



*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 Ard Eoin
Belfast**

Inspected: April 2009

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Naíscoil Ard Eoin
Address:	Ardoyne Community Centre 40 Herbert Street BELFAST BT14 7FE
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	20 April 2009
Date of previous inspection:	N/A

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	16	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	8	-
• funded by Department of Education (DE)	8	-
• qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	8	-
• with a statement of special educational needs	0	-
• without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	2	-
• 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	N/A	-

* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	2	1
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	2	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	-	N/A

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued:	16
Percentage returned:	25%
Number of written comments:	0

REPORT ON THE INSPECTION OF NAÍScoil ARD EOIN, BELFAST, BT14 7NY (1AB-0556)

1. Naíscoil Ard Eoin is accommodated in a dedicated playroom in the Ardoyne Community Centre. It is in its first year of receiving funding from the Department of Education (DE) as a part of the pre-school education programme. The children are reported as coming mainly from English-speaking homes in the local area; they experience early immersion in the Irish language as the medium of communication and interaction in the naíscoil.

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. The parents and management group who responded to the questionnaire were very satisfied with the provision. All of the responses have been taken into account as part of the inspection and shared with the staff and management group.

3. The quality of the pastoral care within the naíscoil is good. The naíscoil has a positive ethos and the staff are committed to the care and well-being of the children. There are very good working relationships between the staff, the children and the parents.

4. There are 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 need to ensure the child protection procedures and behaviour policy are fully comprehensive and that all documents are shared with the parents.

5. The naíscoil's programme for the promotion of health and well-being has strengths, with a developing commitment to encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

THE QUALITY OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

6. The staff work hard to make the best use of all available space within the playroom to create an attractive learning environment; the areas for play are organised to promote the children's choice and independence. The children are well settled and engaged in their learning; their behaviour is very good.

7. The children benefit from the mixed gender staffing arrangements. In particular, the boys respond very well to a male role-model engaging effectively with them in their play.

8. The daily timetable is well managed to provide a good balance between extended periods of freely chosen play and appropriate group activities. The story sessions take account of the children's differing stages of development and the transitions are managed effectively. The children benefit from the opportunity to participate in energetic physical play both indoors and in the large hall. More development is required in the planning, resourcing and management of the hall sessions in order to make more effective use of all the time and space available for learning.

9. The quality of the full-time staff's interaction with the children is very good. They demonstrate skill in promoting purposeful play, building on the children's own ideas and extending the children's language and thinking.

10. All of the staff are competent Irish speakers and they make extensive use of the Irish language for instructional purposes and to communicate with the children; they use mime, gestures and other strategies effectively to support the children's understanding. The children learn Irish in a relaxed and natural way; they are making good progress in their acquisition of the language. Most of the children can follow instructions well and some are beginning to respond using Irish words and phrases.

11. The daily programme is broad and balanced offering satisfactory to very good opportunities to learn in all areas of the pre-school curriculum. Particular strengths of the programme include: the children's personal, social and emotional development; the very good promotion of the children's oral language and understanding of Irish and the children's good level of response; the opportunities to engage in rhymes and songs; and, the promotion of mathematical language. The children engage confidently in exploring the materials at the creative area and in imaginative play. More opportunities should be provided to encourage the children to care for and observe living things, to foster the children's representational creative work and the use of books throughout the session.

12. The planning and assessment methods have strengths. Good progress is evident in the useful evaluations of the weekly programme and meaningful observations of the children's responses. The staff should continue to refine the documentation to ensure the learning potential is consistently relevant and specific and that the assessment information is a systematic, comprehensive and accurate reflection of each child.

13. The staff have made a useful start in developing a policy and associated procedures for special educational needs. They are aware of those children who may require additional support, they liaise with their parents and are beginning to develop individual play plans to support their needs. The staff need to review their skill levels in this important area in order to identify what training and support is required to develop further their skills.

14. The parents receive appropriate information about the work of the naíscoil through a variety of methods. Parents are encouraged to participate in Irish language classes, outings and in a recent song and rhyme session at the local library. In addition, parents are invited to a more formal meeting to discuss their child's progress with the staff.

15. At the end of the pre-school year, the staff forward completed transition forms to the year 1 teachers in the primary schools to which the children transfer. Curricular links should be developed further to ensure adequate progression in the children's learning, and that their pre-school experiences are built upon from the children's pre-school into the foundation stage.

16. The quality of the accommodation is good. The resources have recently been enhanced and are sufficient to implement a basic programme; the staff have identified the need for additional resources to ensure a more challenging programme that progresses throughout the two years that most children attend.

17. The committed and hard-working leader has been successful in developing the pre-school programme in this setting within a short period of time. The staff work very effectively as a team and all contribute to the overall good quality of the provision.

18. The staff are reflective of their own practice and demonstrate a strong commitment to their continued professional development and continuous improvement in the quality of provision. They are effectively supported by two early year specialists (EYS) whose different areas of focus, in Irish language and play development, complement one another's work. The development plan, which is shared with Naíscoil Bheann Mhadagain, identifies some appropriate areas for development and was recently amended appropriately to focus on the development of the children's language, and improved links with Sure Start. Action plans should, however, be developed which are specific to the individual needs of each naíscoil. The management team need to ensure that there is good communication between the staff, management and both EYS and that the leader has adequate time for joint planning and development work.

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

- the organised and attractive learning environment prepared for the children;
- the effective daily timetable which provides a good balance of freely chosen play and group activities;
- the effective promotion of the Irish language through very good interaction between the staff and the children, the level of the children's understanding and their early responses;
- the skill of the staff in supporting the children's own ideas and exploiting the learning potential of the activities and daily routines;
- the broad and balanced curriculum which promotes very effectively the children's language, early mathematical ideas and their social skills and independence; and
- the evidence of the progress and improvements brought about in the provision by the committed leader and her staff team.

20. **The inspection identified an area for improvement:**

- to improve the planning, organisation and resources to enhance the physical play programme.

21. In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this naíscoil is good. The naíscoil has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified an area for improvement which the naíscoil has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the naíscoil's progress on the area for improvement.

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