

EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSPECTORATE

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION

Naíscoil Mhachaire Rátha, Maghera,
County Derry

Irish-medium Voluntary Playgroup, DE Ref No 3AB-0125

Report of a Follow-up Inspection in October 2022



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Follow-up to the inspection of Naíscoil Mhachaire Rátha, BT46 5AP (3AB-0125)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a follow-up inspection of Naíscoil Mhachaire Rátha in January 2020¹, which concluded that the naíscoil needed to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners, namely to:

- embed a shared understanding of the cycle of planning, observation and assessment in order to guide more effectively the learning and teaching and continue to raise the outcomes for all children; and
- develop a shared understanding of and embed the recently established process of self-evaluation and planning for improvement.

The naíscoil's action plans were adjusted in response to the feedback given by the ETI. The naíscoil's development plan was adjusted in light of the inspection findings.

The ETI carried a monitoring visit in March 2022 and a second follow-up inspection in October 2022.

In the interval since the last follow-up inspection, the naíscoil has received external support from an early years specialist (EYS) from Altram in relation to planning, observations and self-evaluation.

Over the same period, the key actions or changes which have affected the work of the naíscoil include:

- the appointment of an acting leader;
- the enrolment number has decreased significantly in the past year, from twenty-two children to eight children;
- considerable investment has been made in resourcing both the indoor and outdoor play areas; and
- staff have attended, and continue to attend, Irish-language capacity-building courses.

Key findings

The outcomes for learners remain as good. The children are well-settled and are developing well their independence as they: choose where they wish to play; access their own resources; and follow the well-embedded routines of the day. They participate enthusiastically in and enjoy story time and singing a range of songs and rhymes in Irish.

¹ [Pre-School Inspection – Naíscoil Mhachaire Rátha, County Derry \(etini.gov.uk\)](https://etini.gov.uk)

The quality of provision remains as having important areas for improvement. The cycle of planning, observation and assessment does not guide effectively enough the practice. Short-term planning now identifies clear learning intentions across all areas of the pre-school curriculum and staff record meaningful observations of the children's learning. These observations are, however, not used consistently enough to inform the planning and track progress for all children. Planning for the role of the adult and the Irish language associated with the intended learning also require further development to improve the immersion environment and ensure that the staff interactions are effective in extending the children's thinking and language. The staff have created a well-resourced, positive and nurturing learning environment; they engage pastorally with the children at all times. Songs and rhymes are used purposefully throughout the session, and particularly during key transition times, to develop further the children's understanding and use of Irish and to support them in following the routines.

The quality and effectiveness of leadership and management remain as having important areas for improvement. The staff work well as a team and have managed collegially, with the support of both their EYS and management committee, the challenges of staff changes and the significant reduction in enrolment numbers this year. The process of self-evaluation, which had been in place at the time of the last follow-up inspection, has not yet been embedded. It will be important that all of the staff develop a shared understanding of self-evaluation and planning for improvement that is reflective of the current needs of the naíscóil and that supports them in bringing about the required improvements.

Overall effectiveness

Naíscóil Mhachaire Rátha needs to continue to address important areas for improvement. The follow-up inspection has identified the following areas for improvement:

- to make more consistent use of observations of learning to inform planning for individual children and track their progress;
- to include a language-specific element in planning in order to improve the immersion experience for the children and support the adults with their interactions; and
- to develop a shared understanding of self-evaluation and planning for improvement.

Further action will be considered by the Department of Education.

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