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**Department of Education
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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection

**Naíscoil Bheann Mhadagáin
Belfast**

June 2008

REPORT OF A SECOND FOLLOW-UP INSPECTION IN NAÍScoil BHEANN MHADAGÁIN, BELFAST (1BB-0016)

The original inspection in Naíscoil Bheann Mhadagáin, Belfast May 2006 highlighted strengths in the centre's ethos and in the staff's use of Irish to promote the children's learning and identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- the organisation of the day to provide longer periods of uninterrupted play;
- provide progression and more challenge in the physical play programme; and
- the effective organisation of the group and story rhyme sessions.

The follow-up inspection in February 2008 identified and reported on a deterioration in the quality of provision, and also raised concerns about the low enrolment level. It also reported that the centre had experienced several changes in early years specialist (EYS) support and staff; the Naíscoil had been operating for most of the year with an acting-leader. The report highlighted that whilst some improvements which affected the work of the Naíscoil had been made, overall, the educational provision was poor, and as a result, the Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) did not have confidence in the capacity of the current leadership and management to bring about the necessary sustained improvement.

At the time of the current follow-up inspection in June 2008, there were 15 children enrolled in the Naíscoil; seven of the children are in their pre-school year and the remainder are in their penultimate pre-school year. The number of pre-school children currently enrolled is below the minimum number required for those centres receiving funding as part of the Pre-School Education Expansion Programme.

In the interval since the first follow-up inspection, the following actions which affect the work of the naíscoil have taken place.

- There has been a collegiate approach to the development, implementation and monitoring of a comprehensive development plan for the Naíscoil. The Naíscoil's EYS and the management group have provided more focused and regular support for the new staff. Those with management and leadership roles display a sense of purpose and commitment to the continued development of the educational programme.
- The staffing within the Naíscoil has been enhanced by two new temporary members of staff, one of whom is a qualified teacher.
- All of those involved with the Naíscoil have worked very hard to enhance significantly the learning environment, both indoors and outdoors.

The following are the most important improvements brought about by the staff and the management group.

- The staff and management group have received excellent advice, guidance and support from the centre's EYS to bring about the improvements needed.
- The management group has provided additional time and support for the staff to work together as a team in order to develop the planning for the educational programme and an appropriate system of assessing the children's progress. The staff have made a good start to developing appropriate planning and assessment methods.
- The sensitive approach, assessment and early identification of children who have difficulties with aspects of their learning, is now a particular strength of the Naíscoil's provision.

- During the visit, many examples of good quality interaction between the staff and children were observed; the adults promoted the children's language, thinking and learning and contributed effectively to the children's settled play.
- The children now show good levels of concentration in their play and an increased ability to develop their own ideas; they co-operate readily with the staff and with each other.
- The Naíscail's programme is now broad and balanced and offers satisfactory or good, opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school programme. The organisation of the day ensures that all time is used effectively for learning. Group story and rhyme times are enjoyable and appropriately differentiated to take account of the children's differing needs.

CONCLUSION

Good progress has been made in most of the areas for improvement identified during the original inspection, but some minor areas still require improvement. The organisation is developing a more rigorous process of self-evaluation which leads to improvement.

The Inspectorate now has confidence in the Naíscail's collegiate approach to leadership and management and the staff's capacity to bring further improvement. The acting-leader, supported effectively by the EYS, has brought about significant improvements in the quality of the provision for the children's learning and development.

The management group report that 17 pre-school children are enrolled for the September 2008 intake; the children will be accommodated within two pre-school settings, Naíscail Ardoyne and Naíscail Bheann Mhadagáin. There is a need for the Department of Education to continue to monitor the enrolment figures in Naíscail Bheann Mhadagáin to ensure that the numbers meet the minimum of eight pre-school children that is required for those centres receiving funding under the Pre-School Education Expansion Programme.

The Naíscail's capacity to sustain and build on this progress and address the remaining areas for improvement will continue to be monitored by the District Inspector.

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