

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Naíscóil Dhún Pádraig,
Downpatrick

Report of an Inspection
in March 2010

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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



CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Naíscoil Dhún Pádraig
Address:	St Michael's Parish Centre 99 Irish Street DOWNPATRICK Co. Down BT30 6BS
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	11 March 2010
Date of previous inspection:	27 March 2003

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	16	14
• in their immediate pre-school year	16	-
• funded by Department of Education (DE)	16	-
• qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 & 2	0	-
• 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	0	-
Attendance:		
• attendance* of funded children for the previous school year	92.4%	-

* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

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

Number of: **	
Students	1
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
2¾ hours	-	174

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	30
Percentage returned:	36.7%
Number of written comments:	4

NAÍScoil DHÚN PÁDRAIG, DOWNPATRICK, CO DOWN, BT30 6BS (4AB-0409)

1. Naíscoil Dhún Pádraig, an Irish-Medium pre-school, is accommodated in St Michael's Parish Centre, Irish Street, Downpatrick. Most of the children who attend the pre-school come from the surrounding area. At the time of the inspection, a new playgroup leader had been in post for one year.

2. The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents, the management committee and the staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Thirty questionnaires were issued to the parents; approximately 37% were returned to the Inspection Services Branch and four contained additional written comments. The responses from the questionnaires indicate that the parents appreciate the dedication of the leader and staff and the good range of experiences provided for their children in the pre-school. The very small number of issues arising from the parental questionnaires were shared with the leader and the management committee. Five of the management committee responded to the questionnaires and four contained additional comments. The responses were wholly positive and expressed high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the pre-school.

3. The provision for pastoral care within the pre-school is very good. Among the strengths are the very good working relationships between the staff and the children and the welcoming atmosphere that permeates all aspects of the life of the pre-school.

4. The pre-school has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department. The management committee and staff need to ensure that all parents obtain copies of the child protection policy and practices as part of the induction programme to the pre-school.

5. The pre-school gives good attention to promoting healthy eating; for example, the children enjoy a good range of fresh fruit as part of the buffet break and can access drinking water throughout the session. In addition, the children benefit daily from the satisfactory opportunities for physical play.

6. Almost all the children engage in collaborative and imaginative role-play and maintain sustained periods of concentrated play. The children make independent choices and they take responsibility for their play environment. They are developing good listening skills and enjoyment of reading through the staff's modelling of reading on request and as part of the story time sessions. The majority of children understand the staff's instructions in Irish and a minority are beginning to respond to the staff in Irish by using high frequency Irish language during the day. There are instances of good quality interaction between the staff and the children whereby they promote the children's sense of fun and enjoyment and add occasionally ideas to promote the children's thinking skills 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 further the children's language and learning.

7. The centre's educational programme provides 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, the children's interest in role-play and early mathematical ideas and concepts. The children are counting informally, developing a good understanding of mathematics in a social context, and using comparative language as an integral part of their play in sand, dough and water.

8. The daily timetable provides a suitable balance between freely chosen play and small group activities led by the adults. The children's snack time operates unobtrusively and provides suitable opportunities for the children to acquire important social skills.

9. The staff are making satisfactory progress in developing their short-term planning. This work needs to continue to ensure that the planning identifies more clearly the learning potential of the play activities in order to guide the staff more effectively in their day-to-day work with the children and that it provides sufficient progression and challenge to meet the children's learning needs. In addition, 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 to support planning to meet specific children's learning needs.

10. The leader is committed to the development of the pre-school. There is a very good team-spirit among the dedicated staff who have a clear understanding of the areas for further development, specifically the outdoor physical play facilities, the observations and the planning. Appropriately, the staff are engaged in work to extend their confidence and competence in the Irish language. Under the direction of the ALTRAM early years adviser, the staff have made necessary and appropriate improvements to the learning environment. The good quality pre-school development plan identifies appropriate areas for incremental improvement. The management committee, the staff and the ALTRAM early years specialist need to continue to work together to build on this initial work and continue to raise standards through a rigorous and systematic approach to self-evaluation.

11. The key strengths in this pre-school include:

- the very good working relationships at all levels;
- the management of the new leader and the developing team-approach to curricular development;
- the very good quality of the advice given by the ALTRAM early years adviser to promote improvement in the pre-school;
- the good quality of the children's collaborative and imaginary role-play; and
- the children's developing understanding of the Irish language.

12. The priority identified for further development includes the need:

- to develop further the planning and assessment methods in order to identify the learning to be promoted and that there is progression and challenge in the pre-school programme, throughout the year.

13. In most of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided in this pre-school is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified an area for improvement in the children's achievements which needs 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 pre-school's progress in addressing the area for improvement.

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