

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Loughinisland Playgroup,
Co Down

Report of an Inspection in
January 2015

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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:

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.

The parental responses indicate very high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the educational and pastoral provision provided by the playgroup. In particular, the parents appreciate the dedication and enthusiasm of the staff and the provision of a wide range of activities and resources for the children.

2. Context

Loughinisland Playgroup is located in the grounds of St. McCartan's Church, in the village of Loughinisland. The children come mainly from the surrounding rural area, in the parish of Loughinisland and Seaforde. Since the last inspection, a new leader has been appointed.

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

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are very well settled, for the time of year, they are familiar with the daily routines and their behaviour is excellent. All of the children engage in purposeful play, alone, in pairs or in groups. Nearly all of the children relate well to one another, they are learning to share the materials and clearly enjoy the range of interesting learning activities available to them.
- Many of the children show a growing awareness of mathematical language and ideas through their play. For example, they like to count, they can sort and match and most demonstrate an increasing awareness of colour and shapes as they explore a wide range of resources. Many of the children's representational paintings and drawings show close attention to detail and are of a very good quality.
- Most of the children can choose resources independently and make good use of all the space available. They demonstrate good self-management skills as they engage in the tidy-up routine, store their work, organise their own snack and dress appropriately for outdoor play.

6. Provision

- The playgroup has a very positive ethos; the working relationships at all levels are excellent. The warm, supportive atmosphere helps the children grow in confidence and is developing their self-esteem.
- The free play session provides the children with good opportunities to make independent choices and to explore learning across all areas of the pre-school programme. While routines are unobtrusive and provide the children with some choice and, develop their social skills and extend their learning. The period of uninterrupted free play should be extended .
- The staff use a thematic approach to planning the curriculum; the written planning outlines many interesting activities and identifies appropriately some useful learning opportunities for the children in all areas of the pre-school curriculum. While the staff make some relevant observations of the children's responses to the play programme, it will be important for them to develop further the learning inherent in the activities and use the information from their observations more effectively to inform the future planning of the play programme.
- The development of the children's personal, social, emotional and language skills are strengths of the provision. Early scientific ideas are generated through play with sand and water. The children are encouraged to notice changes in materials, for example, as they observe the ice melting in warm water.
- The availability of an appropriate range of writing tools and materials provides the children with very good opportunities to develop their experimental writing skills. Captions, labels and visual instructions are used very effectively to record the children's learning experiences and to promote the development of their early reading skills. The adults read stories at the children's request and the children listen attentively during the group story time which they all enjoy.

- The staff know the children well and make very good efforts to identify, address and monitor the particular problems faced by the children with additional support needs.
- There are very good links with the parents who are kept well informed about events within the playgroup. The staff have also developed very good links with the local schools and the wider community.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the playgroup is very good. The staff are very caring and attentive to the children and supportive of one another. They provide a safe and secure learning environment for the children where they are at ease with the staff and clearly enjoy their learning.

7. Leadership and management

- The staff work together effectively as a team in the best interests of the children. Since the last inspection, the staff have developed various aspects of the centre's provision, including the outdoor play provision. The current development plan outlines appropriately a range of developments and improvements that will enhance further the provision for the children.
- All of the staff have undertaken a wide range of additional training; their recent involvement in the Special Educational Needs Capacity Building pilot has led to the implementation of a range of new strategies and resources to improve their practice. An example of this is the positive management of the children's behaviour.
- The staff are receiving appropriate guidance from their current early years specialist (EYS) from the Early Years Organisation who has been supporting the group for just over a year. The staff report that there has been fragmented support from a number of previous EYSs over the past ten years, and at times they have received contradictory advice. It will be important for the EYS to work with the staff to develop further their involvement in the process of self-evaluation.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection the playgroup has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding the children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant departments.
- The playgroup gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, through the healthy breaks provided and the regular opportunities for physical activity outdoors.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of the education provided by this playgroup is very good. The playgroup is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION LOUGHNISLAND PLAYGROUP

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school setting	24	
in their immediate pre-school year	24	
funded by Department of Education (DE)	24	
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	2	
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.	86.5%
Number of days open in previous school year	189

** Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Sessions

Duration of morning session	Duration of afternoon session
2½ hours	-

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader		3
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification		3
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification		0
New appointments within previous 12 months		0

Number of: ***	
Students	0
Trainees	0

*** Total placements since September of current year

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