encourage them to take pride in their children's work.
- While the staff have made a useful start to evaluating aspects of their provision, they should continue to work with their early years specialist to develop further the process of continuous self- evaluation and demonstrate how it is leading to improvement.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the playgroup has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department.

## **8. Conclusion**

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this playgroup is very good. The playgroup is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

## STATISTICAL INFORMATION BALLYMACWARD PRE-SCHOOL

1. Details of Children

| Total number of children:   | am session | pm session |
|---|------------|------------|
| attending the pre-school setting  | 22         |            |
| in their immediate pre-school year  | 14         |            |
| funded by Department of Education (DE)  | 14         |            |
| qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2  | 14         |            |
| 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  | 0          |            |
| who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school                      | 0          |            |

\* Special Educational Needs = fewer than five

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Attendance** of funded children for the previous school year. |     |
| Number of days open in previous school year                   | 185 |

\*\* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Sessions

| Duration of morning session | Duration of afternoon session |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2¾ hours                    | N/A                           |

3. Details of Staff

| Number of:  | Full-time | Part-time |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| Staff, including leader                                       | 3         |           |
| Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification | 2         |           |
| Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification   | 1         |           |
| New appointments within previous 12 months                    | 0         |           |

| Number of: *** |  |
|----------------|--|
| Students       |  |
| Trainees       |  |

\*\*\* Total placements since September of current year

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