

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Little Acorns Playgroup,
Coagh, Co Tyrone

Report of an Inspection in
January 2015

eti

*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*

Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

CUSTOMER
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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 Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels in reports:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

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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's publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self evaluation* at: [Together Towards Improvement Pre-school | Education and Training Inspectorate](#)

Inspectors observed teaching and learning 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, staff and members of the management group to complete a confidential questionnaire or to meet with the inspection team.

All of the parental returns from the questionnaires indicated high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the work of the playgroup.

2. Context

Little Acorns Playgroup is a newly established pre-school centre located in the main hall within St Luke's Parish Hall, Coagh. The playgroup is the sole occupant of the building during playgroup hours. The staff are in post since the playgroup opened in September, 2013.

3. Focus of the inspection

The inspection focused on:

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

4. Overall findings

Overall Performance Level	Satisfactory
Achievements and Standards	Satisfactory
Provision	Satisfactory
Leadership and Management	Satisfactory

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- Most of the children are settled in their play and are able to sustain concentration to learn. They respond well to the established routines and instructions from the staff and can engage in collaborative play. A small number of the children are less settled and at times engage in noisy unproductive play. The children's levels of independence are variable and a majority require support to develop further their self-management skills
- Most of the children have good language and communication skills. They can turn-take during play and snack-time, and readily engage in conversation, often turning to the adults to extend their play with additional resources. They enjoy listening to stories in small and large groups. The children's early mark making and writing is under developed and they require more appropriate resources and strategies to develop further their fine motor skills.
- The quality of most of the children's mathematical language is satisfactory and their associated mathematical concepts of sorting, matching and counting are developed effectively. The children's awareness of measurement, shape and space is at an early stage of development.

6. Provision

- The playroom is spacious and bright and the staff have begun to effectively zone areas for specific elements of play. The staff are developing an outdoor play area to extend the children's learning experiences. More internal storage and display facilities are required to ensure that the staff and the children have sufficient equipment and resources to provide a broad and balanced pre-school programme. The children need further support and opportunities to develop their independence, for example, to be able to make choices in selecting their play equipment from appropriate storage units within the playroom.
- The daily timetable provides a lengthy period of free play and activities organised by the staff. The children can self-register, for example, during the snack; this effective strategy should be deployed in the other areas of learning to develop further the children's learning and self-management. The transitions between the activities need to be developed further to promote independence and to improve the children's concentration.
- The quality of the interaction between all of the staff and the children is variable. In the best practice the staff join in the play and ask open-ended questions to develop the children's language and thinking skills. During the inspection, there were too many missed opportunities to extend the children's learning or to utilise fully the potential of the learning from the activities.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the playgroup is good. The staff treat the children with care and respect and they supervise closely the toileting of the children as the toilets are located outside the playroom. They have created a welcoming learning environment for the children. The relationships are good and children readily approach the staff to ask for help.

- The planning for progression in the pre-school programme needs further development. The members of staff operate a keyworker system, whereby each of them is responsible for assessing and recording the progress and learning of a group of children in their care. A majority of the records contain limited information of the children's progress and development and are in need of improvement. The planning and assessment methods should be developed, to identify more clearly the learning to be promoted from the activities.
- The special needs provision is good and is given appropriate priority. The staff have benefitted from training in a range of medical conditions and take very good care of the children with medical needs. The children have care plans which the staff refer to, and effectively implement, on a daily basis.
- The playgroup gives very good attention to healthy eating through the provision of healthy foods. During the inspection, the children enjoyed games. When the weather permits, the children engage in outdoor physical activity which effectively promotes energetic play.

7. Leadership and management

- The leader has effectively overseen the development of a three-year development plan and a wide range of policies and procedures to establish the playgroup. She is well-supported by the staff and now needs to focus on the priorities for improvement of the pre-school programme. The staff and the management committee have worked effectively as a team to establish good working relationships and a safe and secure environment for the children.
- The parents are provided with informative newsletters and have been given information on the children's progress. There is excellent communication with the parents of the children with additional needs. Most of the children transfer to the local primary schools and relevant information about the children's progress is made available to the schools.
- The early years specialist from the Early Years Organisation has appropriately identified areas for improvement. There is a need to ensure that the specialist advice is followed up and acted upon in a timely manner by the staff, in order to ensure that the necessary developments are effectively implemented in the playgroup.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the playgroup has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Departments, however, the following area needs to be urgently addressed: the deputy leader needs to complete the deputy leader safeguarding training.

8. Conclusion

In most of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided in this playgroup is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in standards, learning and teaching, and leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively. The areas for improvement include the need to:

- develop further the planning to identify clearly the full learning potential in the activities and use this information to guide the staff more clearly in their work with the children;
- ensure that there is a more systematic approach to recording the children's progress and development and to using the information to inform the planning; and
- ensure a consistently high quality of staff interaction with the children is sustained to promote concentrated play and extend learning across all areas of the curriculum.

The ETI will monitor and report on the playgroup's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12-24 month period.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION LITTLE ACORNS PLAYGROUP, COAGH

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school setting	26	
in their immediate pre-school year	22	
funded by Department of Education (DE)	22	
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	21	
with a statement of special educational needs	0	
without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	*	
with English as an additional language	0	
who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	0	

* Special Educational Needs = fewer than five

Attendance** of funded children for the previous school year.	26
Number of days open in previous school year	188

** Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Sessions

Duration of morning session	Duration of afternoon session
3 hours	-

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	3	1
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification	3	1
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification		
New appointments within previous 12 months		1

Number of: ***	
Students	
Trainees	

*** Total placements since September of current year

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