

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Kells and Connor Pre-school
Playgroup, Kells,
County Antrim

Report of an Inspection in
April 2016



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
Department for Communities



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 playgroup 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 Playgroup | 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 meeting with those involved with leadership and management including the management group; and
- the opportunity for the parents and staff to complete confidential questionnaires.

Seventy-three percent of the parents responded to the questionnaire; they were highly positive about all aspects of the life and work of the playgroup. In the written comments, the parents praised the high quality of the provision, including the care given by the staff, and their children's continuous progress in and positive attitude to all aspects of their learning through play. All of the staff responded to the questionnaire and likewise affirmed all aspects of the playgroup's provision.

2. Focus of inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interests 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

Kells and Connor Pre-school Playgroup operates in a customised unit in the centre of Kells. There is a small outdoor learning space. Twenty-six children attend the playgroup and they come mainly from the local area. The playgroup has a varied range of links and partnerships to support and extend the provision including, for example, the local feeder primary schools.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Achievements and standards	Outstanding
Provision for learning	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are motivated learners with a keen interest in the world around them; they settle quickly and independently to their self-selected play activities, taking high levels of responsibility for their learning and regular routines. They select and use imaginatively the carefully considered range of natural and authentic resources on offer.
- The children move calmly and freely around the play areas, showing respect and care for one another and their well-planned learning environment. They respond very positively, at all times, to the high standards the adults set to develop their early understanding of how to listen and talk, share, work collaboratively and take turns across a variety of learning activities.
- All of the children, including those who require additional support with their learning and development, are making outstanding progress across all aspects of the pre-school curriculum. This progress is clearly evident from observing how the children are learning and what they are able to do for themselves and in the detailed, individual records the staff maintain to monitor the children's progress.
- Particular strengths include the development of the children's early mathematical understanding and how they investigate and question aspects of the world around them. Almost all of the children are progressing very well in the development of their language skills and can explain their thinking in extended sentences using a broad range of vocabulary. They are very interested in browsing through books related to their play themes and other print resources, taking pleasure in stories and rhymes and locating information for themselves.
- The children play collaboratively for prolonged periods, absorbed fully in their chosen activities. They respond very well to their involvement in the well-planned regular routines, such as, helping to organise the buffet snack, taking responsibility for their equipment and knowing how to manage important aspects of their personal care.

6. Provision for learning

- The staff provide a well-organised and appealing learning environment which is flexible and responsive to the children's individual interests and needs. The adults focus closely on extending the children's knowledge, skills and capabilities through the continuous identification of the learning potential contained in the play activities and the regular routines. They take careful account of the children's stages of development to provide engaging learning experiences which capture the children's curiosity and include meaningful opportunities for them to use and investigate real materials and try out their own ideas.
- There is a calm, relaxed and purposeful atmosphere for learning within the playgroup. The staff's interactions with the children are of a consistently high quality; their skilled use of open and interesting questions extends considerably the children's thinking. The adults respect and value what the children say and do, and clearly enjoy interacting with the children at their level to raise further the learning potential within the play.

- The planned programme is comprehensive and contains progression and balance across all aspects of the pre-school curriculum. There is a high quality, detailed system in place for observing, assessing and recording the children's progress. The staff are reflective in considering and acting upon the quality of the children's individual learning responses to inform the future planning to enable each child to reach their learning potential.
- The quality of the pastoral care in the playgroup is outstanding. Key characteristics of the provision include: the inclusive and nurturing ethos where every child is cherished; the efforts the staff make to develop the children's early awareness of a range of personal, social and emotional issues, such as, difference and disability; and, how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations.
- The playgroup gives very good attention to developing the children's early understanding of healthy lifestyles; the children are provided with healthy snacks, they understand the importance of their hygiene routines and participate regularly in physical activities to develop their strength and co-ordination.

7. Leadership and management

- The leadership and management lead by example, they set a very positive tone and the highest expectations for the work of the playgroup and are highly effective in leading the talented staff team in bringing about continuous improvement in the provision. Together with the management committee, they collaborate tirelessly in developing further all aspects of the children's learning.
- Self-evaluation is used comprehensively and has a direct and strategic influence on how the playgroup staff consider and plan for the future. There are effective, systematic processes in place to inform and implement appropriate improvement actions which take careful account of the playgroup's key priorities.
- The playgroup has built up a wide range of purposeful links with the parents, local schools, the community and various learning partnerships to support and extend the staff's work with the children. The parents are welcomed into the playgroup and are given detailed information about the provision. The staff operate effective transitional arrangements from pre-school to year one in the local primary schools.
- The independent early years specialist acts as a critical friend to the staff in developing further the provision. The staff have benefitted from the Early Years Special Educational Needs Capacity Building pilot and further professional development through cluster meetings; there is clear evidence of the positive impact of this work on the quality of the provision.
- 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 broadly the guidance issued by the relevant Departments.

8. Overall effectiveness

Kells and Connor Pre-school Playgroup has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will continue to monitor how the playgroup sustains improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON KELLS AND CONNOR PRE-SCHOOL PLAYGROUP, KELLS

1. Details of children

Number of children:	Class 1
Attending full-time	-
Attending part-time	26
Under 3 years of age*	0
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	2
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	2
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	0
With English as an additional language	0
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.

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	0
Average attendance for the previous year.	92%
Number of days open in previous school year	188

2. Duration of sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
	09.00-11.30	

3. Details of staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff including, Teachers/Leaders		5
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification		4
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification		0
New appointments within the previous 12 months		1

Number of: ***	
Students	0
Trainees	0

*** Total placements since September of current year

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