

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St John's Pre-school Playgroup,
Belfast

Voluntary playgroup

Report of an Inspection in
November 2017



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



CONTENTS

Section	Page
1. Context	1
2. Views of parents and staff	1
3. Focus of the inspection	1
4. Overall findings of the inspection	2
5. Outcomes for learners	2
6. Quality of provision	2
7. Leadership and management	3
8. Safeguarding	4
9. Overall effectiveness	4

Appendices

- A. Inspection methodology and evidence base
- B. Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

1. Context

St John's Pre-school Playgroup is accommodated within a parish hall belonging to St Kevin's Parish in west Belfast. The playgroup has a sensory room and a large playroom which is divided into space for small play and an area for indoor physical play. The setting has very limited outdoor space which was not in use on the day of the inspection due to inclement weather. There have been no staffing changes since the playgroup was last inspected in 2011; however, there have been significant changes in the roles of the staff. The current leader took up her post in September 2017.

Number of children:	Class 1
Attending part-time	24
Under 3 years of age*	#
Funded by Department of Education	23
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	#
Number of children who transferred from a Sure Start 2 year old programme	7
Number of children who participated in other Sure Start services	#

Average percentage attendance for the previous year.	78.9
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

Thirty-five per cent of the parents and all of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. Almost all of the parental responses were positive about all aspects of the life and work of the playgroup. A small number of written comments highlighted the friendly, approachable staff and the good communication with the parents. The staff responses were wholly positive and in the written responses they highlighted their desire for ongoing professional development to support children with additional learning needs.

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

Overall effectiveness	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Outcomes for learners	Good
Quality of provision	Good
Leadership and management	Good

5. Outcomes for learners

- Most of the children are well settled and engage in extended periods of purposeful play. They are confident in the routines of the playgroup and are developing well their independence. The children can access the resources they need, label their own work and both register for and serve their breakfast and snack. Almost all of the children play an active role in the tidy-up routine and can sort and put away the toys and resources with adult supervision and encouragement.
- The children do not have sufficient opportunities to observe closely and care for living things, and investigate technology; consequently their observation skills and interest in the World Around Us are underdeveloped.
- The children have a good interest in the arts and show great pride in their junk modelling and painting. They use a variety of small tools effectively and the majority have good fine-motor skills. The children have a good interest in books and listen with enthusiasm at story time; joining in with the refrains in the story. They respond well to songs and rhymes, in particular, the action songs and games. The children can sort by colour and show an interest in numbers and counting during games and stories. They are beginning to respond to positional language and understand the early mathematical language of measures. A small number of the children can recognise their name and, those who can, use their name for registration rather than a picture symbol.
- A minority of the children are beginning to play collaboratively and to solve problems, with adult support, about how to share the resources. During the physical play session the children take turns for games and a small number use the percussion instruments well to keep a beat and sing nursery rhymes spontaneously.
- There are a small number of children who require support with aspects of their learning and the majority are making progress. They are supported well by the staff with the use of a range of strategies to help them to manage their behaviour; however, for a small number of children it remains very challenging at times. Good use is made of the sensory room as a safe place for the children to calm their behaviour before re-joining their play.

6. Quality of provision

- The staff provide a bright and stimulating learning environment for the children and make good use of almost all areas of the large playroom and entrance hall. More effective use could be made of the indoor area for physical play to define the areas and guide better the children in using the equipment safely without adult help. The routines in the playgroup ensure effective transitions across the day.

- The broad and balanced programme presents good opportunities for learning across most of the areas of the pre-school curriculum. The provision for the World Around Us is currently limited and does not provide the children with sufficient opportunities to experience natural and technological resources and develop their curiosity, investigation and observation skills.
- The staff interactions with the children are of a consistently good quality and in some instances are very good. During the inspection there were some good examples of effective questioning to develop the children's thinking and problem-solving. However, there were also missed opportunities; this is an aspect that the staff need to develop further.
- Regular and relevant observations of the children's learning, along with information on their interests and spontaneous responses to play are used well to inform the weekly planning. The use of small group time is not planned for effectively enough to provide necessary additional support.
- There are individual education plans for those children identified with additional learning needs. The targets on the plans need to be more clearly defined in order for the children's progress to be measured. The staff employ, with varying degrees of success, a range of strategies to support the children who have behavioural challenges. They have appropriately identified the need for additional professional development in this area.
- 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.

7. Leadership and management

- The staff work well collaboratively with effective teamwork. The recent change in leadership roles has resulted in a revised three year development plan which is not yet complete. The priorities on the current action plans are appropriate and have been informed by a number of audits of the provision and a recognition of the additional learning needs of a small number of the children. There is evidence of on-going monitoring of the impact of the current actions to promote improvement.
- The early years specialist from the Early Years Organisation provides very good on-going support to the staff and has liaised effectively with the management committee to secure additional time for the leader and staff for administration work.
- There are good links with the parents which the staff have been developing further through planned parental fund raising activities alongside workshops organised through the 'Getting Ready to Learn' strategy. There are well-established links with the adjacent primary school which promote a good transition for the children. The communication and links with the local Sure Start within the catchment area of the playgroup are currently underdeveloped.

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. However, the playgroup needs to:
 - review aspects of the Child Protection Policy to incorporate all elements within one comprehensive policy; and
 - review the policy for educational trips to ensure that it reflects more accurately the good practice regarding the completion of risk assessments for trips.

9. Overall effectiveness

St John's Pre-school Playgroup demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the children.

Areas for improvement include the need to:

- develop the planning and provision for physical play and the World Around Us;
- improve the planning and provide staff development relating to children with learning and behavioural needs; and
- take forward the completion of the development plan and related action planning.

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 members of the management group and a meeting with the early years specialist; 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:

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 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.
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.
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.
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.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2018

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the ETI website: www.etini.gov.uk