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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
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Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of an Inspection

Naíscoil an Bhaile Bhoicht
Newry

Inspected: January 2009

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Naíscoil an Bhaile Bhoicht
Address:	Barcroft Community Centre Doran's Hill NEWRY BT35 8EJ
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	12 January 2009
Date of previous inspection:	N/A

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	9	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	6	-
• funded by Department of Education (DE)	6	-
• qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	0	-
• with a statement of special educational needs	0	-
• without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	0	-
• 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	90%	-

* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	2	0
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	1	0
New appointments within previous 12 months	1	0

Number of: **	
Students	0
Trainees	0

** 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	1 hour	176

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	9
Percentage returned:	77.8%
Number of written comments:	1

NAÍScoil AN BHAILE BHOICHT, NEWRY, CO DOWN, BT35 8EJ (5AB 0551)

INTRODUCTION

1. Naíscoil an Bhaile Bhoicht is situated in Barcroft Community Centre in the centre of Newry. The children come from a wide catchment area. At the time of the inspection the leader was supported by a temporary assistant.

2. The parents, staff and management group were given opportunities to express their views about the naíscoil through the inspection questionnaires. The responses have been taken into account as part of the inspection. Almost all of the parents responded to the questionnaire and one made additional written comments. The responses from the parents indicate a high level of satisfaction with the quality of the provision. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care within the naíscoil are satisfactory. The staff demonstrate commitment to the welfare of the children and working relationships at all levels are good. Further consultation with the parents when revising the policies in relation to anti-bullying and intimate care is necessary. The naíscoil has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Departments but the following minor area needs to be addressed:

- to ensure the policies made available to the parents are sufficiently detailed.

3. The naíscoil gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity and has effective policies and programmes in place to encourage the children to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

THE QUALITY OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

4. There is a settled, happy atmosphere in the naíscoil; the children's behaviour is very good. The pre-school accommodation is shared with other organisations and as a result the furniture and play equipment are set out and stored on a regular basis. The staff work hard to create an inviting environment; thought has been given to defining areas for play and appropriate use is made of the children's art work, posters and an interest area to create colourful displays around the playroom.

5. The staff work hard to develop positive, friendly relationships with the parents and use a variety of methods to keep them informed about aspects of the provision and their children's progress and development.

6. The thoughtful organisation of the daily timetable allows the day to flow smoothly and provides a good balance of free play and activities organised by the staff.

7. The staff have made a useful start to developing the written planning. Suitable themes are used to introduce a variety of interesting activities and experiences for the children throughout the year. The staff should now develop aspects of the planning further to identify more clearly the key language and learning to be promoted in all areas and also to take more account of the children's individual responses in order to inform future learning.

8. The staff are friendly and supportive and clearly enjoy participating with the children in their play. They frequently engage the children in discussion and praise and encourage the children's efforts. During the inspection, there were some instances when the staff's participation fostered sustained play and promoted effectively the children's learning. At other times, however, their involvement was too narrowly focused and this resulted in some missed opportunities to promote language and learning. The staff need to develop greater skill in recognising the potential of all the resources and materials in order to promote fully the children's language and learning.

9. The naíscoil's programme provides satisfactory opportunities for learning in most areas of the pre-school curriculum. The points which follow illustrate specific aspects of the programme.

- The children appear happy in their environment. Much of the children's play is settled and purposeful. There are opportunities throughout the session for the children to work alone, in pairs or in a group with their peers.
- The children are developing their manipulative skills using a range of small tools and equipment. There are regular opportunities for physical play using a basic range of resources. The naíscoil has access to the adjoining community play park.
- The children have regular opportunities to paint and explore the range of art materials provided. The staff value the work of the children and display it attractively throughout the naíscoil.
- The staff make good use of the play opportunities to help develop the children's conversational skills. At present, however, too much of the interaction takes place in English. At the time of the inspection the leader was supported by a temporary assistant who speaks very little Irish. The staff need to ensure Irish is the working language of the naíscoil. The children are introduced to text incidentally through captions displayed around the room and some can recognise their own name. The staff encourage the children to develop an interest in books and at times make good use of the books to help stimulate the children's interest and imagination. Throughout the session the staff used rhymes and action songs in Irish which the children clearly enjoyed. The story session needs to be reviewed in order to develop and extend the children's language skills. The leader has appropriately attended an Irish language course for naíscoil staff organised by Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta.
- At times the staff use some appropriate mathematical language when participating in the children's play. They need to make better use of the opportunities that arise during the session to further promote this aspect of the children's development.
- Seasonal topics and visits to places of interest help to extend the children's knowledge of, and interest in, the world around them. Opportunities to develop play with sand and water are currently limited and underdeveloped.

10. The staff make regular observations of the children's responses to play and have an appropriate system in place for monitoring, recording and evaluating the children's progress. The staff need to ensure that there is a clear link between the observations and the planning of the programme in order to meet the differing needs and interests of all the children.

11. The naíscoil has established some useful links with the local Irish-medium primary school, to which the majority of the children will transfer. The staff plan to develop the links further in order to share information about the children's progress and to help ensure that the children make a smooth transition into year 1.

12. The leader demonstrates commitment to developing the work of the naíscoil. The contribution made by the naíscoil's early years specialist (EYS) has strengths, including the recent action plans which prioritise appropriately important areas for improvement in the naíscoil's work. It will be important that the EYS continues to work closely with the staff in order to address these key areas for improvement. The staff have not yet embarked on developing the process of self-evaluation. Currently the naíscoil does not have a full committee in place to support the work of staff and the care of the children.

13. The quality of the accommodation is satisfactory. The naíscoil is well maintained.

14. There is a basic supply of resources and equipment. Additional resources are needed for all areas of the programme, in order to support the implementation of a more progressive programme which meets the needs of the children throughout the year.

15. **The strengths of the naíscoil include:**

- the caring, supportive staff who work hard to create an interesting learning environment for the children;
- the good working relationships between the staff and the children;
- the emphasis placed on promoting the children's personal, social and emotional development and their creative development;
- the appropriate methods of assessing the children's progress and development; and
- the smooth organisation of the daily timetable.

16. **The inspection has identified areas for improvement. In addressing the most important of these areas, the staff need to:**

- continue to develop their Irish language competence to enable them to interact more effectively with the children in Irish;
- develop further the methods for planning in order to identify more clearly the intended learning outcomes for the planned activities; and
- improve the range of resources across the curriculum in order to provide a challenging programme that progresses steadily over the year.

17. In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this naíscoil is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in learning and teaching which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the naíscoil's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

APPENDIX

1. At the time of the inspection the entrance door into the community centre and the main access door into the naíscoil were not secured.
2. The naíscoil is currently operating with a limited management group. To date only the position of chairperson has been filled.

Both issues need to be addressed urgently.

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