

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Happy Tots Playgroup,
Portadown, County Armagh

Voluntary playgroup

Report of an Inspection in
February 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

Happy Tots Playgroup is located within Thomas Street Methodist Church Hall. A new pre-school leader and deputy leader were appointed in September 2016. Almost half of the children in the setting have English as an additional language.

Number of children:	Class 1
Attending part-time	15
Under 3 years of age*	11
Funded by Department of Education	16
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	#
With English as an additional language	6
Who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	#

Average percentage attendance for the previous year.	76
Number of days open in previous school year	186

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

2. Views of parents and staff

Almost half of the parents responded to the confidential questionnaire. The responses were very positive about almost all aspects of the life and work of the playgroup. The written comments highlighted the variety of interesting activities on offer to the children and the caring staff who encourage the parents to be involved in the children's learning. All of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaire and their responses were wholly positive. In their written comments, they highlighted the committed team who work together to provide the best developmental outcomes for each child within the setting.

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	Important areas for improvement
Outcomes for learners	Important areas for improvement
Quality of provision	Important areas for improvement
Leadership and management	Important areas for improvement

5. Outcomes for learners

- A minority of the children have an insufficient understanding of rules and routines in the setting and require adult intervention to focus their attention. Most of the children are able to share the resources and engage appropriately with each other and with adults.
- There is a wide range of ability in language and communication skills among the children. The children have limited interest in mark making, experimental writing, labelling their work and books; a small number of children were inattentive during story time. Most of the children participate enthusiastically when singing the greeting song and during rhyme time.
- Most of the children demonstrate an early awareness of mathematical concepts and language as they match, sort, count and make comparisons as an integral part of their play.
- The children enjoy experimenting in the playroom's 'laboratory' and use their senses to engage in exploratory and investigative play in the water and sand. The children are able to express their ideas through construction and design and were observed creating their own musical instruments during the inspection.
- The significant number of newcomer children and those who require additional support are well-integrated into the playgroup.

6. Quality of provision

- Planning is an important area for improvement. While the staff deliver the curriculum through themes and interest topics, there is lack of progression within the planned activities and across the pre-school curriculum. The planning is not differentiated sufficiently to take account of the two distinct age groups within the setting. The outdoor planning requires further development; this has been identified appropriately by the staff. The staff listen to the children's ideas and incorporate these into some aspects of planning.
- The staff observe the children's learning regularly, however, the observations do not inform sufficiently the next stage of planning.
- Overall, the staff do not have a sufficiently developed shared understanding of how to promote purposeful play and extend children's language and learning through play. On occasions, the behaviour of a small number of children diverts the staff from having meaningful interaction with the children. The staff are not consistent in their use of appropriate behaviour management strategies to meet fully the needs of the newcomer children and those with additional needs.
- The staff have made good use of the space to create a stimulating learning environment using a range of natural and authentic resources which are readily accessible to the children. The staff are caring and welcoming to the children and the children appear happy and settled in the group. The staff create an inclusive ethos which respects and values difference.

- 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 learning and teaching, and outcomes. Positive behaviour is not promoted consistently enough in the setting.

7. Leadership and management

- The processes for self-evaluation leading to improvement in the quality of the provision and better outcomes for the children are at an early stage of development. While priorities have been identified for the next three years, there are no clear action plans in place and there is limited evidence of monitoring and evaluating the impact of improvement work undertaken.
- The playgroup has received inconsistent and insufficient support from the Early Years Organisation. It will be important that the newly assigned early years' specialist works closely with the staff to address the areas identified within the report.
- The recently established team are collegial, committed and have a clear vision for the future development of the playgroup. They are supported very ably by the well-informed and hard-working management committee who know the strengths of the setting and the priorities for improvement.
- There are very good links with the parents; the parent newsletter and the recently developed online application provide a range of information to give insight in to the children's learning. Very good use is made of parents and visitors to the setting to enrich the children's learning experience.

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

Happy Tots Playgroup needs to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners.

The areas for improvement are:

- to develop and employ consistently behaviour management strategies with a small number of children;
- to develop the planning and provision in personal, social and emotional development and language development for the two distinct age groups within the setting;
- to improve the provision for newcomer children and those with additional needs; and
- to develop further the process of self-evaluation and demonstrate clearly the impact of improvement work on the outcomes for the children.

The ETI will monitor and report on the playgroup's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection in 12 to 18 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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