

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Early Bird Playgroup,
Armagh City

Voluntary pre-school playgroup

Report of an Inspection in
May 2018



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

Early Bird Playgroup is a voluntary playgroup located in the centre of Armagh City. The children come mainly from the local area.

Number of children:	Class 1
Attending full-time	
Attending part-time	
Under 3 years of age*	
Funded by Department of Education	
With statement of special educational needs	
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	
With English as an additional language	
Who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	100%
Average percentage attendance for the previous year.	
Number of days open in previous school year	

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.

fewer than 5

N/A not available

2. Views of parents and staff

All of the staff and a small number of the parents completed the confidential questionnaire and the responses were all very positive. No written comments were recorded in either questionnaires.

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	capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Outcomes for learners	Good
Quality of provision	Good
Leadership and management	Good

5. Outcomes for learners

- The children are well-settled and engage confidently with each other and with the staff. They spend lengthy periods at self-chosen play, follow instructions, take turns and listen attentively during group story sessions.
- The children's behaviour is exemplary and they follow and respond well to the basic rules of the playgroup. Their representational art work shows close attention to detail and is age and stage appropriate for the time of year.
- The high adult to child ratio in the session results in the children spending prolonged periods in adult company; as a consequence, there are limited opportunities for extended child initiated play with peers and the children often gravitate towards, and rely on the adults as play partners.
- The children who have been identified with additional needs are well-integrated within the group and respond positively to the various strategies deployed by the staff to meet individual needs.

6. Quality of provision

- Through their engagement with and observations of the children the staff know the children very well and share information on their progress with the parents both formally and informally throughout the year. Account is taken of the individual needs, interests and responses of all the children to ensure a level of progression in their learning.
- The staff present a very attractive and well-organised learning environment for the children, both indoors and outdoors, and make very good use of all the available space. There is a wide range of good quality resources with many natural and authentic items incorporated into most of the areas of play.
- The documentation outlining the support provided and the progress made for those children who require assistance with aspects of their learning and development is of a good standard. Appropriate targets are set and strategies used to help ensure the children's needs are fully met.
- Aspects of the written planning need to be developed further, in particular, the medium-term plans, outdoor play plans and evaluations need to be more reflective of the learning inherent in all the activities.
- The staff join willingly in the children's play, generate interest and fun in many of the activities, build on the children's personal interests and experiences and ask open-ended questions; however, there is a tendency for them to dominate play by constantly engaging with the children.

- The organisation of the day is generally well-structured to provide for lengthy periods of indoor and outdoor play. Aspects of the snack routine need to be reviewed to ensure more effective use is made of this time to promote further the children's language, learning and their independence and to provide more opportunities to develop healthy eating habits.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the pre-school's approach to the care and welfare of the children impacts positively on learning, teaching and outcomes. The children are forming positive relationships with the adults and one another in an atmosphere of care and mutual respect.

7. Leadership and management

- The process of self-evaluation and development planning is developing well. The staff have identified appropriate priorities for improvement and development and are in the process of collating relevant evidence to support these. The findings from the inspection should now inform these priorities to guide the work of the staff in providing high quality pre-school provision at all levels.
- The early years specialist (EYS) from the Early Years Organisation provides good support to the staff in many aspects of their work. The chair of the management group reports very good working relationships between all parties.
- The playgroup works in partnership with the parents to encourage them to play an active role in the education of their children. Effective links have been established with relevant agencies, the main feeder primary school and the local Sure Start for the benefit of the children.

8. Safeguarding

- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect the guidance from the relevant Departments.

9. Overall effectiveness

Early Bird Playgroup demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the playgroup sustains improvement.

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 the chair of the management committee;
- a meeting with the early years specialist; 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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