

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Little Ducks Playgroup, Belfast

Report of an Inspection in
February 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
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 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.

Forty-four percent of the parents responded to the questionnaire and a small number of them included additional written comments. The responses were highly positive and indicated a very high level of satisfaction with all aspects of the setting's work; in particular, the parents praised the friendly, caring staff and the good information shared with them about their child's progress. The responses from the staff questionnaires were also very positive. All of the responses have been shared with the staff and the management of the pre-school setting.

2. Context

Little Duck's Playgroup is accommodated within Carew II Family and Training Centre in East Belfast. There have been no changes in staff since the last inspection.

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 | Good |
| Achievements and Standards | Very good |
| Provision | Good |
| Leadership and Management | Good |

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are well-settled and engage purposefully for prolonged periods of play. They demonstrate very good levels of independence and are keen to help and support each other. The majority of the children are beginning to play collaboratively and are confident in engaging with adults and asking questions.
- Almost all of the children can recognise their names and a small number of them can write their name independently. The children show a good interest in early mark making and they particularly enjoy writing notes and lists in the role play area. The children produce good representational drawings and the majority have good scissor skills. They listen attentively in the group story session and have a good recall of the vocabulary and road safety messages in the current transport topic.
- The children enjoy browsing in the book area and show a particular interest in the diary photo books which the staff have created featuring the puppets which the children take turns in bringing home. A number of the children have a developing awareness of numbers and enjoy the regular opportunities provided for them to count in the playroom. Almost all of the children have a good understanding of positional language which the staff use very naturally in their engagement with the children.

6. Provision

- The staff provide a very attractive and stimulating learning environment and make very good use of all of the space in the playroom. The children's work is celebrated in attractive displays around the playroom. The daily routines provide excellent opportunities for the children to develop their independence and for them to have a long period of uninterrupted free play.
- The staff interactions with the children are of a consistently good standard and in the best practice, excellent use is made of a problem-solving approach to develop well the children's thinking skills. To improve further, the staff need to maintain high quality interactions with the children throughout the whole session and ensure that all opportunities for learning are exploited fully.
- The staff have appropriately been reviewing and refining their planning and assessment methods. Their reflections on the children's learning and interests are being used well to inform future planning. The broad and balanced programme provides good to very good opportunities for learning across almost all areas of the pre-school curriculum though there is a need for the staff to review the opportunities provided to develop the children's understanding in early mathematics. This is necessary to ensure that all of the children have high quality opportunities to develop further their knowledge, understanding and skills across the full breadth of early mathematics. The staff have identified appropriately the need to develop further the planning, provision and timetabling for outdoor play.

- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the playgroup is outstanding. There is a welcoming and inclusive ethos in the playgroup and a caring atmosphere that includes respect for others. Very good use has been made of the playgroup's involvement in the 'Media Initiative for Children'¹ to promote positive attitudes to inclusion and to explore feelings and empathy for others. The staff make very effective use of the positive behaviour strategies and as a result the children are all well-behaved and keen to help and support each other.
- The playgroup gives outstanding attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles. These include, for example: the healthy break, the strong emphasis on personal and dental hygiene, and the regular opportunities for energetic physical play.
- The staff have benefitted from their recent participation in the Early Years Special Educational Needs capacity building pilot. As a result, they are more effective in the early identification of children's additional learning needs and use a range of targeted strategies to support the children's development. However, there is a need for the staff to develop an appropriate policy to reflect their practice in this area.

7. Leadership and management

- The leader is an excellent role model in her own practice and has brought about significant improvements in the quality of provision in the playgroup. She has a clear vision for the continued development of the playgroup and promotes a strong team spirit among the staff.
- A good start has been made by the staff in formalising the development planning process and a three year development plan is in place with a number of appropriate areas for development identified. The staff have begun to make use of self-evaluation tools to assist them in evaluating the strengths and areas for improvement of the playgroup. The early years specialist (EYS) from the Early Years Organisation has provided good focused support for the playgroup. There is a need for the staff to embed further the development planning process and to include more detailed action plans aligned to actual practice, that are implemented appropriately to bring about ongoing improvements in the playgroup.
- There are very good links with the parents and the monthly newsletter provides good information on the life and work of the playgroup along with information on how the parents can support their children's learning at home. There are good cross-community links with another local playgroup and the 'Media Initiative for Children' is used very effectively with the parents and the children to develop an understanding and respect for diversity.

¹ The Media Initiative for Children is a programme developed by the Early Years Organisation which combines cartoon media messages and the use of puppets to promote positive attitudes to physical, social and cultural differences amongst young children, practitioners and parents.

- 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 but the following area needs to be addressed:
 - there is a need for the staff to review and update a small number of the policies to ensure that they reflect more fully the practices within the playgroup.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this playgroup is good. The playgroup has important strengths in most of its educational (and pastoral) provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the playgroup has demonstrated the capacity to address.

The areas for improvement include the need for the staff to:

- embed further the development planning process and to include detailed action plans aligned to actual practice, that are implemented appropriately to bring about ongoing improvements in the playgroup; and
- develop further the planning, provision and timetabling for outdoor play.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the playgroup's progress on the areas for improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION LITTLE DUCKS PLAYGROUP

1. Details of Children

| Total number of children: | am session | pm session |
|---|------------|------------|
| attending the pre-school setting | 16 | |
| in their immediate pre-school year | 16 | |
| funded by Department of Education (DE) | 16 | |
| qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2 | 16 | |
| 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. | 82% |
| Number of days open in previous school year | |

** Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Sessions

| Duration of morning session | Duration of afternoon session |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 3¾ hours | - |

3. Details of Staff

| Number of: | Full-time | Part-time |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| Staff, including leader | 2 | |
| 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 | 0 | |

| Number of: *** | |
|----------------|---|
| Students | 1 |
| Trainees | 0 |

*** Total placements since September of current year

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