

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Rathfriland Pre-school
Playgroup, Newry,
County Down

Report of an Inspection in
June 2016

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The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing Inspection Services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
Department for Communities

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



Quantitative terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

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 when reporting on Achievement and standards, on Provision for learning and on 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 nursery school / playgroup has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the nursery school / playgroup sustains improvement.
The nursery school /playgroup demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the nursery school/ playgroup sustains improvement.
The nursery school/ playgroup needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the nursery school's/ playgroup's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.
The nursery school / playgroup needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all learners. It requires external support to do so. The ETI will monitor and report on the nursery school's / playgroup's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

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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 publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self-evaluation* at: [Together Towards Improvement Pre-school | Education and Training Inspectorate](#)

Inspectors observed learning and teaching 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 meeting with those involved with leadership and management including the management group; and
- the opportunity for the parents and staff to complete confidential questionnaires.

Seventeen percent of parents responded to the confidential questionnaire; most of the responses were highly positive. In the additional written comments, the parents praised the professionalism and dedication of the staff and the support provided in building the children's self-esteem and confidence. All of the staff responded to the questionnaire; their responses were wholly positive. The issues raised in the questionnaires have been shared with the staff and representatives of the management committee.

2. Focus of inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all children, the purpose of inspection is, through effective linking of internal and external approaches, to evaluate the:

- children's achievements and standards;
- quality of provision for learning; and
- quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

Rathfriland Pre-school Playgroup is a long established playgroup located in Rathfriland Community Centre situated in the centre of the town. The children in the playgroup come from the immediate vicinity of the town and the surrounding rural townlands. On the day of the inspection, a new staff member had joined the team.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Achievements and standards	Very good
Provision for learning	Very good
Leadership and management	Very good

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are friendly and welcoming to visitors and engage in purposeful play for sustained periods of time. They are confident in asking questions and when discussing their learning. The children are familiar with key early mathematical concepts within the areas of number, capacity, money, shape and space. Early language skills are developing well; the children are attempting to label their own work and engage with real reading material in the role-play areas.
- The children show high levels of independence and are imaginative and innovative in using the readily available resources to express their ideas and interests, particularly at the indoor and outdoor creative play areas. Their observation and decision-making skills are well developed through the provision of real resources and a wide choice of various sized paintbrushes, paper and writing tools. Their representational paintings and junk models are very detailed and imaginative.
- The children show a natural curiosity in the world around them and enjoy exploring and investigating the mini-beast area outdoors. They play co-operatively and imaginatively in the role play areas and transfer their play across areas within the playroom. The children grow a range of flowers, fruit and vegetables and are keen to tell visitors about their work in this area.

6. Provision for learning

- All of the available indoor and outdoor space has been used imaginatively to create learning opportunities for the children; the provision of natural resources and authentic equipment has developed the children's imagination in the role-play areas and developed their sense of discovery and exploration outdoors. The extensive range of children's work displayed in the playroom creates a child-centred learning environment and the children take pride in talking about their achievements.
- The staff develop the children's language through the use of open-ended questioning strategies and model appropriate topic-based language. Of particular note is the engagement with the young children at the creative area about real artists and their style of painting. The staff play alongside the children, often taking roles within the play activities to extend the learning and promote the children's language.
- The play programme is broad and well balanced and provides very good learning experiences across the pre-school curriculum. The detailed planning, observation and assessment link effectively with future planning and highlight what action the staff need to take in order to meet the needs and interests of the children and ensure their progression across the year. The staff have worked hard at involving the children in the planning process and have identified the need to review this aspect of provision to make it more manageable. The children with additional needs are identified early. There are individual education plans in place and the staff monitor and record the progress of the children.
- The quality of the pastoral care is very good; the staff are kind and supportive of the children's needs. Although there has been a recent change in staffing, there are positive working relationships within the playgroup.

- The staff use the planned programme to promote actively healthy eating and physical activity. There are opportunities for physical play outdoors and the children grow and care for a variety of flowers, fruit and vegetables.

7. Leadership and management

- The very experienced playgroup leader is well supported by the assistants and the staff work well as a team and are supportive of their new colleague. The staff have undertaken a significant range of pre-school training opportunities to improve their own capacity to provide quality learning experiences for the children. The management committee is involved actively in the life and work of the playgroup and has put in place succession training to ensure the smooth transition of key roles of responsibility within the committee. The extensive range of policies and procedures, which guide the work of the playgroup, are reviewed regularly by the staff and the management committee.
- There is a well embedded process of self-evaluation and reflection in the playgroup with a clear focus on the children's learning and well-being. Of particular note are the very good pastoral and curricular links with the local primary schools which provide progression from the pre-school curriculum to the primary curriculum and help with the transition from playgroup to the foundation stage. The staff have developed effective links with parents through, for example, a monthly newsletter which provides details of topics, planned closures and up-coming events.
- On the basis of the evidence available 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. Overall effectiveness

Rathfriland Pre-school Playgroup has a high capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will continue to monitor how the playgroup sustains improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON RATHFRILAND PRESCHOOL PLAYGROUP, NEWRY

1. Details of children

Number of children:	Class 1
Attending full-time	0
Attending part-time	24
Under 3 years of age*	0
Funded by Department of Education	24
With statement of special educational needs	0
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	2
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	0
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	0
With English as an additional language	0
Who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	0

* On 1 July.

** The stages refer to those set out in the Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs.

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	24
Average attendance for the previous year.	
Number of days open in previous school year	

2. Duration of sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
	3 hours	

3. Details of staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff including, Teachers/Leaders	1	2
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification	1	2
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification	0	0
New appointments within the previous 12 months	0	0

Number of: ***	
Students	0
Trainees	0

*** Total placements since September of current year

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