

# PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Little Folk Playgroup,  
Rostrevor, Co Down

Report of an Inspection in  
December 2014

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*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:

<b>DESCRIPTOR</b>
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.

The staff (60%) and parents (16%) who responded to the questionnaire were positive about most aspects of the life and work of the playgroup. Any issues raised through the questionnaires were shared with the leader and a representative of the management committee.

## 2. Context

Little Folk Playgroup operates in the Lecture Hall in Rostrevor, County Down. At the time of the inspection, a new management committee (including a new chairperson) had just come into place and a new early years specialist (EYS) from the Early Years Organisation had begun to support the playgroup.

## 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

<b>Overall Performance Level</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>Achievements and Standards</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>Provision</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>Leadership and Management</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>

## **Key findings of the inspection**

### **5. Achievements and Standards**

- The children settle enthusiastically into the play activities provided by the staff. Most engage in purposeful play for extended periods and a majority are beginning to work well collaboratively. Overall, for the time of year, most of the children display independence in accessing and managing the resources and equipment on offer, self-registering their activity 'licence' cards, using timers to be aware of how long they can spend at their chosen activities and taking increasing responsibility for key aspects of their personal care.
- Most of the children are confident and imaginative in their free play. For example, in the creative and outdoor areas, they make independent choices about and using appropriately a variety of resources and equipment, including art materials, small tools and games.
- The children enjoy browsing books in the library area and a majority are able to listen attentively during story sessions. There are satisfactory opportunities for the children to develop early mark making and writing; the children who are at this stage in their writing development would benefit from more purposeful experiences to build this aspect of their emerging literacy. Most of the children engage easily in conversations with other children during play and at the snack table.
- Most of the children know about and use some aspects of early mathematics including number and time in their play and are developing an awareness of how to look after living things including seeds, plants and small animals. Overall, the staff need to improve the progression in the learning experiences on offer to provide greater challenge for those children already demonstrating more advanced understanding of early mathematical language and concepts.

### **6. Provision**

- The staff have created a well-resourced learning environment in the playroom and appropriately, they are working towards the further development of the outdoor play area. All of the indoor space and equipment is arranged to provide an appropriate blend of learning experiences and to encourage the children to take increasing responsibility for important aspects of their personal development and regular routines.
- The staff interactions with the children are mainly good. In the best practice observed, the staff listened closely to the children's responses, posed questions to extend the learning potential and the children's thinking and included appropriate vocabulary to build the children's language and early mathematical understanding. On a minority of occasions, the interactions were more limited or supervisory and the learning potential was not fully achieved.
- Overall, the children's educational programme is balanced and contains satisfactory opportunities for learning in most areas of the pre-school curriculum. The system for observing, assessing and recording the children's progress and development is inconsistent and does not currently link well enough with the future planning. It is appropriate that the staff have begun to clarify their shared understanding of these key elements to inform and develop further the planning

in order to meet more fully the children's specific individual needs. The inspection findings endorse the need for this important work, which should be embedded and evaluated fully over time, in order to realise the full learning potential of the planned programme for every child.

- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is good. The playgroup has a child-centred ethos; the children are well-behaved, they approach the adults with confidence and respond positively to their peers. The staff engage kindly with the children and praise the children's efforts in all aspects of their learning.
- The children are provided with healthy snacks, are encouraged to try and enjoy a good variety of fruit and participate in a range of physical activities to develop their agility and co-ordination.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The management committee, leader and staff team are committed to the improvement of the provision and are beginning to make more reflective use of all the available information, to inform the future actions for addressing key areas. It is now important for the staff to plan for and implement systematically the guidance and advice given by the EYS in order to bring about continuous and sustained improvement in the playgroup's provision.
- To improve the overall quality of leadership and management of the playgroup, all those involved need to work together collaboratively to build more effective working relationships and improve the communication; both of which are currently impacting negatively on morale and the ongoing development of the provision. It is appropriate that the staff and the management committee have accessed relevant external support to enable them to carry out their individual and collective roles and responsibilities more effectively. In particular, this includes the need to develop more robust processes for agreeing, recording and communicating all decisions affecting the life and work of the playgroup.
- The staff have developed a range of links with the parents, the local community and neighbouring schools, including implementing appropriate transition arrangements to year one. The parents are given regular newsletters about the provision. It will be important for the staff to strengthen their partnership with parents further by providing them with more specific guidance about the planned programme and how to support their children's learning at home.
- 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, there is an urgent need to:
  - complete the vetting procedure for the newly appointed chairperson; and
  - obtain and display on the parent notice board the most recent Health and Social Services Trust registration document.

## **8. Conclusion**

In most of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this playgroup is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement 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 processes for observing, assessing and recording the children's progress in their learning to inform the planning in order to meet better the children's specific individual needs; and
- for all those involved in the leadership and management of the playgroup to work together collaboratively to build more effective working relationships and to improve the capacity to carry out their individual and collective roles and responsibilities effectively, including the development of more rigorous processes for agreeing, recording and communicating decisions affecting the life and work of the playgroup.

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

## STATISTICAL INFORMATION LITTLE FOLK PLAYGROUP, ROSTREVOR

### 1. Details of Children

<b>Total number of children:</b>	<b>am session</b>	<b>pm session</b>
attending the pre-school setting	24	19
in their immediate pre-school year	24	19
funded by Department of Education (DE)	24	19
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2		
with a statement of special educational needs	0	0
without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	*	0
with English as an additional language	*	0
who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	0	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

<b>Duration of morning session</b>	<b>Duration of afternoon session</b>
2½ hours	2½ hours

### 3. Details of Staff

<b>Number of:</b>	<b>Full-time</b>	<b>Part-time</b>
Staff, including leader		5
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification		5
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification		0
New appointments within previous 12 months		1

<b>Number of: ***</b>	
Students	1
Trainees	0

\*\*\* Total placements since September of current year



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