

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Finian's Playgroup,
Newtownards, County Down

Report of an inspection in
October 2016



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments



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, 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.

None of the parents and a small number of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. All responses were wholly positive.

2. Focus of inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all children¹, 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

St Finian's playgroup is located within a converted classroom in St Finian's Primary School in Newtownards. Recently, the staff have developed the outdoor play area. The children attending the playgroup come from the town and immediate areas.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

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

¹ In the case of a Day Nursery this refers only to the DE-funded pre-school provision.

5. Achievements and standards

- Nearly all of the children are very well settled for the time of year; they are highly motivated and engage very well for sustained periods in purposeful play. They are confident in their approach to activities and in their interactions with adults and peers. They are curious and often ask insightful questions of the adults; they are able to attend to their own needs and demonstrate high levels of independence.
- Their conversational skills are very well developed and they talk confidently about their play activities and experiences. Many of the children are able to use early mathematical language associated with time, number, shape, size, quantity and position. The children have an excellent understanding of the schedule of the day. They use sand timers very well and share in activities with one another.
- The children show a keen interest in books; at this early stage of the year, they have a wide ranging vocabulary. They use reference books and ask adults to read stories. As a result of excellent behaviour management all of the children listen attentively at group story time. Their language develops well as they join in enthusiastically with the story, songs and rhymes. Most of the children are developing their early writing skills well and many are able to write letters and their own names. The children's early representational drawings, paintings and model are detailed.
- The children who require support with aspects of their learning are well integrated and are making good progress.
- All of the children are attaining the expected standards across all six areas of learning. The children's development in language generally, and early mathematical language in particular, their outdoor learning and their creativity are particular strengths.

6. Provision for learning

- The learning programmes and experiences provided for the children are outstanding. All time, including that for necessary routines and transitions, is used very effectively to promote learning.
- The staff work together effectively as a team in the best interest of the children. All of them are caring and clearly enjoy their work with. They provide a rich learning environment and stimulating learning experiences across all areas of the preschool programme. The ethos is inclusive and respectful and the children's behaviour is excellent. The prompts, posters, photographs and displays around the room stimulate the children's interest, arouse their curiosity and enhance their learning.
- Additional resources enable the children to develop their independence, encourage them to make independent choices and to take responsibility for their own learning space.
- The quality of the interaction of the staff with the children is consistently of a very high standard. All of the staff demonstrate a clear understanding of the learning inherent in the various activities.

- The written planning for a progressive programme is underpinned by a very good, shared understanding of the pre-school curriculum. The observations of the children's responses to the play programme are detailed and relevant and the staff use the information gathered well to inform further planning.
- The staff know the children well; they have developed appropriate education plans with manageable targets to address the children's specific needs.
- The quality of pastoral care is outstanding and meets fully the needs of every child. The children are at ease with the staff, turning to them confidently for help and support. The happy learning environment is evident through the children's singing and laughter as they play.

7. Leadership and management

- The leadership of the provision is outstanding. The staff work very effectively as a team and are reflective in their practice; the work of the centre is of a very high standard. Much attention is given to continuous professional development; there is evidence that their attendance at relevant courses has a positive impact on their work thus is enhancing the learning opportunities provided.
- The management group is very supportive; they meet regularly with the staff. The staff value the support provided by the independent early years specialist.
- Development planning and self-evaluation is very good. The plan outlines appropriate targets for improvement and the staff are able to demonstrate that improvement happens, particularly in the outdoor play provision, through effective self-evaluation.
- The parents are kept informed of the work and life of the pre-school. There are very good links with the neighbouring primary school and the local community.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the playgroup has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children which reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Departments.

8. Overall effectiveness

St Finian's playgroup has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the playgroup sustains improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON ST FINIAN'S PLAYGROUP, NEWTOWNARDS

1. Details of children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3
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	#		
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	#		
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	#		
With English as an additional language	#		
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.	100%
Average attendance for the previous year.	97%
Number of days open in previous school year	185

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		#
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification		#
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification		0
New appointments within the previous 12 months		0

Number of: ***	
Students	0
Trainees	0

*** Total placements since September of current year

Source: data provided by the nursery school / playgroup.

fewer than 5

N/A not available

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