

# PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

The Little Castle Playgroup,  
Lisnaskea, Co Fermanagh

Report of an inspection in  
June 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

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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'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-seven percent of the parents responded to the questionnaire; almost all of their responses were positive about all aspects of the educational and pastoral provision provided by the playgroup. The staff responses were also very positive. All of the responses have been shared with the staff and management of the playgroup.

## 2. Context

The Little Castle Playgroup is situated in a purpose-built accommodation within the Castle Park Leisure Centre, Lisnaskea. The playgroup operates one part-time session for children from the local area. Seventeen children are in their immediate pre-school year and eight children are in their penultimate pre-school year. The leader and the staff are newly appointed since the last inspection in 2007.

## 3. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

1. the children's achievements and standards;
2. the quality of provision; and
3. the quality of leadership and management.

## 4. Overall findings

<b>Overall Performance Level</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Achievements and Standards</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Provision</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Leadership and Management</b>	<b>Good</b>

## **Key findings of the inspection**

### **5. Achievements and standards**

- The children are well settled and engage generally in productive and concentrated play. The children's behaviour is very good and they turn readily to the staff for support and engage well with the routines of the day. They access independently the learning and play resources they require and make very good use of the stimulating play activities.
- The children are developing good social and communication skills. Most of the children listen to and engage with stories and rhymes. The children's fine motor skills are good and their mark-making and representational drawing is very well developed and celebrated in the displays in the playroom. Most of the children show a keen interest in the books and dramatic role play using puppets.
- During the inspection, the development of the children's mathematical understanding about shape, measurement and early counting was evident during role play across the curricular areas. The children were observed matching, using timers and applying the early mathematical language and concepts about sorting, position, shape and space in play and discussions. The children's awareness of information communication and technology is underdeveloped.

### **6. Provision**

- The staff have worked diligently to create a stimulating and safe indoor and outdoor learning environment. The activities are well-resourced and there are opportunities for visitors to talk to the children about their roles in the community which promotes effectively the children's understanding of the world around them. The daily timetable provides a lengthy period of play; however, more effective use needs to be made of the transitions to support learning and to promote further the children's self-management skills.
- The staff interactions with the children were always of a good to very good quality. The staff model good play and develop the children's language and thinking through sustained discussions and open-ended questions. The staff listen carefully to the children and respond appropriately to their ideas.
- The children's educational programme is well-balanced with good opportunities for learning across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The planning is detailed and guides effectively the progression in activities throughout the year. The staff operate a key-worker system and have compiled informative records of the children's learning that include samples of the children's work. The staff now need to link more closely the planning processes and assessment information in order to meet more fully the individual needs of the children.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is very good. There is a welcoming and inclusive ethos in the playgroup. The staff use a consistent, positive and respectful approach with the children which encourage the children to be well behaved, to share and to play collaboratively. There are very good links with the parents; they contribute to the management of the playgroup and raise funds to support the playgroup.

- 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 and the staff make suitable provision for indoor physical activity during inclement weather.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The leader is highly committed and has a clear vision for the continued development of the playgroup. She has developed an effective team working approach to support the continuous improvement of the playgroup.
- There is an appropriate overview of the three-year development plan. The staff are beginning to develop action plans to promote improvement in the pre-school programme. They have used the process of self-evaluation to bring about significant improvements in the playgroup's provision, such as, the development of a broad and balanced pre-school programme. The chairperson manages effectively the available finance very well to ensure that there are good quality resources for the children: however, the playgroup has to rely on grants from a range of sources to remain viable.
- The early years specialist (EYS), from the Early Years Organisation, has provided very good, focused support for the playgroup in the development of their understanding of the pre-school curriculum. Planning, assessment methods and the special educational needs provision are appropriate priorities for further development as identified by the staff.
- 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. When children require some additional time to settle, the parent is encouraged to stay to ensure the children are at ease with the staff in the playroom.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the playgroup has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Departments. The following areas need to be addressed:
  - the chairperson needs to complete safeguarding training; and
  - the safeguarding policy needs to be reviewed and updated to reflect the current roles and responsibilities of the management committee.

## **8. Conclusion**

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the playgroup is good. The playgroup has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the playgroup has demonstrated the capacity to address.

The areas for improvement are:

- the staff need to link more closely the planning processes and assessment information in order to meet more fully the individual needs of the children; and
- the safeguarding matters as listed in the report.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor, through district inspection activity, the school's progress on the areas for improvement.

## STATISTICAL INFORMATION THE LITTLE CASTLE PLAYGROUP

### 1. Details of Children

<b>Total number of children:</b>	<b>am session</b>	<b>pm session</b>
attending the pre-school setting	25	-
in their immediate pre-school year	17	-
funded by Department of Education (DE)	17	-
qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	17	-
with a statement of special educational needs	0	-
without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	0	-
with English as an additional language	1	-
who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	0	-

\* Special Educational Needs = fewer than five

Attendance** of funded children for the previous school year.	89%
Number of days open in previous school year	188

\*\* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

### 2. Details of Sessions

<b>Duration of morning session</b>	<b>Duration of afternoon session</b>
2½ hours	-

### 3. Details of Staff

<b>Number of:</b>	<b>Full-time</b>	<b>Part-time</b>
Staff, including leader		3
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification		3
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification		0
New appointments within previous 12 months		0

<b>Number of: ***</b>	
Students	1
Trainees	0

\*\*\* Total placements since September of current year



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