

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Little Oaks Pre-School,
Portadown, County Armagh

Voluntary playgroup

Report of an Inspection in
May 2018



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments

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1. Context

Little Oaks Pre-School is located in Killicomaine Community Centre, Portadown and provides two daily sessions for the children who come from the surrounding local area. The children in the morning session are all in their pre-school year; the afternoon session caters for children who are either in their pre-school or penultimate pre-school year. The leader and almost all of the staff have been in post since the last inspection.

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending part-time	26	26
Under 3 years of age*	0	21
Funded by Department of Education	26	10
With 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	5	5

Average percentage attendance for the previous year.	83.54%
Number of days open in previous school year	191

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

A small number of parents responded to the confidential questionnaire. The responses were wholly positive about all aspects of the life and work of the playgroup. The small number of written comments praised the staff and management committee who provide parents with useful information to progress the children's learning. All of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaire and their responses were wholly positive. The written comments highlighted the staff's commitment to self-evaluation and improving the provision for the children.

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	Important areas for improvement
Outcomes for learners	Good
Quality of provision	Important areas for improvement
Leadership and management	Important areas for improvement

5. Outcomes for learners

- All of the children are happy and settle quickly to play. Almost all of the children are developing well their independence; they self-register on arrival, self-select their areas for play, organise their snack, and, manage their own personal care. During the inspection, a small number of the children were observed engaging in collaborative play, most notably, when completing jigsaws, building in the construction area and mark-making with chalk outdoors. A minority of children find it difficult to sustain play without the support an adult.
- Overall, the children achieve a good standard in most areas of the curriculum. Most of the children count as a natural part of their play. They use mathematical language to compare the size and length of objects and have a good understanding of shape and colour.
- Many of the children enjoy browsing books in the outdoor area and mark make using a range of materials. The children listen attentively during story time and engage enthusiastically with the props.
- The children have good fine motor skills; they thread beads and use scissors with developing confidence at the junk-art table. The children's creativity and their interest in and understanding of the world around them is underdeveloped for the time of year.
- Newcomer children and those who require support with aspects of their learning are well-integrated and are making good progress.

6. Quality of provision

- The planned programme does not provide sufficient provision and progression across the pre-school curriculum, particularly in The World Around Us and the Arts. The children have limited opportunities to explore, experiment and investigate the natural world around them and develop their creativity. The development of the children's personal, social and emotional skills is a particular strength of the provision.
- The staff observe regularly the children's learning and have identified appropriately the need to link better the observations of the children's learning to the planning to ensure progression. The inspection findings confirm that this as an area for improvement.
- The playroom is attractive and well-organised with a range of resources that are readily accessible to the children. The outdoor space is not resourced appropriately to support the development of children's physical skills and is not utilised effectively enough to maximise the children's learning.

- There is variation in the quality of staff interactions. While the staff are always supportive and encouraging to the children, at times, the interactions are supervisory and as a result there are too many missed opportunities to develop and extend the children's learning. In the best practice, the staff build on the children's interests and extend their language.
- The children who have additional learning needs are identified early and appropriately. The individual education plans outline appropriate strategies for the staff to support the children; however, the children's targets need to be more specific and achievable to measure better their progress.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the pre-school's approach to care and welfare impacts positively on outcomes. The staff create an inclusive and caring ethos and are consistent in their approach to positive behaviour management. Consequently, the children are confident and well-behaved.

7. Leadership and management

- The playgroup's approach to self-evaluation is underdeveloped. While the development plan and action plans are well-constructed and outline appropriate priorities, there is limited evidence of the impact of this work on the quality of the provision and the outcomes for the children. The use of effective monitoring and evaluation strategies to measure the impact of the development work is an area for improvement.
- The staff team work well together and are supportive of one another. They are ably supported by the members of the management committee who have clear roles and responsibilities, are well-informed about the life and work of the playgroup, and provide very good support to the leader and staff.
- The current early years' specialist has provided a very good level of support to the pre-school. Prior to January 2018, the pre-school received inconsistent and insufficient support from the early years' organisation.
- A strength of the pre-school is the very good link with the local primary school which supports the children very well with transition. Parents are encouraged to play an active role in their children's development through the 'Big Bedtime Read' and 'Ages and Stages' initiatives.

8. Safeguarding

- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect broadly the guidance from the relevant Departments. However, the Little Oaks Pre-school needs to develop an attendance policy. This has been identified appropriately by the staff and management committee.

9. Overall effectiveness

Little Oaks Pre-school needs to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners.

The areas for improvement are to:

- develop the planning and provision for all areas of learning, in particular, the Arts and the World Around Us;
- use the observations to inform the short-term planning to meet better the children's differing needs; and
- improve self-evaluation and demonstrate the impact of the improvement work on the provision leading to better outcomes for the children.

The ETI will monitor and report on the playgroup's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection in 12 to 18 months.

Health and safety/accommodation

- The door to the children's toilets is heavy and presents a health and safety risk to the children.

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:

- a meeting with those involved with leadership and management, including the management group; 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 management:

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the school:

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.
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.
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.
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.

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