

PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Naíscoil Choin Ri Uladh,
Ballymena

Report of an Inspection
in May 2011

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Naíscoil Choin Ri Uladh
Address:	St Joseph's Early Years Centre 90 Doury Road BALLYMENA Co Antrim BT43 6JE
Management Type:	Voluntary
Date of inspection:	18 May 2011
Date of previous inspection:	N/A

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
attending the pre-school centre	10	-
in their immediate pre-school year	6	-
funded by Department of Education (DE)	6	-
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	1	-
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	79.5%	-

* Calculated from the date when the intake was complete

2. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-time	Part-time
Staff, including leader	0	2
Staff holding recognised childcare qualifications	0	2
New appointments within previous 12 months	0	0

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
3 hours	-	188

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	10
Percentage returned:	40%
Number of written comments:	3

NAÍScoil CHOIN RI ULADH, BALLYMENA, CO ANTRIM, BT43 6JE (3AB-0564)

1. Naíscoil Choin Ri Uladh is accommodated in St Joseph's Early Years Centre, a former primary school building which has been adapted to accommodate a number of pre-school groups and SureStart services. The children are reported as almost all coming from English-speaking homes in the local area; they experience early immersion in the Irish language as the main medium of communication and interaction in the Naíscoil. The small number of six pre-school children enrolled for the current year, falls below the criteria for inclusion in the Departments pre-school funded programme; the remaining four children attending the Naíscoil are in their penultimate school year.

2. In most of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this is Naíscoil is good. The Naíscoil has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the Naíscoil has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) will monitor the Naíscoil's progress on the areas for improvement.

CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENTS

3. The children are happy and settle quickly to their chosen activities; they are confident in following the daily routines and can share and take turns. Overall their behaviour is very good and they co-operate well with the staff. Those children who require support are making progress in developing their social skills. The small number of children present during the inspection often restricted the opportunities for the children to develop sustained collaborative and imaginative play and, at times, resulted in either solitary or parallel play or the children becoming over-dependent on the adults.

4. The children's interest and progress in the use of a wide range of art activities is a particular strength in the Naíscoil; there is evidence of many good examples of detailed representative paintings, drawing and models. Many of the children show a good awareness of early mathematics as they count, sort and make comparisons of size. The children show an interest in exploring the natural items provided on the interest table and in the well-resourced play areas.

5. Almost all of the children show a good understanding, can follow instructions and use simple, frequently used words and phrases in Irish. There is a high level of interest in mark making and emergent writing and the children also participate fully with songs and rhymes throughout the session. On the day of the inspection, the children showed limited interest in the wide range of books available.

THE PROVISION FOR LEARNING

6. The staff prepare a rich, well resourced and very stimulating learning environment. They make effective use of photographs and displays to enhance the playroom.

7. The staff provide high levels of care and support for the children. Relationships between the staff and the children are very good and the children respond well to their suitably high expectations. The staff value the children's own ideas and work hard to extend their language and learning as they interact with them during activities and routines. At times, however, the quality of the Irish language and the staff's effectiveness in promoting learning is inconsistent.

8. The planning and assessment methods are being developed effectively. The staff demonstrate a clear understanding of the pre-school curriculum and implement their planning consistently. The children's records demonstrate the progress being made. The staff would benefit from additional training and support in the identification of children's additional needs at an early stage and guidance on how to provide appropriate early intervention.

9. The pre-school curriculum being provided is broad and well balanced. It provides good to very good opportunities for the children to learn in all areas of the pre-school curriculum.

10. The parents are kept well informed about the Naiscoil and their children's progress. The useful links developed with the local SureStart have been effective in raising the capacity of the staff and enhancing the availability of resources.

11. The quality of pastoral care within this centre is very good. The strengths include the very caring and supportive ethos and the links with the parents.

12. The Naíscoil has very good comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department.

13. The Naíscoil gives very good attention to promoting the children's health and well-being, including a healthy break and special events such as healthy eating week. The children enjoy well organised energetic physical activity sessions in the large hall area.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

14. The Leader is well organised, provides a good role-model in her work with the children and fosters a team approach. She demonstrates a clear understanding of the pre-school curriculum and the needs of young children. The staff work well as a team and have worked hard to improve the quality of their spoken Irish. The staff have worked closely with their early years specialist (EYS) to continually improve the provision; the quality of the EYS support and training from ALTRAM has been good.

15. The key strengths in this Naiscoil include:

- the very good use of resources to create a stimulating and attractive learning environment;
- the caring and supportive ethos based on the excellent relationships between the staff and the children;
- the good progress made in planning a well balanced programme and assessing the children's achievements;
- the wide range of planned experiences which provide good to very good opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum;
- the many examples of effective staff interaction when the staff promoted settled play and extended the children's learning; and
- the effective leadership and strong sense of team-work among the staff.

16. The areas for improvement include:

- the need for the staff to develop their competency in the Irish language; and
- the need to build the capacity of the Naíscoil's staff and management to identify and access support for children with additional needs.

17. In most of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this Naíscoil is good. The Naíscoil has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the Naíscoil has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Inspectorate will monitor the Naíscoil's progress on the areas for improvement.

QUESTIONNAIRES

The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents, the staff and the management committee to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. The responses from the parents, staff and management group indicated a high level of satisfaction with the provision. In particular, they highlighted the commitment of the staff to the children's care and development, the progress of the children in their social skills, general confidence and in their use of the Irish language.

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