

Education and Training Inspectorate

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Gracehill and Galgorm Playgroup, Ballymena, County Antrim

Voluntary playgroup DE Ref No (3AB-0111)

Report of an Inspection in May 2019



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
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1. Context

Gracehill and Galgorm Playgroup is located in a large hall within the community centre in the village of Galgorm. The playgroup has access to a grass area and the local play park for outdoor play. The children attending the playgroup come from the local and wider catchment area. Since the previous inspection in May 2014, two new assistants have been appointed.

Number of children:	Class 1
Attending full-time	26
Funded by Department of Education	26
With statement of special educational needs	0
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	0

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	100
Average percentage attendance for the previous year.	N/A
Number of days open in previous school year	188

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

A significant minority of parents and all of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. All of the responses were extremely positive about the life and work of the playgroup. In written comments, the parents highlighted the friendly, caring staff and their pastoral care of the children. The written comments from the staff highlighted their appreciation of the collegial teamwork. A summary of the responses was shared with the leader and a representative from the management 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	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Outcomes for learners	Very good
Quality of provision	Very good
Leadership and management	Good

5. Outcomes for learners

- The children are very well settled and their behaviour is exemplary. They are forming friendships with each other and confidently talk about their play, interests and experiences. Nearly all of the children play collaboratively for sustained periods of time and are inquisitive, highly motivated learners. All of the children are familiar with the daily routines and have very good levels of independence as they: self-register; label their artwork; put on aprons for painting and water play; and, actively participate in the tidy up routine sorting and putting away resources.
- All of the children are making very good progress across most areas of the pre-school curriculum. The children enjoy selecting books and listening to stories. Their attention and listening skills, and interest in mark making are very well developed; a few of the children can write their own names. Almost all of the children have a very good understanding of early mathematical concepts. They use appropriate mathematical language in various contexts across the areas of play.
- The children use skilfully a wide range of art materials to develop their own imaginative ideas. They individually and collaboratively design and make very creative models that they take great pride in, such as, handbags, microphones, kites and a vending machine. Their representational artwork, is of a very high standard and is displayed and celebrated in the playroom. Most of the children contribute enthusiastically to the opportunity to make music and play a variety of instruments; they engage fully in rhyme and song sessions.
- All of the children enjoy exploring their learning environment with curiosity and use their senses to investigate, make predictions, take risks and solve problems. They use effectively a range of materials that reflect their interests, particularly in the World Around Us topics, such as, creating their own 'frog spawn' and growing flowers.
- Most of children develop, their own imaginations and language by re-enacting familiar family roles in the home area such as cooking, making beds, and caring for babies. The children's fine motor skills are very well-developed; they use safely and confidently a wide range of equipment including hammers, nails, real cutlery, art and craft tools and writing implements.

6. Quality of provision

- The staff interactions are nurturing, positive and affirming; they model language very effectively and skilfully ask open-ended questions to extend the children's thinking and conversational skills. The children are given appropriate time to process information, answer questions and follow instructions. The staff respond well to the children's spontaneous ideas and interests; consequently the children experiment and take risks which greatly extend their learning potential.
- A bright and stimulating learning environment has been created by the staff. The large hall is appropriately separated into zones and very good opportunities are provided for the children to move around freely and to access a wide range of resources to develop further their learning through play. The organisation of the day is used well to maximise learning experiences.

- There is a rigorous system in place for observing, assessing and monitoring each child's progress. The staff collaborate effectively; they know the children very well and use the information gained through observations of the children's learning to inform future planning and to meet their individual needs. There is appropriate short-, medium- and long-term planning for indoor play which ensures progression across the pre-school curriculum; however, outdoor and energetic physical play planning is underdeveloped.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the pre-school's approach to care and welfare impacts positively on the children's learning. The caring, child-centred ethos and very good working relationships at all levels help develop the children's independence, self-esteem and creativity.

7. Leadership and management

- The leadership of the playgroup is good. The leadership and staff work well collaboratively and have a shared commitment to providing high quality provision for all of the children. Whilst the staff have identified some appropriate areas for improvement in the three-year development plan, the processes for self-evaluation are underdeveloped. The action plans do not focus sufficiently on the potential impact of the actions leading to improvement.
- The capacity and effectiveness of the leadership and staff to bring about improvement, has benefitted from professional development, through internal and external training. The Early Years Specialist, from the Early Years Organisation, provides clear guidance and very good support which has led to improvement in the outcomes for learners and provision. The management group support the staff well in their work.
- There are very effective links with the parents, the local community and appropriate external agencies. The parents receive regular information through newsletters, meetings and reports; they attend events and activities, assist with fundraising, and their views are sought and valued. A wide range of visitors to the setting and educational visits enrich the children's learning experiences.

8. Safeguarding

- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect broadly the guidance from the relevant Departments. However, Gracehill and Galgorm Playgroup needs to:
- implement more robust procedures for risk assessments for educational trips and visitors to the setting.

9. Overall effectiveness

Gracehill and Galgorm Playgroup demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the children.

There are areas for improvement that the playgroup has demonstrated the capacity to address. The areas for improvement are:

- to further develop planning and provision for outdoor and physical play, ensuring progression for all of the children; and
- to embed the implementation of effective self-evaluation processes leading to improvement in development planning and associated action plans.

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 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 management¹:

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

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on governance:

High degree of confidence
Confidence
Limited confidence

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on safeguarding:

Reflects the guidance
Reflects broadly the guidance
Unsatisfactory

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on care and welfare:

Impacts positively on learning, teaching and outcomes for learners
Does not impact positively enough on learning, teaching and outcomes for learners

¹ And the overall provision in a subject area or unit, as applicable.

Overall effectiveness

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

<p>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.</p>
<p>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.</p>
<p>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.</p>
<p>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.</p>

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