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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
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CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

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**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 Mhuire
Pomeroy**

Inspected: November 2007

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Name of pre-school centre:	Naiscoil Mhuire
Address:	5 Cavanakeeran Road POMEROY Co Tyrone BT70 2RD
Management Type:	Voluntary

Date of inspection:	21 November 2007
Date of previous inspection:	N/A

1. Details of Children

Total number of children:	am session	pm session
• attending the pre-school centre	6	-
• in their immediate pre-school year	6	-
• funded by Department of Education	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	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	93%	-

* 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	1
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
2½ hours	-	187

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued to parents:	6
Percentage returned:	83%
Number of written comments:	2

NAÍScoil Mhuire, POMEROY, CO TYRONE, BT70 2RD (5AB-0546)

INTRODUCTION

1. Naíscoil Mhuire is situated in mobile accommodation within the grounds of St Mary's Primary School and Gaelscoil Mhuire, in Pomeroy. At the time of the inspection, there were six children enrolled in the pre-school centre. This number is insufficient to meet the minimum requirements of the Pre-school Education Expansion Programme.

2. The parents, staff and management group were given opportunities to express their views about the centre through the inspection questionnaires. The responses have been taken into account as part of the inspection and any issues raised have been shared with the staff. Those who responded expressed satisfaction with the centre's provision.

3. The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection has some strengths. The pre-school centre has appropriate policies and procedures for child protection. Some additions are needed to ensure they are sufficiently detailed, including the need to:

- update the information flowchart for parents;
- include an anti-bullying statement; and
- ensure that the parents sign consent forms in relation to the personal care of the children.

The inspection evidence indicates that some further action is needed to ensure that new members of staff are aware of the procedures for recording and reporting concerns.

4. The centre'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.

THE QUALITY OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

5. The ethos of the centre is caring and the staff provide a supportive environment which helps the children to settle. The playroom has been set up with defined areas for play. On the day of the inspection, only four children were present; as a result, the interactions between the children were very limited and they were overly dependent on adult intervention.

6. The daily timetable begins with a short period of free play during which the children engage purposefully with the materials available. The staff should improve the organisation of the daily session in order to provide a longer period of uninterrupted play, and to ensure that the children's choice of activities and the development of their play are not limited unnecessarily. The staff make appropriate use of the children's snack time to help promote early social and conversational skills. The children have regular opportunities for outdoor play, rhymes and songs and a group story session.

7. The quality of the staff's interactions with the children is limited by the small number attending the centre. The staff join the children in their play activities and frequently praise their efforts. On occasion, the staff help sustain the children's interest in the play activities but frequently the interactions are instructional and supervisory.

8. The leader is a confident, competent speaker of Irish. On occasion, however, he combines the use of Irish and English within his conversations with the children. The formal language teaching observed during the inspection is inappropriate. The assistant needs a significant level of support to allow her to interact more meaningfully with the children in Irish. The children demonstrate a good understanding of spoken Irish and are beginning to use some Irish words in their interactions with the adults.

9. The written planning outlines a range of suitable themes and topics which help to develop a variety of learning experiences for the children. The short-term planning identifies aspects of learning which the staff intend to promote through the various play activities. The planning is evaluated regularly; the staff should use this evaluation more effectively to identify and respond to the needs and interests of individual children and groups.

10. The centre's educational programme offers opportunities for learning in most of the areas of the pre-school curriculum. The points which follow illustrate specific aspects of the programme.

- Attention is paid to promoting the children's personal, social and emotional development although their social interactions are limited due to the small number attending the centre. The children show an appropriate understanding of the necessary rules and routines. More opportunities should be provided to allow the children with greater choice of activity and to help develop their independence and decision-making skills.
- The children have regular opportunities for energetic physical play. Many of the children are acquiring appropriate manipulative skills using small tools such as scissors and markers.
- The staff provide a range of creative activities to encourage the children to experiment with different materials. Some of these activities are overly directed by the adults. More opportunities should be provided to help the children develop their creativity and imagination. There are frequent opportunities for informal singing which the children clearly enjoy; they are acquiring a suitable repertoire of rhymes and songs.
- The staff make use of the play opportunities to develop the children's listening skills. The children respond well to the group story session. The children's interest in early writing should be developed further through the various areas of play. The staff should make better use of books throughout the playroom and continue to promote opportunities for sharing stories with individuals and small groups.

- Early mathematical ideas are promoted throughout most areas of play. The staff use seasonal and environmental topics to develop the children's knowledge of, and interest in, the world around them. More opportunities should be provided, both indoors and in the outdoor play area, to encourage exploration and investigation of the natural world, and to enrich the children's experiences in early science and technology.

11. The staff work together to observe and record the children's responses to play. The staff need to ensure that the information is used more effectively to meet their needs and interests within the planned programme.

12. There are effective informal and formal links with the parents. Information about the work of the centre is available on the parents' noticeboard and in the bi-lingual monthly newsletter. The staff share information on the children's progress with the parents twice a year.

13. There is a developing sense of team-work among the staff. They meet regularly to evaluate the programme and the leader takes a reflective approach to his work. The early years specialist (EYS) has made a very good contribution to the development of the provision in this pre-school centre. The support provided is well focused including, in particular, the progress made in organising the layout of the playroom, in developing the written planning and in helping the staff to deepen their understanding of aspects of the pre-school curriculum.

14. **The strengths of the centre include:**

- the dedication and commitment of the team and the settled behaviour of the children;
- the progress made by the staff in developing the centre's written policies and planning;
- the efforts made to inform and involve the parents; and
- the quality of the advice and guidance provided by the EYS.

15. **The inspection has identified areas for improvement. In addressing the most important of these areas, the centre needs to:**

- ensure that the number of children attending the centre is sufficient to meet the requirements of the Pre-school Education Expansion Programme;
- review and improve the organisation of the session to ensure a more appropriate balance between child-initiated play and adult-led activity; and
- improve the quality of the staff's interactions with the children, in order to promote further the children's autonomy and creativity, and extend their thinking skills across all areas of the pre-school curriculum.

16. The pre-school centre has a few strengths in its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement, which need to be addressed promptly if the centre is to meet effectively the needs of all the children.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the pre-school centre's progress in addressing these areas for improvement.

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