

EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
INSPECTORATE

## PRE-SCHOOL INSPECTION

Naíscoil Mhachaire Rátha, Maghera, County Derry

Irish-medium, voluntary pre-school, DE Ref No 3AB-0125

Report of a Follow-up Inspection in May 2024



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# Follow-up to the inspection of Naíscoil Mhachaire Rátha, Maghera, BT46 5AP (3AB-0125)

## Introduction

Naíscoil Mhachaire Rátha is located in the town of Maghera. The 20 pre-school children attending the naíscoil come from the town and the surrounding rural area. Naíscoil Mhachaire Rátha has experienced significant challenges in relation to staffing and leadership for several years. The naíscoil had to close for five days in April due to insufficient levels of staffing. At the time of this inspection, all of the staff have been in post for less than one year, and shared leadership roles have only been in operation for two weeks.

This follow-up inspection was carried out in May 2024 and provided the naíscoil with the opportunity to demonstrate its progress in addressing the areas for action from the time of the last inspection in October 2022.

## Views of parents, staff and pupils

The ETI issued online confidential questionnaires to parents and staff in advance of the follow-up inspection.

Most of the staff (75%) and just over one-half of the parents (55%) responded to the questionnaire. All of the staff responses and almost all of the parental responses were wholly positive. Just over one-third of the parents (36%) who responded to the questionnaire included written comments, all of which were very positive and commented on: their children's enjoyment of the naíscoil; the caring staff; and the effective range of means through which they receive helpful information and are kept informed about the life and work of the naíscoil.

## Key actions

During this period, the key actions which affect the work of the naíscoil include:

external support provided by an early years' specialist (EYS) from Altram, in relation to leadership and management, child protection training and the cycle of planning, observation and assessment;

- a new management committee has been established; and
- the chair of the management committee and staff are attending all meetings with the EYS and they network with other Irish-medium and Irish-language organisations in the wider Maghera area.

## Key findings

- In order to keep the naíscoil open and provide continuity and stability for the children in the final term of their pre-school year, the management committee and EYS prioritised appropriately the building of relationships between the children and staff and the delivery of a range of staff professional learning and development. As a result, the children are happy and are making progress in their learning.
- The management committee, EYS and staff have identified the need to develop a fit-for-purpose approach to self-evaluation and to the cycle of planning, observation and assessment that is understood and implemented by all staff and impacts positively on the learning experiences and outcomes for the children.
- At the time of this inspection, almost all of the children: engaged in collaborative and purposeful play; had a good understanding of the Irish spoken to them and were using single words and short phrases in Irish naturally during play; and enjoyed and participated in songs and rhymes. They were developing well their fine-motor skills, independence and self-management skills through their play and interactions with each other, with the adults and with their environment.
- The management committee have been strategic in their approach to mitigate the challenges with recruiting and retaining suitably qualified Irish-medium staff. They have also embarked upon intentional networking with other Irish-medium and Irish-language organisations in the wider Maghera area to support the staff, children and families of the naíscoil by creating a wider community of learning and support network. An innovative approach to providing professional learning and development opportunities for the staff is in place through the supportive and creative partnership with a well-established neighbouring naíscoil.
- The EYS from Altram has consistently provided effective support to the naíscoil with a wide range of matters relating to leadership and management, child protection and safeguarding, and planning and assessment for effective learning in the early years.

## Child Protection

At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by the naíscoil demonstrates that the arrangements for child protection align to the current statutory guidance.

## Going Forward

The management committee, EYS and staff of Naíscoil Mhachaire Rátha have appropriately and effectively prioritised the children, their safety and their educational experience, during this challenging time. They have a shared strategic vision for the future of the naíscoil and have been proactive in working towards that vision, through: securing planning for the construction of new purpose-built accommodation; creating innovative opportunities for staff professional learning through mentorship with staff from another naíscoil; and establishing a professional partnership with an Irish language accredited training and employment provider in order to build a qualified workforce going forward.

Area for action:


for the staff to continue to develop the planning and provision for high quality learning across all areas of the pre-school curriculum.

The ETI will continue to monitor the naíscoil's progress.

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