

Education and Training Inspectorate PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Laughterland Early Years, Toomebridge, County Antrim

Voluntary Playgroup DE Ref No: 3AB-0574

Report of an Inspection in January 2020



Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
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1. Context

Laughterland Early Years is accommodated in a purpose-built mobile, situated within shared community grounds. The children come from the immediate and surrounding local area. Since the last inspection, there have been several changes within the staffing and leadership and management team. The pre-school are participating in the 'Getting Ready to Learn' programme funded by the Department of Education.

Number of children:	Class 1
Attending full-time	24
Funded by Department of Education	24

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	N/A
Average percentage attendance for the previous year.	95.9%
Number of days open in previous school year	185

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

A majority of the parents and all of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. They were wholly positive about all aspects of the provision. In written comments, the parents indicated their appreciation of the professional and approachable staff, the regular feedback provided about their children's progress and the positive, caring ethos. A summary of the questionnaire responses were 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	Good
Quality of provision	Good
Leadership and management	Good

5. Outcomes for learners

- The children are making good progress in all aspects of their learning and development. They settle quickly to purposeful play and sustain high levels of concentration throughout the session. They independently initiate and develop their own ideas, choose and put away equipment and self-manage with confidence their daily routines.
- The children's communication skills are well developed. They talk confidently to staff about their activities and collaborate and negotiate maturely during their play; particularly in their imaginative role play in the home area. The children listen very attentively during large group sessions and have a high level of interest in mark making and experimental writing.
- The children count, match, sort and show a clear understanding of positional language as they participate in their activities. They use the art materials to draw, paint and make models with junk, dough and small construction materials. They enjoy exploring the water and the sand play using resources linked to the winter theme.
- During the indoor physical session, the children are developing an awareness of space and have good co-ordination and control of their own bodies to stretch, bend, jump and crawl. They use small tools such as brushes, rollers and pens with confidence and increasing dexterity.
- The children's interest in asking questions, investigating and problem solving is not as well developed as their other areas of learning.

6. Quality of provision

- The staff plan a varied programme with interesting activities and resources for the children both outdoors and indoors across all areas of the pre-school curriculum.
- The resources in the playroom are well presented and labelled enabling the children to self-select with independence and they are generally well matched to the children's stages of development. The outdoor play area has been recently developed and enhanced with new resources and improved layout. The indoor learning environment does not provide sufficient space for construction, and additional resources, including more real and natural items, within areas of play to enable the children to extend and develop their play ideas.
- The daily timetable incorporates a good balance between extended time for freely chosen play and appropriate adult-led group activities. The daily routines and transitions are well managed; however, there are missed opportunities to develop further the children's social and conversational skills during their snack time.
- The staff promote purposeful play and are caring and supportive in their engagement with the children. They play alongside the children, model vocabulary, extend the children's language and thinking through open-ended questions and lead most of the group sessions effectively. At times the staff do not observe, wait and listen to allow the children sufficient time to respond before interacting in order to more consistently build on the children's own ideas.

- The written planning provides a good guide to ensure a broad and varied programme within the pre-school with additional planned visits and visitors to enhance the learning further. The staff have identified the need to plan in more detail for specific aspects of their work, such as music, to ensure progression in the use of resources and to guide the staff. The assessment information is relevant and used well to inform parents of their children's progress and to identify support for individual children. The current planning is not flexible enough to adapt to the children's own interests and their responses to the planned activities.
- The staff have had a range of appropriate training in special educational needs and have suitable processes in place to guide their practice. At the time of the inspection no children had been identified with special educational needs. The written policy needs to be reviewed and updated to reflect recent training.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the pre-school's approach to care and welfare impacts positively on learning and teaching, and outcomes. The respectful and inclusive ethos promotes the children's settled behaviour and social skills.

7. Leadership and management

- The pre-school is well organised and managed on a daily basis, with regular communication between the leader, the independent early year's specialist and the management committee.
- The staff take the views of the parents and the children into account when developing aspects of their work such as the outdoor area, the session times and the introduction of several parent workshops. The evaluations of these areas of development focus effectively on demonstrating the improved learning for children and parents.
- The staff have identified relevant priorities for future development and carried out initial audits to inform the action plans. The current action plans do not guide the staff effectively enough in implementing, monitoring and evaluating the improvement work. The recent changes to the staff team, alongside a period of uncertainty over the future location of the pre-school, have impacted negatively on the rate and pace of continuous improvement.
- There are effective links with the local primary schools to promote smooth transitions for the children and useful links with the local community such as the librarian and a local author. There are good links with the parents who are encouraged to become involved with their own child's learning at home through the 'Getting Ready to Learn' workshops focusing on reading, healthy eating and physical play.

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

Laughterland Early Years demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.

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

The areas for improvement are to:

- promote more fully the children's curiosity, investigation and problem solving skills;
- develop consistently high quality interactions between the staff and the children to promote their language and learning; and
- develop a more coherent approach to action planning among the leadership and management.

The ETI will monitor how the playgroup sustains improvement.

Accommodation

1. The larger tables and chairs, while suitable for the afternoon after schools provision are not a suitable size for the pre-school children and restrict the space within the room, particularly for floor play.

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; 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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