

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Little Bears Day Nursery,
Bangor, Co Down

Report of an Inspection in
November 2014

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
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



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 centres, 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.

The parental responses indicate very high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the educational and pastoral provision provided by the playgroup. In particular, the parents appreciate the dedication and enthusiasm of the staff and the provision of a wide range of resources for the children.

2. Context

Little Bears Day Nursery Playgroup is located in purpose built accommodation within the Ashbury Shopping Centre in Bangor. The playgroup has been in the Preschool Programme since 2012; at the time of the inspection an acting leader was managing the playgroup.

3. Focus of 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	Very Good
Achievements and Standards	Very Good
Provision	Good
Leadership and Management	Very Good

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- During the inspection, there were many instances of settled, co-operative and purposeful play, particularly in the sand, water, creative and role-play areas.
- Many of the children relate well to one another, are learning to share their materials and clearly enjoy the range of interesting activities on offer.
- Many of the children show a growing awareness of mathematical ideas through their play, they like to count and can sort and match a variety of resources.
- Through the use of relevant topics the children are helped to become aware of the roles of others within the community; the current topic has generated many detailed representational paintings of people in the community.

6. Provision

- The playgroup has a very positive ethos and relationships at all levels are excellent. The warm, supportive atmosphere helps the children grow in confidence and self-esteem.
- The free play session is well organised and provides the children with good opportunities to make independent choices and to develop their learning across all areas of the programme. Routines are unobtrusive and used very effectively to provide choice, and promote the children's independence, social skills and learning.
- The staff have worked hard to develop the written planning; the programme outlines a broad and balanced learning opportunities for the children, which are designed to foster their all-round development. A good range of themes and topics is used to introduce a variety of interesting activities in all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The staff know the children well and make relevant observations of the children's responses to the play programme; it will be important for the staff to now use the information more effectively to inform the future planning of the play programme.
- There are good or very good opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum; the development of the children's language and communication skills and of their understanding of early mathematical concepts are particular strengths of the provision. Early scientific ideas are generated through play with sand and water; the children are encouraged to notice change in materials, for example, as they observed the ice melt in the water and through more structured activities such as making dough and baking.
- The availability of an appropriate range of writing tools and materials provides the children with very good opportunities to develop their experimental writing skills. Captions, labels and visual instructions are used very effectively to record the children's learning experiences and to promote the development of their early reading skills. The children browse frequently in the book area and the adults read stories at the children's request; most of the children listen attentively during group story time. A small number of the children would benefit from smaller group or individual story sessions until they are ready to join the larger group.

- Good provision is made for the children with special educational needs; the staff liaise effectively with the parents and other professional agencies and make very good efforts to identify, address and monitor the particular problems faced by these children.
- There are very good links with the parents who are kept well informed about events within the nursery through the parents' information board and an informative newsletter. The staff have also developed very good links with the local schools and the wider community.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the playgroup is very good. The staff are very caring and attentive to the children and supportive to each another. They provide a safe and secure learning environment for the children where they are at ease with the staff.

7. Leadership and management

- The proprietors set a positive tone for the work of the playgroup. They make every effort to provide the staff with the resources and training they require to enhance the provision for the children. Appropriate areas of the playgroups work has been identified for further developmental. The staff are receiving appropriate guidance from their early years specialist from the Early Years Organisation and are beginning to develop useful methods of self-evaluation; it will be important to ensure that the pace of change is manageable and that staff understand the need for the changes in order to ensure sustained improvement in the playgroup's provision.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection the playgroup has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding the children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department.
- The playgroup gives appropriate attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity for example through the healthy breaks provided and the regular opportunities for music and movement. It will be important, however, when the weather is not too inclement, for the staff to ensure that children are able to avail of daily opportunities for a period of outdoor play to encourage the children to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of the education provided by this playgroup is very good. The playgroup is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION LITTLE BEARS DAY NURSERY, BANGOR

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school setting	20	
in their immediate pre-school year	20	
funded by Department of Education (DE)	20	
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	20	
with a statement of special educational needs	1	
without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	1	
with English as an additional language	1	
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.	185
Number of days open in previous school year	185

** Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Sessions

Duration of morning session	Duration of afternoon session
2½ hours	-

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader		3
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification		2
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification		0
New appointments within previous 12 months		2

Number of: ***	
Students	0
Trainees	0

*** Total placements since September of current year

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