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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 Chamlocha
Camlough**

Inspected: January 2008

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Naíscoil Chamlocha
Address:	Shane O'Neill's GAA Grounds Newry Road CAMLOUGH Co Armagh BT35 7JP
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	28 January 2008
Date of previous inspection:	N/A

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	22	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	12	-
• funded by Department of Education (DE)	12	-
• qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	3	-
• with a statement of special educational needs	1	-
• 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	4	-
Attendance:		-
• percentage 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	2
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	2	2
New appointments within previous 12 months	0	2

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
3¾ hours	-	190

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	13
Percentage returned:	54%
Number of written comments:	6

NAÍScoil CHAMLOCHA, CAMLOUGH, CO ARMAGH, BT35 7JP (5AB-0544)

INTRODUCTION

1. Naíscoil Chamlocha is an Irish-Medium Education pre-school centre situated in purpose-built accommodation within the Shane O’Neill Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) grounds. There is access to a recently developed, secure outdoor play area. The children come from a wide surrounding area.

2. The parents, management group and staff were given opportunities to express their views about the centre through the inspection questionnaires. The responses from the parental questionnaires indicated that the parents regard highly, and strongly support, the helpful guidance provided by the staff and the care provided for the children. All of the staff responded to the staff questionnaire and indicated good levels of satisfaction with the centre. Three positive responses were made by the management group. All those who responded using the questionnaires expressed a good level of satisfaction with the centre’s provision.

3. The centre has procedures in place which implement the guidance outlined in the relevant Department of Education (DE) Circulars and has identified appropriately a few areas for improvement which it is currently implementing. Among the strengths are:

- the warm and caring atmosphere which effectively promotes the children’s confidence and self-esteem;
- the quality of the relationships throughout the centre;
- the high priority given to the health and well-being of the staff and the children; and
- the effective communication with the parents and working alongside other agencies.

The area for improvement identified includes the need to:

- systematically update, monitor and evaluate further the effectiveness of the pastoral care policies.

4. The school’s programme for the promotion of health and well-being has important strengths, with attention paid to the development and implementation of healthy eating and physical activity programmes to encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

THE QUALITY OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

5. The centre has a happy, relaxed and caring atmosphere. The staff work hard to provide a secure, supportive environment which helps the children grow in self-esteem, confidence and independence. There are good relationships at all levels.

6. The staff provide an attractive learning environment with clearly identified areas of play. The children’s work is displayed and labelled, often in English and Irish and resources are easily accessible.

7. The daily timetable provides a suitable balance between freely chosen play and activities led by the adults. The children's snack time operates unobtrusively and provides suitable opportunities for the children to develop independence and to acquire important social skills. The children have regular opportunities for outdoor play, rhymes and songs and a group story session.

8. The staff's interactions with the children help to promote a sense of fun and enjoyment. They talk to the children about their play and occasionally add ideas to promote the children's thinking and oral development. The staff need to be more aware of the learning potential within the materials and the planned activities, and to use more effective strategies to extend the children's language and learning.

9. The planning outlines a broad, balanced programme for the children, designed to foster their all-round development. A good range of themes and topics helps to develop interesting and varied learning experiences for the children. The staff should ensure that the short-term planning helps to guide them more effectively in their day-to-day work with the children and that it provides sufficient progression and challenge to meet the children's individual needs.

10. The centre's educational programme is broad and balanced and offers satisfactory to good opportunities for learning in most areas of the pre-school curriculum. The points which follow illustrate specific aspects of the programme.

- Careful attention is given to promoting the children's personal and emotional development. The children are able to make independent choices and to take responsibility for their play environment. They are confident and well motivated, and are developing an appropriate understanding of the necessary rules and routines.
- Weather permitting, the staff are beginning to make effective use of the outdoor play area for some energetic play and have identified the need to develop further the outdoor play provision. The children are acquiring appropriate manipulative skills using small tools and are becoming skilful in the use of scissors and paintbrushes.
- There is a very good range of creative activities provided which encourages the children to experiment with different materials and tools. Through frequent opportunities for informal singing the children are developing a suitable repertoire of rhymes and songs which they clearly enjoy.
- The leader is a competent Irish speaker and runs an Irish language course for other Naíscóil staff from the surrounding areas. The other members of staff use basic Irish with the children and as a result the quality of the interaction through the medium of Irish between the staff and the children is variable, ranging from a good to a limited standard. The staff need to develop further their language skills so that they can communicate more fully with the children and each other. The children are beginning to respond to the staff in Irish and should be encouraged to use high frequency Irish language during the day.

- The centre has a quiet room which is used as the library. It is stocked appropriately and more books could be included in the playroom activities. During the inspection, the children enjoyed the music and song session and partook eagerly; rhyme and song were used during the session to promote learning and interest, and the children have suitable opportunities to explore marking and early-writing. The staff make good use of text to record the children's sayings and ideas and appropriately annotate their drawings and art work.
- There is effective promotion of early mathematical ideas in many areas of play. The staff use seasonal and environmental topics to promote the children's knowledge of, and interest in, the world around them.

11. The staff operate a key-worker system and record observations of the children's progress and their responses to play. These observations need to be more rigorous and appropriately linked to the planned programme in order to support planning to meet some children's individual needs. Information on the children's progress is shared with the primary schools to which they will transfer.

12. The staff provide valuable support for those children identified with special educational needs. They liaise appropriately with the parents and other professionals. There is a need for the staff to continue to develop further their expertise through additional training and support.

13. There are good opportunities for informal contact between the staff and the parents and Irish language sessions are provided to support the parents in the acquisition of Irish to support their children. Regular newsletters and meetings provide the parents with appropriate information about the children's progress and development.

14. The leader is committed to the development of the centre. She brings a high level of enthusiasm to her work. There is a sense of team-work among the hard-working staff, and the team have a clear understanding of the areas that need further development, for example, the outdoor play provision. Effective links have been made with outside agencies, the local primary schools and the SureStart programme. The staff should begin to take a structured approach to self-evaluation and to gather evidence of improvement in provision and practice. The contribution made by the centre's early years specialist (EYS) has important strengths. The staff, with the continued support from the centre's EYS, are well placed to continue the developmental work required.

15. The strengths of the centre include:

- the attractive learning environment and the very positive ethos which promotes the children's confidence, independence and self-esteem;
- the friendly children and the good relationships at all levels which support the many instances of settled, purposeful play;
- the supportive parents and the opportunities provided to attend Irish language sessions;

- the many instances of concentrated play, and the high quality construction and creative activities;
- the satisfactory to good opportunities for learning in most areas of the pre-school curriculum; and
- the committed and enthusiastic leader and the supportive and hard-working staff.

16. The inspection has identified areas for improvement. In addressing the most important of these areas, the centre needs to:

- ensure that staff interactions through the medium of the Irish language are more consistent in extending effectively the children's language and learning; and
- continue to develop further the planning and assessment methods in order to identify the learning to be promoted and ensure that all the children's differing needs are met.

17. The pre-school centre has strengths in many aspects of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified a few areas for improvement in important areas which need to be addressed to meet effectively the needs of all the children.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the pre-school centre's progress in addressing these areas for improvement.

APPENDIX

HEALTH AND SAFETY

There is a need to ensure that the use of authentic tools is appropriately supervised when in use by the children.

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