

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Squirrels Montessori Nursery,
Enniskillen, Co Fermanagh

Report of an Inspection in
May 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

Contents

Section	Page
1. Inspection method and evidence base	1
2. Context	1
3. Focus of inspection	1
4. Overall findings	1
5. Achievements and standards	2
6. Provision	2
7. Leadership and management	3
8. Conclusion	3
Appendix	

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 and staff to complete a confidential questionnaire or to meet with the inspection team.

Forty-two percent of the parents responded to the questionnaire and most of those provided additional written comments. The parents praised the highly committed and caring staff for the provision made for all children; particularly those with additional needs, and were wholly positive about all aspects of the educational and pastoral provision provided by the playgroup. The staff responses were very positive. All of the responses have been shared with the staff and management of the playgroup.

2. Context

Squirrels Montessori Nursery is situated in a purpose built mobile building in the town boundary of Enniskillen. The playgroup operates two part-time sessions for children from the local area. The leader who is the proprietor and the staff have been in post since the last inspection in 2006.

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	Outstanding
Achievements and Standards	Outstanding
Provision	Outstanding
Leadership and Management	Outstanding

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are sociable, confident and imaginative in their play and learning. They are well-motivated to learn and engage in purposeful, concentrated play. They collaborate effectively during play and are confident to turn to the staff for additional support to extend their ideas and display high levels of independence in accessing resources and making choices in their play.
- The children's communication skills including their mark making and pre-reading skills are well-developed. They show a keen interest in the books around the playroom and in the quiet area and enjoy the large and small group story sessions. The children enjoy singing and know the actions for a repertoire of rhymes. They have acquired a high level of mathematical language for shape and position and can sort or name sea creatures and animals.
- During the inspection, the children were observed watering and caring for a wide range of small trees and flowers grown from seeds. They develop well their gross motor skills through running and jumping in the outdoors and show very good levels of interest in the world around them.

6. Provision

- The staff have worked hard to create stimulating and safe indoor and outdoor learning environments. The children's work is valued and displayed attractively throughout the playroom. There is a smooth flow to the organisation of the day and the routines are used very well to develop the children's independence and self-management skills.
- The staff interactions, often with a sense of fun for the children, are skilful in sustaining high quality play and learning. They listen carefully to the children and respond appropriately to their ideas. The staff extend effectively the children's language through immersion in a rich language environment and encourage them to ask questions.
- The children's educational programme is well-balanced with very good opportunities for learning across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The planning is comprehensive and guides well the work of the staff with the children. It is well-informed by the thorough and rigorous system for observing the children at play and assessing the progress in their learning. Planning for children with additional needs is very well informed by individual needs and in collaboration with external professional agencies and families.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is outstanding. There is a welcoming and inclusive ethos in the playgroup. The staff have a consistent, positive and respectful approach with the children which encourages the children to be well behaved, to share and to play collaboratively.
- The staff give very good attention to the promotion of healthy eating through the provision of healthy snacks. The children have regular opportunities to engage in energetic physical activity outdoors.

7. Leadership and management

- The leader, who is the proprietor, is highly committed and has a clear vision for the continued development of the playgroup and its role in supporting families with differing needs. She has maintained effective links and partnerships with a wide range of professionals in the local community. The leader is a very good role model in her work with the children and is well-supported by the skilful assistant; together they have developed and sustained an effective team approach to all aspects of the work of the playgroup.
- The staff are highly reflective and have used the process of self-evaluation to bring about significant improvements in the provision. Excellent use has been made of funding to improve the quality of the accommodation by adding new windows, doors and disability access. The maintenance of the mobile continues to be costly and the staff make the best possible use of all the space to provide for the needs of all the children. They are currently working on the second year of implementation of the three-year development plan which is appropriately designed to meet the needs of the children.
- The playgroup has developed very good links with the parents through an informative induction meeting and regular newsletters. The parents are welcomed to the playroom at the beginning and end of each session. A particular strength of the playgroup is the development of effective links with the local health professionals which enhance the learning experiences of the children.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the pre-school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Departments.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this playgroup is outstanding; the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. 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 SQUIRRELS MONTESSORI NURSERY

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school setting	16	17
in their immediate pre-school year	16	13
funded by Department of Education (DE)	16	12
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	0	*
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	0	3
who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	0	2

* Special Educational Needs = fewer than five

Attendance** of funded children for the previous school year.	85%
Number of days open in previous school year	195

** Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Sessions

Duration of morning session	Duration of afternoon session
2½ hours	2½ hours

3. Details of Staff

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

Number of: ***	
Students	0
Trainees	0

*** Total placements since September of current year

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