

# PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Newtownabbey Methodist  
Mission Playgroup, Co Antrim

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 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.

The small number of responses received through the questionnaires were generally positive about the work of the playgroup. The small number of issues raised have been shared with the leadership and management group.

## 2. Context

The playgroup is accommodated in Newtownabbey Methodist Mission church hall in the Rathcoole Estate. Due to the nature of the shared facility, the staff set up and clear away the playgroup equipment on a regular basis. Although there is currently no outdoor area, a large adjacent hall is used for physical play activities. Since the last inspection, a new leader and deputy leader have been appointed. The staff report a recent increase in the number of newcomer children and also an increase in the number of children enrolled who have been identified as having additional needs.

## 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

<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>Satisfactory</b>

## **Key findings of the inspection**

### **5. Achievements and standards**

- The children are making satisfactory to good progress across all areas of the pre-school curriculum.
- The children independently choose play activities and cooperate very well with the daily routines such as snack time and tidy up time. Almost all of the children can share, take turns and are developing well their social skills. The small number of children who still require help to regulate their behaviours and emotions are well supported and are making good progress.
- There is a wide variation in the quality of the children's communication and oral language skills. Most of the children are confident in talking to the staff and each other about their experiences during their play; almost all participate fully in the enjoyable group story and song session. The small group of children who experimented with the musical instruments were confident in their singing, rhyme and rhythm. A few children choose to refer to books during their play, both independently and with adult support. The staff need to use every opportunity to promote the children's' vocabulary, communication skills and their interest in mark making more consistently.
- The children are given opportunities to develop effectively their gross motor skills through, for example: throwing, cycling, running, climbing and balancing.
- The children show an interest in capacity, number and shape particularly for example, as they use the puzzles and water tray activities. The staff need to model and introduce a broader range of mathematical language through the full range of activities and daily routines.
- The children use the wide range of construction materials imaginatively to make simple models and they enjoy exploring the properties of dough and water. The staff have identified appropriately the need to enhance the children's learning opportunities as they develop an outdoor play space.

### **6. Provision**

- The staff provide a good range of stimulating activities which are well laid out into distinct areas and promote independent choice of play, both within the play room and the large hall area. The daily routine is well managed and provides a good balance of freely chosen play, smooth transitions and appropriate whole group sessions.
- All of the staff are caring and supportive as they engage with the children and they settle them well to purposeful play and promote effectively their social skills. The quality of the staff interaction to support the children's learning and development ranges from satisfactory to very good. The best practice needs to be identified and built upon further to ensure that the staff use high quality engagement in all activities which is well matched to the wide range of the children stages of development.

- The staff recognise the need to develop further their systems for planning the pre-school programme and assessing the children's progress. The planning needs to identify more fully the learning potential of the activities to guide more effectively the staff interactions with the children on a day-to-day basis. The methods for assessing the children's progress need to be more systematic and effective to ensure that progress is tracked more accurately and that the information is used to tailor more closely the experiences and support to the needs of individual children.
- The staff have benefited from participating in the SEN capacity building training. They now need to implement this training more fully to plan appropriately for individual children and improve their processes for recording and tracking children's progress.
- The quality of the pastoral care is good. There is an inclusive and respectful ethos based on good working relationships between the staff and the caring and supportive approach towards the children.
- The children have a healthy fruit break and daily opportunities for physical activity which promotes a healthy lifestyle.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- Since the last inspection a new leadership team has been established. They foster a strong whole-team approach among the dedicated and hard working staff. While there is evidence of improvements in the development of, for example, improving resources and future planning for an outdoor play space, overall, the staff recognise that the processes for self evaluation leading to continuous improvement are at an early stage of development.
- There are useful links with the parents including a regular newsletter and meetings to discuss the children's progress. The link with the newly developing Newtownabbey Early Years Learning Partnership is strengthening working relationships between the private playgroup and schools sector and is provided a useful forum for sharing practice. The staff need to keep the children's attendance under review and where it is poor, consider ways to support parents to attend more regularly, to ensure their children benefit fully from their funded pre-school year.
- There are good links being developed with most of the local feeder primary schools, Sure Start and Barnardos Family Connections project.
- The support being provided by the early years specialist from the Early Years Organisation is very good. She provides relevant evaluative feedback and guidance and there is evidence that the areas of focus have improved.
- The management group provide useful support to the leader and have indicated that they would undertake a training needs analysis to ensure they are fully equipped in their role.
- On the basis of the evidence at the time of the inspection, the playgroup has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant departments.

## **8. Conclusion**

In most of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided in this playgroup is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision.

The inspection has identified areas for improvement in learning and teaching, and leadership and management, which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively.

The most important areas to be addressed are to:

- develop further their systems for planning the pre-school programme and assessing the children's progress;
- ensure the staff use more consistently high quality interactions with the children which are more closely matched to the wide range of the children stages of development; and
- develop further the staff's capacity for effective self evaluation and development planning.

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 NEWTOWNABBEY METHODIST MISSION PLAYGROUP

### 1. Details of Children

<b>Total number of children:</b>	<b>am session</b>	<b>pm session</b>
attending the pre-school setting	25	
in their immediate pre-school year	25	*
funded by Department of Education (DE)	25	
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	25	
with a statement of special educational needs	*	
without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	*	
with English as an additional language	*	
who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school		

\* denotes a category which has fewer than five

Attendance** of funded children for the previous school year.	79.6%
Number of days open in previous school year	188

\*\* 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>
3 hours	-

### 3. Details of Staff

<b>Number of:</b>	<b>Full-time</b>	<b>Part-time</b>
Staff, including leader		4
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification		4
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification		0
New appointments within previous 12 months		1

<b>Number of: ***</b>	
Students	3
Trainees	

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



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