

# Education and Training Inspectorate PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



## St Comgall's Playgroup, Antrim

Voluntary playgroup DE Ref No: 3AB-0351

Report of an Inspection in January 2020



Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education  
Department for the Economy  
and other commissioning Departments



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## 1. Context

St Comgall's Playgroup is located in St Comgall's minor hall in Antrim; there is access to a soft play outdoor play area. The children attending the playgroup come from the local area. There have been changes in staff since the last inspection. The playgroup is engaged in a shared education programme with a playgroup in Kells.

<b>Number of children:</b>	Class 1
Attending part-time	24
Funded by Department of Education	24
With English as an additional language	8

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2	100
Average percentage attendance for the previous year	85.95
Number of days open in previous school year	185

**Source:** data provided by the setting.

\* On 1 July.

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

# fewer than 5

N/A not available

## 2. Views of parents and staff

A small number of the parents and all of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. Almost all responses were very positive; in written comments, the parents highlighted the positive holistic approach of the caring staff. A summary of the questionnaire responses were shared with the leader and a representative from the management committee.

## 3. Focus of the inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all learners, the inspection linked internal and external approaches to evaluate the:

- outcomes for the children;
- quality of provision for learning; and
- leadership and management.

## 4. Overall findings of the inspection

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Very good
<b>Quality of provision</b>	Good
<b>Leadership and management</b>	Good

## **5. Outcomes for learners**

- All of the children settle quickly to their self-chosen activities and can play for sustained periods of time across a range of activities which reflect their various interests, for example, sorting games and jigsaws. Almost of the children have very good levels of independence; they self-register, manage their own personal care and are highly motivated learners.
- The children are developing friendships and collaborate very well especially during their role-play in the home corner. They share, co-operate and show respect, kindness and consideration for each other.
- Nearly all of the children are making very good progress across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. They enjoy exploring a wide range of art materials and discuss enthusiastically their own creative ideas, as they investigate different textures, colours and playdough. All of the children are making detailed early representations of a high standard, for example, snowmen and polar bears. Their early mark making is of a very high standard and is integrated into many areas of play. The children have very well developed fine motor skills; they use skilfully and safely a wide range of equipment including writing implements, real cutlery, and authentic tools.
- Most of the children listen attentively during the large-group story; a majority contribute by asking and answering open-ended questions. Nearly all of the children engage confidently in conversations with their peers and with the adults; however, a small number of children need further support to develop their listening and attentional skills during instructions, story time, and transitions. The children join in singing songs and rhymes using sign language to integrate all of the children.
- The children enjoy and respond positively to opportunities to extend their learning through the World Around Us by exploring their natural environment with curiosity. They use their senses to investigate effectively and make predictions about a range of natural materials that reflect their interests and topics; they particularly enjoy investigating the properties of water and ice.
- The children who require support with aspects of their learning are integrated very well into the pre-school and are making good progress.

## **6. Quality of provision**

- The staff plan a broad and balanced programme which provide good opportunities for learning across the pre-school curriculum. There is appropriate short-, medium- and long-term planning for all areas; however, planning for the outdoor play area does not focus clearly enough on providing opportunities for the development of the children's gross motor skills through energetic play. Although the staff observe and record the children's learning regularly, the written observations and assessments are not being used sufficiently to inform future planning to ensure progression for all children. The process requires further development.

- The staff create a well-organised attractive learning environment with resources that are accessible to the children. The children's work is valued and displayed on wall displays. The outdoor provision provides different contexts and opportunities for the children to apply their learning; the staff have correctly identified that physical skills require progression. There is a good balance between free play and organised activities; however, transitions are not smooth between tidy-up time, and indoor and outdoor play.
- Almost all of the staff interaction is effective in promoting the children's language and learning by effectively modelling vocabulary, asking open-ended questions and supporting the children's social skills.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the pre-school's approach to care and welfare impacts positively on learning and teaching, and outcomes. The staff have a very positive and nurturing approach towards the children which enhances their self-esteem and confidence.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The leadership of the playgroup is good; the staff combine their complementary talents and skills well and work collaboratively with a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. There is a culture of self-evaluation and reflection which identifies appropriate priorities for improvement through a development plan. The action plans do not focus consistently on the potential impact of the actions leading to improvement.
- The management committee have high expectations and is informed about the work of the playgroup through regular and detailed reports from the leadership. The independent early years specialist provides clear guidance and support for improvement.
- There are effective links with the parents and the local community. The parents receive regular information through newsletters, meetings and reports; they attend events and activities and assist with fundraising. A wide range of visitors to the setting and educational visits enrich the children's learning experiences, for example, the fire station, greengrocer and post office.
- There are agreed priorities and effective action plans for the 'Sharing from the Start' shared education programme that are leading to improved learning experiences for all of the children and staff, for example, the children benefit from visiting each setting, and staff share examples of good practice.

## **8. Safeguarding**

- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect broadly the guidance from the relevant Departments. There is a need to update the Anti-bullying Policy to reflect more fully the current guidance from the Department of Education.

## **9. Overall effectiveness**

St Comgall's Playgroup demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners.

There are areas for improvement that the playgroup has demonstrated the capacity to address. The areas for improvement are:

- to develop further the cycle of observation and assessment to inform future planning to ensure progression in learning for all children; and
- to develop effective outdoor play planners ensuring progression and appropriate learning outcomes for the children.

The ETI will monitor how the playgroup sustains improvement.

### Inspection methodology and evidence base

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework is available on the ETI website <https://www.etini.gov.uk/publications/inspection-and-self-evaluation-framework-isef-effective-practice-and-self-evaluation>.

Inspectors observed learning and teaching through play, the children's achievements, progression and standards, scrutinised relevant documentation, and held formal and informal discussions with 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 a confidential questionnaire.

## Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

### 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 ETI use the following performance levels when reporting on outcomes for learners, quality of provision and leadership and management<sup>1</sup>:

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on governance:

High degree of confidence
Confidence
Limited confidence

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on safeguarding:

Reflects the guidance
Reflects broadly the guidance
Unsatisfactory

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on care and welfare:

Impacts positively on learning, teaching and outcomes for learners
Does not impact positively enough on learning, teaching and outcomes for learners

<sup>1</sup> And the overall provision in a subject area or unit, as applicable.



## Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the school:

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

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