

Education and Training Inspectorate PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Little Bears Day Nursery, Bangor, County Down

Private Day Nursery DE Ref No: 4CA- 0615

Report of an Inspection in January 2020



Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments



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1. Context

Little Bears Day Nursery is a private childcare facility which operates a pre-school playgroup within the Ashbury Shopping Centre in Bangor. The children who attend the pre-school come from the immediate and wider Bangor area and all are in their pre-school year. The pre-school was last inspected in 2014 and since then there have been changes of leader and staff.

Number of children:	Class 1
Attending part-time	16
Funded by Department of Education	16
With English as an additional language	#

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	100
Average percentage attendance for the previous year.	91
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

N/A not available

2. Views of parents and staff

Half of the parents replied to the confidential questionnaire; almost all expressed high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the pre-school's provision. The parental comments noted that the children were well-settled and making good progress. All of the staff responded to the questionnaire; their responses highlighted the impact of staff changes on the continuity and development of the pre-school's work and the need to be supported with further training.

A summary of the questionnaire responses was shared with the nursery manager, the pre-school leader and the early years specialist from the Early Years Organisation (EYO).

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	Address urgently the significant areas for improvement
Outcomes for learners	Important areas for improvement
Quality of provision	Important areas for improvement
Leadership and management	Requires significant improvement

5. Outcomes for learners

- For the time of year, there are important areas for improvement in the children's learning across key aspects of the pre-school curriculum.
- There are missed opportunities to develop the children's social language and early mathematical understanding within routines, such as, the snack and tidying times. The children's creativity, problem-solving and investigative skills are underdeveloped. This is due partly to the lack of natural and authentic resources available to encourage the children to explore, investigate and experiment.
- The children show an interest in browsing books and occasionally the staff ask pertinent questions and introduce new vocabulary to extend the children's language. Overall, their interest in reading and early mark-making is underdeveloped with the limited range of engaging reading and writing resources available across the playroom. The children understand some early number, positional language and time concepts in a range of relevant contexts.
- The children are happy and well-settled and most engage in collaborative play. They are at ease with the staff and most express confidently their needs and interests. Overall, the children behave very well; most respond appropriately to the staff expectations and are becoming more self-reliant in taking increased responsibility for aspects of their regular routines.

6. Quality of provision

- The staff provide a bright, clean and well-organised learning environment in the playroom. However they do not exploit effectively enough the learning potential of the resources available and the use of natural items in the indoor and outdoor learning areas, to enhance the children's curiosity and extend their learning.
- The staff interactions with the children are consistently pastoral and positive, focusing on building the children's involvement in the activities and extending their vocabulary. The staff do not make sufficient use of open-ended questions to develop the children's natural curiosity and there are missed opportunities to develop the children's mathematical learning naturally within the children's play and regular routines.
- Appropriately, the staff are making improvements to the planning and assessment methods to reflect and target more explicitly individual children's specific learning outcomes. The staff team acknowledges the need for further training and support to develop this important aspect of their work.
- The staff take care to identify and support sensitively the children identified as having additional learning needs. There is regular and constructive communication with the parents in relation to the progress the children are making.
- 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, teaching and the children's outcomes. While the staff nurture the children's well-being and value and reward their efforts, the inconsistent quality of the provision and the associated need for staff training and development are not enabling the children to achieve the expected learning and outcomes.

7. Leadership and management

- The leadership and management of the day nursery requires significant improvement; it is not effective enough in working collaboratively to plan, implement and evaluate high quality pre-school education. There is a need to address key issues in relation to the ongoing instability in the staffing arrangements and supporting the current staff team to understand and operate more effectively their respective roles and responsibilities.
- Overall, the pre-school's approach to self-evaluation requires significant improvement. At the time of the inspection, due to ongoing staff changes, there was little evidence of self-evaluation being undertaken, and the staff's understanding of development planning was under-developed. The staff team is highly committed to making and sustaining positive changes in the best interests of the children. In order to improve the quality of the provision and evaluate the impact on the children's outcomes, the staff need to be supported with relevant training and guidance in the pre-school curriculum and strategic planning.
- The work of the pre-school is supported productively by the recently appointed early years specialist who articulates a clear understanding of the key strategic aspects which need to be addressed to bring about further improvement in the provision for the children.
- There are valuable working and communication links with the parents. The staff make effective use of visitors and planned trips to enrich and extend the children's learning.

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

Little Bears Day Nursery 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 areas for improvement are:

- to address the instability in staffing in order to provide high quality learning experiences for all of the children;
- for the leadership and staff, with the continued support of the early years specialist, to develop further the understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities;
- to develop the staff's understanding of the pre-school curriculum to connect the children's learning and extend their thinking skills and curiosity;

- to develop a shared understanding of self-evaluation and development planning in order to improve systematically the quality of the provision and the children's outcomes; and
- to continue to develop the quality of the learning environment both indoors and outdoors.

The ETI will monitor and report on the pre-school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

There will be a formal follow-up inspection in 18 to 24 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:

- meetings with those involved with leadership and management, including the nursery manager, the pre-school leader and staff team, and the early years specialist from the Early Years Organisation; 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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