

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Naíscóil Neachtain, Dungiven
County Derry

Irish-medium, voluntary playgroup

Report of an Inspection in
October 2017



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments

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1. Context

Naíscoil Neachtain is located in purpose-built accommodation in Dungiven, County Derry. The children attending the naíscoil come from the town and surrounding rural areas. There has been a change of leader each year for the past three years and, at the time of inspection, all of the staff were new to their posts.

Number of children:	Class 1
Attending part-time	21
Funded by Department of Education	21
At CoP stages 3 or 4*	#
At CoP stages 1 or 2*	#

Average percentage attendance for the previous year.	N/A
Number of days open in previous school year	185

Source: data provided by the setting.

* The stages refer to those set out in the Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs.

fewer than 5

N/A not available

2. Views of parents and staff

Fourteen percent of the parents and a majority of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. Almost all of the responses were wholly positive about the life and work of the naíscoil. The small number of concerns arising from the questionnaires were shared with the staff and a representative of the management committee.

3. Focus of the inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all learners, the inspection linked internal and external approaches to evaluate the:

- outcomes for the children;
- quality of provision for learning; and
- leadership and management.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Outcomes for learners	Very good
Quality of provision	Good
Leadership and management	Good

5. Outcomes for learners

- Almost all of the children are very well settled and play purposefully for sustained periods. They are making good or very good progress in their learning across all areas of the curriculum. Their behaviour and social skills are very good, as they play contentedly and collaboratively with each other. The children are familiar with the routines of the day and independently self-register, serve their own break and choose where they want to play; most children engage well in transitions and tidy-up routines.
- Almost all of the children have very good fine and gross motor skills as they use, with increasing skill and confidence, the range of resources available to them in both the indoor and outdoor play areas. They play energetically outdoors as they balance, climb, dig, throw and run.
- The children have good language and communication skills. They are beginning to understand the Irish spoken to them and most of them are responsive to the songs and rhymes used spontaneously during the session. Many of the children independently write and mark make during free play; a small number of children talked confidently about what they had written.
- Most of the children understand key mathematical concepts as they count, sort and match during play and use the language of measurement, time and shape during routines and transitions.

6. Quality of provision

- The staff have created attractive, child-centred learning environments, both indoors and outdoors, in which the children have independent access to a range of materials, allowing them to extend further their thinking and creativity. Most of the routines and transitions of the day are well embedded and develop further the children's mathematical learning, independence and self-management. The transition from outdoor to indoor play needs to be reviewed.
- The quality of the staff's interactions with the children is mostly good; they model play effectively and, on occasions, ask open-ended questions to extend the children's thinking. The leader is a good linguistic role model, however, the overall quality of the immersion experience and the staff's interactions is not good enough and all staff need to improve their spoken Irish.
- The staff plan together an appropriate, well-balanced educational programme covering all areas of the curriculum. However, there is not a shared understanding of the learning to be promoted through each of the play activities. The evaluations of planning and observations of the children are often used effectively to inform future planning, but there is scope for improvement.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the naíscoil's approach to care and welfare impacts positively on learning, teaching, and outcomes. The children are forming positive relationships with the adults and one another which is evident in their developing social skills and good behaviour.

7. Leadership and management

- The recently-appointed team work very well together and are committed to ongoing improvement within the naíscoil. Although changes in staffing over recent years have been challenging, the impact on the children has been minimised owing to the continuous, effective support from the early years specialist from Altram and the commitment and support of the management committee. There is evidence of self-evaluation leading to improvement in past years and the new leader has made a good start to identifying current priorities for improvement and has appropriate plans in place.
- The naíscoil has developed effective links with the parents and with a range of external agencies and health professionals. The well-established partnership with the local Irish-medium primary school is particularly effective in not only supporting the children and the parents with transition to Year 1, but also in providing a support network and capacity building opportunities for the naíscoil staff.

8. Safeguarding

- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect broadly the guidance from the relevant departments. However, the naíscoil needs to review the anti-bullying policy and ensure, as a matter of urgency, that the newly-appointed deputy designated officer receives appropriate child protection training.

9. Overall effectiveness

Naíscoil Neachtain demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the children.

There are areas for improvement that the naíscoil has demonstrated the capacity to address. These are to develop further:

- the capacity of the staff in the Irish language; and
- the weekly planning to outline clearly the learning potential inherent in the activities.

The ETI will monitor how the naíscoil sustains improvement.

Inspection methodology and evidence base

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework is available on the ETI website <https://www.etini.gov.uk/publications/inspection-and-self-evaluation-framework-isef-effective-practice-and-self-evaluation>.

Inspectors observed learning and teaching through play, the children's achievements, progression and standards, scrutinised relevant documentation, and held formal and informal discussions with staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a meeting with those involved with leadership and management, including the management group; and
- the opportunity for the parents and staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

Quantitative terms

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75% - 90%
A majority	-	50% - 74%
A significant minority	-	30% - 49%
A minority	-	10% - 29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

Performance levels

The ETI use the following performance levels when reporting on outcomes for learners, quality of provision and leadership and management:

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the school:

The school has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.
The school demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.
The school needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.
The school needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners. It requires external support to do so. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

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