

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Naíscoil Mhachaire Rátha
Maghera, County Derry

Voluntary, Irish-medium Playgroup

Report of an Inspection in
November 2018



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
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1. Context

Naíscoil Mhachaire Rátha is located in newly refurbished accommodation in Maghera. Since the time of the last inspection in 2012, there have been a number of changes in staff and over the past couple of years in particular the naíscoil has experienced a period of significant instability. In September 2018, a new leader and nursery assistant were appointed.

Number of children:	Class 1
Attending part-time	12
Funded by Department of Education	12

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	100%
Average percentage attendance for the previous year.	N/A
Number of days open in previous school year	N/A

Source: data provided by the setting.

2. Views of parents and staff

A significant minority of the parents and all of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. The responses were very positive. In their written comments, the parents expressed their appreciation of the professional, friendly and approachable staff and indicated their satisfaction with the opportunities provided for them to share in their children's learning. The questionnaire responses were shared with the leader and a representative from 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	Important areas for improvement
Outcomes for learners	Good
Quality of provision	Important areas for improvement
Leadership and management	Important areas for improvement

5. Outcomes for learners

- Almost all of the children are well-settled and well-behaved. They support and encourage each other during play and approach the adults confidently to show them their work or to ask for assistance when required. Most of the children have good levels of independence as they: choose where they wish to play; make smooth transitions between areas of play and from indoor to outdoor play; follow confidently the established routines at break and tidy-up time; and, self-register on arrival with their name and individual symbol.

- Almost all of the children have a good understanding of the Irish spoken to them and a small number are beginning to respond in Irish using single words and short phrases. They enjoy books; most are attentive during story time and engage enthusiastically with the leader. Most of the children have a good understanding of key mathematical concepts associated with number, shape, pattern and measures. They initiate collaborative imaginative role play outdoors and a small number sustain purposeful role play indoors.
- Almost all of the children have well-developed fine motor skills as they use with ease a range of tools at the dough and complete jigsaws and mathematical table-top games. They all sustain purposeful, energetic play in the outdoor area and are developing very well their personal safety strategies and games skills as they run, jump, balance and climb.

6. Quality of provision

- Although planning is in place for all areas of the pre-school curriculum, the cycle of planning, observation and assessment is underdeveloped and does not guide sufficiently the learning and teaching. The recently-appointed staff are developing their understanding of planning for learning and have identified the need to make the intended learning more explicit and to formalise their approach to evaluating the quality and extent of learning that has taken place. On most occasions, the staff record relevant observations of the children across all areas of learning; the use of the information gathered from the observations however is not being used effectively enough to inform future planning.
- The staff have created an attractive, well-organised indoor learning environment in which there is an appropriate range of natural and commercial resources available to the children. The well-embedded routines promote effectively the development of the children's independence, social skills, language and mathematical learning. The transitions around the playroom and from indoor to outdoor play are smooth and well-managed. The outdoor environment, although it provides an opportunity for the children to engage in purposeful, energetic play, is underdeveloped and under-resourced.
- The interactions between the staff and the children are mostly good. The staff are supportive and pastoral at all times; they join the children at play and are good linguistic and play role models.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the naíscoil's approach to care and welfare impacts positively on learning and teaching, and outcomes. The friendly, caring staff and positive working relationships create a nurturing and supportive environment and develop well the children's confidence, linguistic and social skills.

7. Leadership and management

- There have been significant changes in and challenges relating to staffing and leadership and management over recent years, which have impeded progress in establishing the effective use of self-evaluation and strategic planning for improvement. As a result, these are underdeveloped. The leadership has been supported well by the early-years' specialist from Altram in establishing a process of self-evaluation and development planning and is able to articulate appropriately the improvements made to the induction process owing to self-evaluation and consultation that has taken place.

- The recently-appointed staff are dedicated and enthusiastic and work effectively as a team. They are supported in their work by the recently reconstituted management committee.
- There are effective links with the parents who are kept informed of the life and work of the naíscoil through an informative monthly newsletter, parent noticeboard and regular meetings.

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:

- ensure risk assessments for outings are thorough and specific to the particular outing; and
- continue to update all relevant policies in line with most recent guidance.

9. Overall effectiveness

Naíscoil Mhachaire Rátha needs to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners.

The areas for improvement are to:

- develop further the provision for learning in the outdoor environment;
- develop further the cycle of planning, observation and assessment to guide more effectively the learning and teaching and raise the outcomes for all children; and
- continue to develop a systematic approach to self-evaluation and planning for improvement.

The ETI will monitor and report on the naíscoil's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection in 12 to 18 months.

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 management¹:

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

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on governance:

High degree of confidence
Confidence
Limited confidence

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on safeguarding:

Reflects the guidance
Reflects broadly the guidance
Unsatisfactory

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on care and welfare:

Impacts positively on learning, teaching and outcomes for learners
Does not impact positively enough on learning, teaching and outcomes for learners

¹ And the overall provision in a subject area or unit, as applicable.

Overall effectiveness

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

<p>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.</p>
<p>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.</p>
<p>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.</p>
<p>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.</p>

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