

# PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Forkhill Pre-school Playgroup,  
Newry, County Down

Report of an Inspection in  
May 2016



The Education and Training Inspectorate  
Promoting Improvement

**Providing Inspection Services for:**

Department of Education  
Department for the Economy  
Department for Communities

CUSTOMER  
SERVICE  
EXCELLENCE



## Quantitative terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

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

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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 settings, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the ETI publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self-evaluation* at: [Together Towards Improvement Pre-school | Education and Training Inspectorate](#)

Inspectors observed learning and teaching 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 and staff to complete confidential questionnaires.

The responses to the confidential questionnaire by the parents were highly positive. In particular, they highlighted their appreciation of the community spirit, the dedicated staff team and the good progress in their children's development. The staff responses to the questionnaire were also very positive about all aspects of the provision.

## 2. Focus of inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all children, the purpose of inspection is, through effective linking of internal and external approaches, to evaluate the:

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

## 3. Context

Forkhill Pre-school Playgroup is accommodated in the Forkhill Community Centre which is situated in an attractive rural location approximately 12 miles from Newry. The centre is a shared facility and as a result the staff are required to set out and clear equipment on a daily basis.

## 4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Achievements and standards	Good
Provision for learning	Good
Leadership and management	Good

## **5. Achievements and standards**

- The children are making good progress across all areas of the pre-school curriculum and enjoy their learning.
- The children are developing well their independence and social skills. Most of the children can settle to short periods of concentrated and productive play and co-operate well with the daily routines.
- The children use their well-developed language and communication skills to talk to each other and to the adults about their experiences using a wide range of vocabulary. There was limited use made of books, songs and rhymes by the children or the staff during the inspection to build on these skills.
- The children show an understanding of early mathematical concepts such as size and shape and spatial awareness as they work, for example, with the construction materials. They count items during play activities and are beginning to understand sequencing and ordering aided by the visual prompts provided.
- The children re-enact family roles as they care for babies and make dinner in the home play or build at the construction areas. The children are beginning to make simple representations of people in their paintings and with the dough.
- The children are developing appropriately their fine motor skills as they connect smaller construction materials and tools such as knives to butter their own bread at snack time. They enjoy practising their physical movement skills outdoors while running, pedalling or experimenting with bats and balls. The recent purchase of additional physical play equipment provides the opportunity for the children to progress these skills further.
- The children enjoy cooking, growing plants and exploring mini-beasts as part of their planned programme. While the children enjoy the sand and water play, there are insufficient challenging opportunities for self-initiated exploration and investigation of natural resources on a daily basis with the playroom.

## **6. Provision for learning**

- The staff work hard to set out a stimulating range of resources on a daily basis using all of the space available. While the daily timetable provides a useful guide to the organisation of the snack routine, story time and physical play is not well enough managed to ensure that all of the time is used well for learning and that the staff maintain sufficiently high quality interactions throughout the morning.
- The staff are all caring, respectful and supportive as they interact with the children. A majority of the staff promote effectively the children's independence, language and thinking skills. In this best practice, the staff hold sustained conversations with the children about their activities and personal experiences, model key vocabulary through play and ask appropriate open-ended questions to stimulate and extend thinking. In the less effective practice, opportunities were missed to develop and extend the children's learning through the play and the daily routines.

- The staff have planned and evaluated the play programme extensively, leading to good opportunities for learning across all elements of the pre-school curriculum. They regularly observe the children's responses with the intention of identifying and planning for their individual needs and to inform parents of their progress and achievements. However, for their intention to be fully realised the staff require further training to develop a shared understanding of how to use the assessment information more effectively to plan for the individual needs and interests of the children.
- The children with additional needs are identified early and their needs are being supported in close liaison with the parents, health professionals and other agencies. The individual education plans are not yet well enough developed; the recent special needs link for support provided by the Education Authority is helpful in building further the capacity of the staff.
- The quality of pastoral care is good. The staff create a positive, caring environment within which the children are developing very well their social skills; their behaviour is very good.
- The healthy break and the focus on cooking and healthy foods, along with the regular good opportunities for physical play, help to promote a healthy lifestyle.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The leadership and management have continued to improve their qualifications and have worked tirelessly to secure funding and improve resources. There are very good working relationships among the well-established staff team, committee and parents.
- The staff are strongly committed to improvement and are developing a reflective culture of regular review and evaluation in consultation with the parents. They have gained a number of awards including Investors In People. There is an insufficient focus on the key priorities for improvement in the action plans and associated staff development as seen in the outcomes for the children.
- There is effective communication with the parents through, for example, the informative newsletter and regular parental meetings. There are close links with the local primary school who provide positive feedback on the transition arrangements. Members of the local community, such as the firemen, are invited to talk to the children to enhance their learning.
- 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 Departments.

## **8. Overall effectiveness**

Forkhill Pre-school Playgroup has the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of learners.

The ETI will continue to monitor how the playgroup sustains improvement and in particular how it addresses the need to use the assessment information to identify and respond to the needs of the children individually and maintain consistently high quality staff interactions to promote learning.

## STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON FORKHILL PRE -SCHOOL PLAYGROUP, NEWRY

1. Details of children

<b>Number of children:</b>	Class 1
Attending full-time	0
Attending part-time	24
Under 3 years of age*	0
Funded by Department of Education	24
With statement of special educational needs	0
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	0
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	0

\* 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.

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	100
Average attendance for the previous year.	90.5%
Number of days open in previous school year	185

2. Duration of sessions

<b>Full-time</b>	<b>Part-time: am</b>	<b>Part-time: pm</b>
	09:00 am-12:00 pm	

3. Details of staff

<b>Number of:</b>	<b>Full-time</b>	<b>Part-time</b>
Staff including, Teachers/Leaders		4
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification		4
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification		
New appointments within the previous 12 months		0

<b>Number of: ***</b>	
Students	
Trainees	

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

**Accommodation**

1. The toilets are located outside of the playroom.
2. The garden area has been vandalised on a number of occasions.



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