

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Naíscóil Mhic Reachtain,
Belfast

Report of an inspection in
February 2014

eti

*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 centres, 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 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.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	17	*	24%**	*
Staff	*	*	*	*

* fewer than 5

All of the parents and staff who responded to the questionnaire were positive about all aspects of the life and work of the naíscoil.

2. Context

Naíscoil Mhic Reachtain is accommodated in a mobile classroom within the grounds of the 174 Trust complex, just off the Antrim Road. It provides a pre-school curriculum experienced through early immersion in the Irish language. The leader has been in post for four years. Two new naíscoil assistants have recently been appointed.

3. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards;
- the quality of provision; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

** The ETI is trialling a new range of methods to collect the views of parents/carers and, as a result, the percentage of questionnaires returned may be low.

4. Overall finding

Overall Performance Level	Good
Achievements and Standards	Good
Provision	Good
Leadership and Management	Good

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- Most of the children are very well-settled for the time of year and are developing positive attitudes to their learning. They respond well to the established routines, make choices about the activities they engage in and the materials they use and are developing good levels of independence.
- The children take a pride in their creative work and the standard of their representational drawing is good. They make good use of the wide range of books available throughout the playroom and most of the children use mathematical language with confidence; they count, recognise colours and use prepositional language appropriately during play.
- All of the children have a good understanding of the Irish language and a small number are beginning to respond to the staff in Irish.
- A majority of the children engage in concentrated, purposeful play for sustained periods of time. At times, aspects of the organisation of the day impact negatively on the children's concentration and attention.

6. Provision

- The staff work hard to provide an interesting learning environment and use all available space in the playroom and the limited outdoor area. They value and celebrate well the children's work in displays around the room. The daily snack and other necessary routines are well-organised and provide good opportunities for the children to develop their independence, social and conversational skills.
- The quality of the interaction between the staff and the children is consistently of a good quality. The staff model good play and develop the children's language through sustained discussions. The staff need to develop further their interactions with the children to exploit more fully the learning within the activities and extend more effectively the children's mathematical thinking.
- The quality of the staff's spoken Irish is of a high quality. They make very good use of songs and rhymes to develop further the children's language and consistently use the Irish language in their interactions with the children.
- Overall the children's educational programme is well-balanced with good opportunities for learning across almost all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The staff need to develop further the programme for the World Around Us.

- The new staff team have been working on the development of their weekly planning and the observations of the children's responses to play; this work is at an early stage. The staff need to plan more effectively for progression in the children's learning across the pre-school year, in all areas of the pre-school curriculum, in order to provide a programme which better meets the individual learning needs of the children. The planning and provision for the children requiring additional support with their learning has benefitted well from the support provided by the Belfast Education and Library Board's Early Years Inclusion Team as part of the Early Years Special Educational Needs Capacity Building Pilot.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the naíscoil is very good. The staff are very caring and engage effectively with the children in their play activities. The positive relationships at all levels foster an inclusive and supportive family ethos throughout the naíscoil. The children are at ease with the staff and turn to them readily for help and support.
- Very good attention is given to promoting healthy eating and physical activity through the provision of a healthy snack and a daily session of physical activity.

7. Leadership and management

- The leader is a good role model for the new staff, as demonstrated through her effective and caring work with the children. She is developing well a team approach to promoting improvement in the naíscoil.
- The naíscoil staff have received good support from the early year's specialist (EYS) from the Altram; in particular they have improved the layout of the playroom and the learning environment. The processes for systematic self-evaluation and effective action planning are at an early stage of development. The naíscoil staff and the management committee, with the support of their EYS, need to improve their understanding and use of self-evaluation, to promote continuous improvements within the provision.
- The naíscoil has good pastoral and curricular links with the local bunscoil to provide a smooth transition for the children. The weekly newsletters provide parents with information on the planned learning and events in the naíscoil. The naíscoil has developed good links with the local community and outside agencies in order to improve the learning experiences of the children.
- 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 Department of Education but the following minor areas need to be addressed:
 - the new staff need to attend the planned child protection training; and
 - all staff need to be familiar with the naíscoil's policies and procedures for child protection..

8. Conclusion

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

The area for improvement is:

- to plan more effectively for progression in the children's learning all areas of the pre-school curriculum.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the naíscóil's progress in addressing the area for improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school setting:	Naíscóil Mhic Reachtain
Address:	174 Trust Duncairn Avenue BELFAST BT14 6BP
Management Type:	Committee

Date of inspection:	5 February 2014
Date of previous inspection:	6 May 2008

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school setting	17	-
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	1	-
with English as an additional language	0	-
who left in previous school year to attend reception provision within a primary school	0	--
Attendance:		
attendance** of funded children for the previous school year	-	-

* Special Educational Needs = fewer than five

** Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	5	1
Number of staff holding a recognised child care qualification	4	0
Number of staff holding a recognised teaching qualification	0	0
New appointments within previous 12 months	4	0

Number of: ***	
Students	0
Trainees	2

*** 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
3½ hours	-	188

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