

Education and Training Inspectorate PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Stepping Stones Pre-school Centre, Maghera, County Derry

Voluntary playgroup DE Ref No: 3BB-0085

Report of an Inspection in November 2019



Providing inspection services for:

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1. Context

Stepping Stones Pre-school Centre is located in purpose built accommodation within the grounds of St Brigid's Primary School. The children attending the playgroup come from the local surrounding area. There have been changes in staff since the last inspection.

| | |
|---|---------|
| Number of children: | Class 1 |
| Attending part-time | 12 |
| Funded by Department of Education | 12 |
| Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs | # |

| | |
|---|-------|
| Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2. | 100% |
| Average percentage attendance for the previous year. | 90.6% |
| 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 significant minority of the parents and all of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. All of the responses were very positive about the life and work of the playgroup. In written responses the parents commented positively on the attractive learning environment and strong links with parents and the wider community. The staff comments highlighted their appreciation of the collegial teamwork. 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

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

5. Outcomes for learners

- The children are making good progress across most aspects of the pre-school curriculum. Most of the children play for sustained periods of time and are confident and motivated learners. The children's social skills are developing well and they take turns during collaborative play, especially in the sand and water trays. Most of the children are familiar with the daily routines; they self-register and participate effectively at tidy-up time.
- The children have a good awareness of their own feelings, behaviour and emotions and they respond well to the positive strategies used by the staff. A majority of the children communicate appropriately with each other and the staff about their ideas and interests.
- Nearly all of the children listen attentively during story time. They are aware that print carries meaning, and a small number of the children are showing an interest in early mark making. All of the children participate enthusiastically in singing songs and rhymes linked to the world around us and number.
- The children's representational artwork, is of a good standard and is displayed and celebrated in the playroom but they do not have an opportunity to self-label their work.
- Most of the children have a good understanding of early mathematical concepts, which are integrated naturally during their play, and they make appropriate use of mathematical language in number, size and capacity.
- The children have well-developed fine motor skills and manipulate with ease a range of small play equipment tools and utensils across the playroom.
- The small number of children who require support with aspects of their learning are making progress and are well integrated into the group.

6. Quality of provision

- There are important areas for improvement in the quality of the provision. While the planning for learning shows an understanding of the pre-school curricular guidance, it does not identify clearly enough both the intended learning and the role of the adult in supporting progression. As a result, while the adult interactions were generally good in quality, there were missed opportunities to develop further the children's learning. In the most effective practice, the staff model play effectively and build skilfully on the children's responses. On most occasions the staff make appropriate observations of the children's learning; however, insufficient use is made of these to inform future planning.
- The staff have created an attractive playroom and there is an appropriate range of play resources. The children however do not access independently additional resources and as a result do not develop sufficiently their creativity and extend their own play. The routines throughout the day ensure that most transitions are smooth and managed appropriately.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the pre-school's approach to care and welfare impacts positively on the outcomes for children. The staff value and praise the children's play within a nurturing inclusive environment.

7. Leadership and management

- The leadership and management have developed a culture of self-evaluation and reflection to identify and address appropriate priorities for improvement in the development plan. The staff have a child-centred approach and work well collaboratively in the best interests of the children. The management committee members are supportive of all aspects of the playgroup; they have a good understanding of their role; receive regular updates; and, fundraise extensively, to purchase resources for the identified needs of the playgroup. The Early Years Specialist, from the Early Years Organisation, provides clear guidance and effective support to the staff enabling them to bring about improvement in the outcomes for learners.
- The playgroup have good links with the parents, the local primary school and relevant agencies. There are very positive transition arrangements which benefit the children as they progress to the next stage of their education. The playgroup is actively involved in the Department of Education's 'Getting Ready to Learn' programmes. Good use is made of visitors to the setting to enrich the children's learning, such as, a dental nurse and an environmental health officer.

8. Safeguarding

- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect the guidance from the relevant Departments.

9. Overall effectiveness

Stepping Stones Pre-school Centre demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners.

There is an area for improvement that the playgroup has demonstrated the capacity to address. The area for improvement is:

- to continue to improve the cycle of planning, observation and assessment in order to ensure progression in learning and raise further the 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.eti.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 chairperson of 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 management¹:

| |
|-----------------------------------|
| 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 |

¹ 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:

| |
|--|
| 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. |

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