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*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**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of an Inspection

**Naíscoil an tSeanchaí
Magherafelt**

Inspected: May 2009

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Naíscoil an tSeanchaí
Address:	Mobile 1 Killowen Drive MAGHERAFELT Co Derry BT45 6DT
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	6 May 2009
Date of previous inspection:	N/A

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	17	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	13	-
• funded by Department of Education (DE)	13	-
• qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	1	-
• with a statement of special educational needs	1	-
• 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	86.4%	-

* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	3	1
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	3	1
New appointments within previous 12 months	0	1

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
2½ hours	-	179

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	17
Percentage returned:	64.7%
Number of written comments:	2

NAÍScoil AN TSEANCHAÍ, MAGHERAFELT, CO DERRY, BT45 6DT (3AB-0548)

INTRODUCTION

1. The naíscóil is situated in mobile accommodation within the Killowen estate in Magherafelt. The children have access to a small outdoor play area. The children come from a wide surrounding area.

2.. The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents, the management group and the staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. A majority of the parents responded to the questionnaire and two made additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaire indicated that the parents regard the naíscóil very highly and appreciate that:

- the children feel safe and secure in the naíscóil;
- the parents are encouraged to be involved in the life of the naíscóil; and
- the naíscóil is well thought of in the community.

The responses from the staff were wholly positive. All of the responses have been shared with the staff and management of the naíscóil.

3. The provision for pastoral care within the naíscóil is very good. The naíscóil has a warm and supportive ethos and relationships at all levels are good. The staff are committed to the care and the well-being of the children and have developed appropriate strategies to promote mutual respect and positive behaviour. The children respond well to the staff and their behaviour is very good.

4. The naíscóil has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding the children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department but the following minor areas need to be addressed:

- the staff should ensure that the parents are aware of and agree to the procedures for the personal care of the children; and
- the staff should document risk assessments as part of all planned trips or visits.

5. The naíscóil gives good attention to promoting healthy eating. The children are provided with a healthy snack and have access to drinking water. The children have regular opportunities to play outdoors. The staff need to develop a more progressive and challenging programme for physical play.

THE QUALITY OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

6. The playroom is bright and welcoming and is set up with distinct areas for play. It is important that the staff continue to review the layout of the playroom to ensure the best possible use of the limited space and resources, in order to stimulate the children's interests and to enrich the quality of their play.

7. The children and parents are greeted warmly on arrival and the children settle quickly to play. The children have opportunities for freely chosen play balanced with group activities, stories and rhymes. The daily session is well-organised and the routines are managed effectively to provide opportunities for the children to develop independence and to acquire important personal and social skills.

8. In their interactions with the children, the staff encourage them to play in a settled manner and they help to promote a sense of enjoyment and fun. The children show good levels of confidence and independence and during the inspection there were several instances of sustained and co-operative play. The staff need to exploit more fully the potential of all the materials, and to use more effective strategies to extend the children's thinking and learning.

9. During the inspection, the staff used Irish well on most occasions when interacting with the children. The children enjoyed songs and rhymes in Irish at various times throughout the session. Story time provided another valuable opportunity for the staff to promote further the children's Irish language skills. There was some limited use of Irish between staff. Appropriately, the staff have identified their Irish competence as an area for further development. Irish should become the working language of the naíscóil.

10. The naíscóil's educational programme offers satisfactory opportunities for learning in most areas of the pre-school curriculum. The particular strengths observed during the inspection include the attention given to promoting the children's personal, social and emotional development, their interest in role-play and early writing and the opportunities for singing and listening to music. The curriculum should be developed further to foster and extend the children's understanding of the world around them and their early mathematical ideas and concepts.

11. The staff have developed a comprehensive policy for special educational needs. Valuable support is provided for those children who require additional help with their learning; there is a need to ensure that, where appropriate, individual learning plans are drawn up to focus this support more effectively and to monitor the children's development.

12. The staff have made a useful start to the planning of the educational programme. The weekly planners provide useful guidance for the staff and appropriate themes and topics are designed to develop a range of learning activities and experiences for the children. The staff need to ensure that the learning potential within the activities is clearly understood and they should use their daily evaluations to further inform their planning and ensure progression and challenge across the year.

13. The staff are at an early stage in the development of a system to assess the children's learning and development. They have agreed to operate a key-worker approach to observing the children's responses to play, and are building up individual profiles of the children's achievements. Further development is needed in order to highlight clearly the children's progress and to meet more effectively their individual needs and interests. This information should be shared more regularly with the parents and more effective links should be established with the schools to which the children will transfer.

14. A variety of methods is used to inform the parents of the work of the naíscail and the staff value the contributions made by the parents to the development of the naíscail's resources.

15. The leader and staff meet regularly to evaluate the planned programme and they demonstrate a willingness to develop and improve the quality of the provision. The early years specialist (EYS) has made a very good contribution to the overall development of the provision in this naíscail. The support provided is well focused, in particular, the guidance on planning the programme and the organisation of the session. The staff and the management group should continue to work with the EYS to regularly evaluate the provision and create a development plan for the naíscail which will prioritise appropriate areas for improvement over the next three year period.

16. The key strengths within the naíscail's educational and pastoral provision are as follows:

- the caring support provided by the staff, which helps the children settle and which promotes their confidence and independence;
- the smooth organisation of the daily session;
- the satisfactory opportunities for learning in most areas of the pre-school curriculum;
- the progress made by the staff in developing the written planning;
- the support provided for those children with special educational needs; and
- the quality of the advice and guidance given by the EYS.

17. The inspection identified areas for improvement. The following are the most important areas that need attention:

- the staff should exploit more fully the learning potential within the resources, particularly in relation to early maths and science, and ensure that their interactions are more effective in extending the children's thinking and learning; and
- the staff need to take a more consistent approach to the assessment of the children's learning and development.

CONCLUSION

18. In most of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided in this naíscail 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 naíscail's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

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