

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Little Sunbeams Playgroup,
Saintfield, Co Down

Report of an Inspection in
March 2015

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.

All of the returns from the questionnaires indicated high levels of satisfaction with the work of the playgroup.

2. Context

Little Sunbeams Playgroup is located in the grounds of St. Mary's Primary School, Saintfield. Since the last inspection, the playgroup has moved to new purpose-built mobile accommodation. At the time of the inspection, there were 18 pre-school and four underage children enrolled in the playgroup. The children come from a wide catchment area.

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	Satisfactory
Achievements and Standards	Satisfactory
Provision	Satisfactory
Leadership and Management	Satisfactory

5. Children's achievements

- Most of the children settle quickly to their chosen activity and they appear relaxed and happy. The children play collaboratively and purposefully. Their behaviour is very good and they are confident in engaging with the staff and visitors to the playgroup.
- The children engage well in imaginative play and most are confident in using a range of small and large tools and equipment. They listen attentively during the large group story sessions. Many of the children's individual drawings and paintings are representational and show good attention to detail.
- The organisation of the greeting and transition times need to be reviewed in order to make more effective use of all time and ensure that the children's concentrated play is not interrupted unnecessarily.

6. Provision

- There is a friendly and welcoming atmosphere in the playgroup and the working relationships between the staff and the children are very good. The staff are caring and supportive to the children. The adults work very well as a team in the best interests of the children.
- Often, the staff engaged in purposeful interactions with the children, promoting effectively their self-esteem and language. In the best practice observed, the adults responded effectively to the children's interests, suggestions and needs and used skilful questioning to promote their thinking, to encourage them to provide extended responses and to develop their levels of independence.
- The staff's planning indicates that the children have opportunities for learning across all area of the pre-school programme. Although the written planning outlines a range of activities for the children across the pre-school curriculum, opportunities for the development of the children's understanding of the World Around Us are under-developed. The staff need to provide more opportunities to develop the children's curiosity and to encourage them to explore and experiment with a range of topics and activities.
- The staff know the children well and collate useful observations for each child. They now need to link more clearly the observations of the children's responses to their play into the future plans, identify clear strategies for individual children and ensure there is sufficient challenge and progression in the learning activities for all of the children.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is a key strength in the playgroup's provision. The strengths include the very positive working relationships at all levels, the high priority given by the staff to the care and well-being of the children and the friendly and welcoming atmosphere that permeates the playgroup.
- The playgroup has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department.

- The playgroup gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and life-styles including, for example, the provision of a healthy snack.

7. Leadership and management

- All of the staff, the early years specialist (EYS) from the Early Years Organisation and members of the management committee work collaboratively, have an effective team approach and share expertise; they are all fully committed to the best outcomes for the children and the families in the area.
- The staff have not yet begun to develop the process of self-evaluation; the staff should use the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report as the key priorities for the future development of the playgroup's work.

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 in achievements and standards, learning and teaching, leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively. The Inspectorate will monitor and report on the playgroup's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12-24 month period.

The areas for further development are the need:

- to develop the process of self-evaluation;
- to develop the World Around Us aspect of the programme to heighten the children's curiosity in, and exploration of, a wide range of resources and topics; and
- develop further the planning to outline more clearly the learning inherent in the activities and to make greater use of observation and evaluations when planning to meet the needs of all the children.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION LITTLE SUNBEAMS 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	8	
funded by Department of Education (DE)	8	
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	8	
with a statement of special educational needs	1	
without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	0	
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.	96%
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
3 hours	-

3. Details of Staff

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

Number of: ***	
Students	1
Trainees	0

*** Total placements since September of current year

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