

Education and Training Inspectorate PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Naíscoil Mhachaire Rátha, Maghera, County Derry

Voluntary, Irish-medium playgroup DE Ref No: 3AB-0125

Report of a Follow-up Inspection in January 2020



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

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Introduction

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out an inspection of Naíscoil Mhachaire Rátha in November 2018¹ which concluded that the naíscoil needed to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners.

The areas for improvement were to:

- develop further the provision for learning in the outdoor environment;
- develop further the cycle of planning, observation and assessment to guide more effectively the learning and teaching and raise the outcomes for all children; and
- continue to develop a systematic approach to self-evaluation and planning for improvement.

The naíscoil's action plans were of a good quality and the development plan was adjusted in light of the inspection findings.

The ETI carried out an interim follow-up visit in September 2019 and a follow-up inspection in January 2020.

During this period, other actions or changes which affect the work of the naíscoil include:

- a number of frequent and significant changes in leadership and staffing; and
- staff availing of a range of professional development opportunities.

Views of parents and staff

Owing to the frequent changes in staff since the time of the inspection, confidential questionnaires were re-issued to parents and staff. A majority of the parents and staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. All of the responses were wholly positive. In the additional written comments, the parents expressed their appreciation of the dedicated staff and of the regular communication and supportive partnerships that the naíscoil staff have developed with them. They also commented upon how happy their children are at the naíscoil and the progress they are making in their learning. A summary of the questionnaire responses was shared with the leader and a representative from the management committee.

Key findings

The quality of provision remains an important area for improvement. Although the overall quality of the staff's Irish has improved, it is not yet consistently good. The staff have pro-actively availed of capacity building opportunities to improve their Irish and continue to do so. While the planned programme provides good opportunities for learning across all areas of the pre-school curriculum, the revised approach to planning, observation and assessment is not yet sufficiently embedded and understood by all staff. There have been a number of important changes and improvements made to both the indoor and outdoor learning environments which have impacted positively on the quality of the provision and on the breadth and quality of the learning experiences available to the children across the curriculum. The staff and management committee have invested a great deal of time and resources into making improvements to the outdoor area and have appropriate plans in place to develop this further.

¹ <https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/preschool-inspection-naiscoil-mhachaire-ratha-maghera-county-derry-3ab-0125.pdf>

The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and action to promote improvement remains an important area for improvement. A new process for self-evaluation and planning for improvement has been established, with the support of the early years' specialist from Altram, and has effected improvements within the provision and the quality of leadership and management; however, the process is not yet sufficiently embedded and understood by staff at all levels.

Overall effectiveness

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

- 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
- to develop a shared understanding of and embed the recently established process of self-evaluation and planning for improvement.

The ETI will conduct a further follow-up inspection in 12 to 18 months.

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