

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Naíscóil Mhachaire Rátha,
Maghera

Report of an Inspection
in May 2012



STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Naíscóil Mhachaire Rátha
Address:	41-43 Glen Road MAGHERA Co Londonderry BT46 5AP
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	31 May 2012
Date of previous inspection:	April 2007

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	26	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	15	-
• funded by Department of Education (DE)	15	-
• qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	*	-
• with a statement of special educational needs	*	-
• without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	*	-
• with English as an additional language	*	-
• who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	*	-
Attendance:		
• attendance** of funded children for the previous school year	90%	-

* = fewer than 5

** Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	*	3
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	*	3
New appointments within previous 12 months	*	*

Number of: ***	
Students	*
Trainees	*

*** Total placements since September of current year

3. Details of Sessions

Duration of morning session	Duration of afternoon session	Number of days open in previous year
2½ hours	-	190

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	14
Number returned:	13
Number of written comments:	7

**NAÍScoil MHACHAIRE RÁTHA, MAGHERA, CO LONDONDERRY, BT46 5AP
(3AB-0125)**

1. Naíscoil Mhachaire Rátha is situated in a renovated school building in the town of Maghera. Since the last inspection, in April 2007, a new assistant has been appointed and the outdoor play area has been developed.

2. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this naíscoil is very good. The naíscoil is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENTS

3. There is a very settled and caring atmosphere within the naiscoil which is based on mutual respect between the staff and the children. The children respond positively to the staff's expectations and display exemplary behaviour. The children display a high level of independence; they are able to share follow and lead in the play activities and to persevere with tasks. The children's own artwork is celebrated through attractive displays arranged by the staff around the playroom.

4. The staff has worked hard to create a language rich environment; there is an attractive, well-stocked book area and a range of opportunities for early mark making and experimental writing. Nearly all the children can talk about their experiences and ideas with confidence and fluency. They demonstrate a good understanding of the Irish spoken by the staff and they are also beginning to respond to the staff in Irish

THE PROVISION FOR LEARNING

5. The quality of the interaction between the staff and the children is consistently very good. The staff often engage the children in purposeful discussions and develop their Irish language through skilful questioning. There are very good opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum; the development of mathematical awareness is a particular strength. The thoughtful organisation of the daily timetable provides a good balance between lengthy periods of free play and activities organised by the staff. The necessary routines, such as snack and tidy up time, promote independence and confidence.

6. The staff has developed an appropriate method of planning which outlines variety and progression in the programme. Reflective observations and daily evaluations are based on the children's responses and are used well to inform future learning. The staff know the children very well; they operate a key worker system to assist them in monitoring and recording the children's progress and development. The information gathered is shared with the parents throughout the year.

7. The naíscoil has very good links with parents. Regular newsletters keep the parents informed about the work of the naíscoil and involve them in supporting their children's learning. The parents are encouraged to become involved in fun days and cultural events which enhance the ethos of the naíscoil. The naíscoil has developed strong links with the local bunscoil.

8. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the naíscoil is very good. The atmosphere is friendly and welcoming and is based on an ethos of mutual respect. Among the strengths of the naíscoil are the very positive working relationships at all levels and the priority given to the children's needs and interests. The children appear happy confident and well behaved.

9. On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the naíscoil has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

10. The naíscoil gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity through the healthy snack and regular opportunities for outdoor play.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

11. The leader is enthusiastic about her work and is a very good role model. She works closely with the assistants and all have developed a shared understanding of the aims of the naíscoil. Their hard work and commitment to the well being of the children is evident and contributes to the overall effectiveness of the naíscoil.

12. The staff are developing well the process of self-evaluation. The three year development plan, which includes appropriate action plans, ensures that priorities for future development are identified. The early years specialist (EYS), from Altram, has made a very good contribution to the overall development of the provision in the naíscoil.

13. The key strengths of the naíscoil include:

- the caring ethos and the exemplary behaviour of the children who display a very positive attitude to their learning;
- the very good quality of the interaction between staff and children which promote enjoyment in the learning and develop well the children's understanding of the Irish language;
- the bright, attractive and stimulating learning environment;
- the breadth, balance and progression provided in all areas of the pre-school curriculum;
- the very good cycle of observation ,assessment and evaluation which effectively informs planning, and;
- the very effective leader and the skilful staff who work very effectively as a team.

14. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this naíscoil is very good. The naíscoil is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

QUESTIONNAIRES

The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents and the staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Thirteen of the parents (98%) responded to the questionnaire and seven made additional written comments. All of the parents indicated high levels of satisfaction with the provision in the naíscóil. In particular, they expressed appreciation of the helpful staff, the caring and supportive ethos of the centre and the development of their children's confidence. The responses from the management group and the staff questionnaires were also very positive. All of the responses have been shared with the staff and management of the naíscóil.

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