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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 Éanna
Newtownabbey**

Inspected: February 2008

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Naiscoil Éanna
Address:	Hightown Road NEWTOWNABBEY Co Antrim BT36 7AU
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	5 February 2008
Date of previous inspection:	N/A

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	18	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	16	-
• funded by Department of Education	16	-
• 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	85%	-

* 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	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
3½ hours	-	183

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	18
Percentage returned:	77.8%
Number of written comments:	4

NAÍScoil ÉANNA, NEWTOWNABBEY, CO ANTRIM, BT36 7AU (3AB-0535)

1. Naíscoil Éanna is an Irish-Medium pre-school under voluntary management; the children attending the Naíscoil are from English speaking homes and they experience a programme of early immersion learning through the medium of the Irish language. The Naíscoil is accommodated in a mobile classroom which is situated in the grounds of St Enda's Gaelic Athletic Club. Most of the children come from the surrounding area.
2. The parents, staff and management group were given opportunities to express their views about the Naíscoil through the inspection questionnaires. The responses indicated a very high level of satisfaction with the provision; a number of parents included written comments praising the work of the staff. A very small number of parents indicated they had not been made fully aware of the Naíscoil's policies on aspects of pastoral care.
3. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection has important strengths. The Naíscoil has some appropriate policies and procedures for child protection. Some minor additions are needed to ensure they are comprehensive. These include the need to draw up an anti-bullying statement and written risk assessments for trips and outings. The inspection evidence indicates that the policies and procedures are implemented consistently by the staff.
4. The Naíscoil's programme for the promotion of health and well-being has strengths, with a developing commitment to encourage the children to eat healthily and be physically active.
5. There is a friendly, caring atmosphere within the centre, based on good relationships between the staff and the children. The playroom is set out with a range of activities and is enhanced with photographs and some displays of the children's own art work. The environment could be further enriched with a wider, more stimulating range of resources in each area of play. The children appear happy and confident; a significant minority still require support to develop their social skills and settle to productive play. The staff need to implement their behaviour management policy more consistently.
6. The daily timetable places an appropriate emphasis on extended periods of free play during which children freely choose activities; the programme is balanced with some appropriate group activities. The buffet break provides opportunities for the children to develop independence and social skills. The staff need to improve the management of the transitions between activities including the organisation of tidy-up time, story time and outdoor play, in order to use all of the time more effectively for learning.
7. The staff are all sensitive and caring towards the children. During the inspection, the staff, at times, extended the children's language, thinking and learning as they made dough, engaged at the water tray and used the construction materials. The staff need to build on these best examples to promote purposeful play, establish appropriate expectations with regard to the children's ability, and build on the children's own ideas to promote learning more consistently throughout the session. The staff attend Irish language courses to develop

their competency in the language and should continue to do so, to ensure that they can communicate fully with the children in Irish. The staff need to adopt Irish more fully as the working language of the Naíscoil to add value to the spoken language; the children would benefit from increased opportunities to hear Irish spoken more regularly. In addition the children should be encouraged to use high-frequency Irish vocabulary throughout the day.

8. The programme provides some opportunities for learning in all areas of the Naíscoil curriculum.

- The children are friendly, independent and many can express themselves in English with confidence. The staff need to do more to improve the children's levels of concentration and attention.
- The children's fine motor skills are developed through the use of a range of appropriate tools. The children have daily opportunities for energetic physical play. The staff have identified appropriately the need for additional resources and specific planning to develop further this aspect of the programme.
- The children have access to a creative area; some of the children are beginning to paint simple representations. During the inspection, there were some good examples of co-operative play in the role-play area; the addition of the dough improved the play opportunities.
- A few of the children demonstrate an interest in early marking and writing and show an interest in books. This interest should be built upon throughout the play activities. The staff need to do more to develop the children's listening skills. A story and song session at the end of the day helps to promote the Irish language. Staff should extend these opportunities by making more use of spontaneous song and rhyme throughout the session to promote the children's language development. Almost all of the children demonstrate an understanding of spoken Irish.
- Early mathematical language and concepts are promoted naturally through a range of play activities.
- During the inspection there was some concentrated play as the children investigated the properties of sand, water and dough. The range of visits, along with visitors to the Naíscoil, enhances the children's experiences.

9. The Naíscoil has an appropriate policy for special educational needs. The staff should access training to ensure they are well placed to identify and support children with additional needs.

10. The Naíscoil has established good formal and informal links with parents. All parents are issued with a welcome booklet and appropriate policies when their child starts the Naíscoil. The staff issue a useful questionnaire in the first term to gather some feedback from the parents. This could be broadened to include other aspects of the work of the Naíscoil.

The staff use a range of appropriate methods to keep parents informed about various aspects of the Naíscoil. The useful monthly newsletter which informs parents about events could be further developed to give parents clear information on the curriculum and how they can assist their child's education at home. The staff provide parents with useful Irish phrases. Information on the children's progress is shared informally with parents. Staff meet with parents twice each year to discuss their child's progress.

11. The staff are working with the Naíscoil's early years specialist (EYS) to develop their written planning. They need to ensure there is a clearer shared understanding of the pre-school curriculum, to underpin and guide the planning process. The short-term plans need to be used by the staff more effectively in their day-to-day work. There is a need for a closer match between the children's various stages of development and the learning activities provided. The staff have begun to plan target Irish language outcomes for the children and appropriate language support is available to guide the staff at various areas throughout the Naíscoil.

12. The staff have made a useful start in developing records of the children's progress in learning. They are making systematic, relevant observations in all areas of the curriculum; these now need to be linked more closely to the planning to meet individual needs and interests.

13. Just prior to the inspection, there had been a number of changes to the staffing. The full time assistant is acting as leader; she is in the early stages of developing this role. In addition, there is a temporary assistant in post. The staff work hard and are committed to the children; there is a developing sense of team-work. The contribution made by the Naíscoil's EYS has some strengths, including the identification of appropriate areas for improvement. It will be important that staff work closely with the EYS in order to address the key areas for improvement identified in the inspection report.

14. The quality of the accommodation is satisfactory, the building is well maintained. The children have access to two secure outdoor areas. The resources need to be developed to ensure the programme progresses appropriately over the two years that children attend.

15. The Naíscoil has close links with the adjoining Gaelscoil to which most of the children transfer. The Naíscoil should also develop links with other schools to which some of the children may transfer.

16. The key strengths within the Naíscoil's educational and pastoral provision include:

- the caring, friendly atmosphere based on good relationships between the children and the staff;
- the daily timetable which provides extended periods of play when children can explore freely the range of resources, balanced with appropriate group activities;
- the effective links being developed with the parents;
- those examples of co-operative and productive play when the staff helped to promote learning through the activities;

- the happy, confident and articulate children; and
- the strong commitment of the staff, management and parents to the development of the Naiscoil.

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

- The staff need to improve the organisation and management of the transition periods and the group sessions to ensure all of the children are productively engaged.
- The staff need to develop a better shared understanding of how to promote concentrated play, build on the children's own ideas and exploit the learning potential within activities more consistently throughout the session.
- The planning needs to guide the staff more effectively in their day-to-day work with the children and match more closely the children's varying stages of development.

18. This Naiscoil has strengths in aspects of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has also 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 Naiscoil's progress in addressing these areas for improvement.

HEALTH AND SAFETY MATTERS

- During the inspection a few children were observed climbing on furniture.

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