



# Statement of purpose

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## Aims and objectives

Our aim at Naíscoil na Seolta is to provide high quality integrated pre-school care through the medium of the Irish language to children from a variety of backgrounds in east Belfast. We aim to develop language ability through play and to give children the opportunity to develop their language skills through a program of immersion learning.

We aim:

to offer children in east Belfast a chance to experience integration in an Irish-medium setting; to offer children a broader range of friendships and experiences; to create a safe and shared space for cross-community events.

## Ethos;

At Naíscoil na Seolta, management and staff are committed to creating a safe, stimulating and enjoyable environment for all children. Our motto translates as ‘Happy Children, Learning Together’ and this is central to our approach.

We comply fully with Health and Social Services on child protection procedures and in accordance with the legislative framework of The Children (NI) order 1995, taking into consideration the 5 main principles of the order, the first being ‘welfare of the child is paramount’. We also work directly within the Health and Social Services Day Care for Children under age 12 minimum standards document, adhering to all its guidance but always strive to meet the highest standards for our children and their families.

We are an Irish-medium, integrated sessional pre-school facility and as such immersion education and integration are central to what we do. We work closely with Altram, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta and NICIE and are registered with the Early Years Organisation.

We are committed to allowing children to grow and develop in an integrated environment. This is not about diluting identities, but getting to know each other and learning about our different identities together. This gives children and families a greater feeling of resilience in what is often seen as a divided society.

Our vision is to establish an integrated Irish-medium primary school in east Belfast. We are excited to offer child the opportunity to take their first steps towards bilingualism. And we feel privileged to welcome your family into our dedicated and thriving school community.

## Admissions policy

The Committee and staff of Naíscoil na Seolta are fully committed to the ethos of Integrated Education. As we move towards the status of integrated pre-school operating in Northern Ireland we are committed to maintaining as far as is possible a balance of declared religious

denomination places for 40% Catholic, 40% Protestant pupils with the 20% balance being reserved for those declaring other or no religious affiliation. We are also committed to the delivery of the curriculum through the medium of the Irish language. Those who apply to Naíscoil na Seolta for a place, will be made aware of these fundamental elements of our ethos.

### Criteria for admission

The Management Committee will draw up and agree the admissions criteria, which will have regard to the needs of the children, their families and the available number of places.

### Hours of opening;

The Naíscoil provides 16 places for children of pre-pre-school age, 2 years and 10 months+ Sessions run 5 mornings a week from 9:15am-12:15pm. Each year will begin with a settling in period which is outlined in the Settling In Policy. The Naíscoil will be open for sessions during the equivalent school term dates, and will close during school holidays.

### Contact information

The Naíscoil Leader is Gerardine Munroe and the Naíscoil Assistant is Caoimhe O'Connell. The Naíscoil contact details are as follows:

**Address:** 84 Glenmachan Rd, Belfast BT4 2NN

**Telephone Number:** 07786782083

**Email:** naiscoilnaseolta@outlook.com

The Naíscoil leader can be reached at: [naiscoil@scoilnaseolta.org](mailto:naiscoil@scoilnaseolta.org), or by telephoning: 07786782083

The management committee can be reached via email to [naiscoilnaseolta@outlook.com](mailto:naiscoilnaseolta@outlook.com) or via our website [www.scoilnaseolta.org](http://www.scoilnaseolta.org)

## Routines

We recognise that children respond positively to routines which are meaningful and practical, and can be used to demonstrate progress in all areas of their development. However, within the Naíscoil we must also focus specifically on the routine of language use. Children who come to Naíscoil na Seolta may not have any previous experience of using or hearing Irish used as a means of communication, and therefore one of the primary routines is to ensure that Irish is used as the main form of communication in Naíscoil activities, as far as is reasonable practicable. This is an area which will be regularly monitored, to ensure that the language use is quantifiable and can demonstrate progress, for example, by observing how children respond to instructions in Irish, how they begin to use individual words, building to short phrases and whole sentences, until they reach the point where they are able to create independent sentences in Irish.

Routines at Naíscoil na Seolta comprise three discrete areas:

Long term planning – how the year is planned, including planning for inclusion of a range of topics appropriate to the season or time of year (including celebrations relating to the cultural traditions of our diverse communities);

Medium term planning – ensuring that a program of activities is planned and prepared to match the content of the year plan, but including greater detail, for example, dates for outings, a month by month plan of topic based play activities

Short term planning – where greater detail is added, including the specific role each staff member will play in implementing the plan, the exact resources required, and the daily activities which will be undertaken to demonstrate progress.

The program for each day is outlined below:

## An Lá Naíscoile / The Naíscoil Day

9.15AM-9.30AM	Welcome children in. (wash hands, hang up coats and bags)
9.30AM-10.15AM	Free Choice (A wide range of activities for children to choose from)
10.15AM-10.30AM	Small Groups (Key-worker's choice)
10.30AM-10.45AM	Snack (Children to wash their hands before)
10.45AM-11.15AM	Physical Play
11.15AM-11.30AM	Arts & Crafts
11.30AM-11.50AM	Free choice (Sensory play, sand, water, dough)
11.50AM-12.10PM	Circle Time / Physical activity in big hall
12.10PM-12.15PM	Home time (wash hands and collect belongings)

\*Please Note\* Room routine can be changed to suit children when needed.

The effectiveness of the planning and routines will be regularly monitored by the Naíscoil leader, in conjunction with the Chair of the Committee, in the role of line manager, and any changes to routine will be discussed and put into place as appropriate to the needs of the children.

## Charges and fees

Sessions will be at a cost of £5 per child. Parents will not pay for settling in period. Payments can be made monthly or weekly depending on the needs of the parents.

Naíscoil na Seolta is committed to minimising the financial pressure on parents when it comes to the extra costs that go with sending their child to the Naíscoil. Money spent on uniforms, daytrips, fundraising and stationary can add up to a large sum, especially for large families. We will endeavour:

- to ensure that we keep branded items to a minimum,
- to encourage use of second hand uniforms,
- to make school arrangements with suppliers transparent,
- and to make sure parents have clear and easy to understand information about uniform policies.

## Registration and insurance information

Naíscoil na Seolta is registered with HSC. Our assigned social worker is Clare O’Dempsey. Naíscoil na Seolta is insured with Allianz, through the Early Years Scheme.

POLICYHOLDER	Naíscoil Na Seolta
TYPE OF POLICY	Day Nurseries/Playgroups
POLICY NUMBER	BT RES 4258856
INSURANCE PERIOD	27/09/2021 to 31/10/22

Naíscoil na Seolta also holds a Certificate of Employers’ Liability Insurance, which is available for inspection on request.

## The role of parents, including any expectation that they participate on the management committee or as volunteers

The Naíscoil believes parents’ involvement with their child’s education and development is vital, and this is why the Naíscoil has adopted the policy that parents are welcome to become involved in our group at whatever level suits their skills/interests/needs, for example, parents can help with:

- Settling their child into the Naíscoil
- Sharing information about their child
- Assisting and attending information sessions/open days
- Become a member of the committee and attend committee meetings
- Participate in parent support/focus groups
- Share a special interest, hobby or skill with children and adults in the Naíscoil
- Share their experience of our Naíscoil with other parents and agencies
- Provide support and recognition for our Naíscoil
- Take part in fundraising events
- Participate in social events and outings
- Attend any relevant, beneficial workshops/courses/training.

In addition to this, Naíscoil staff are conscious that other family members often play a large part in the development of the children at the Naíscoil, for example by bringing them to and collecting them from the Naíscoil. Naíscoil staff make an effort to include these carers in the communication loop, however, are well aware of the specific communication which requires the consent of the persons with parental responsibility.

Staff keep parents informed about meetings, open days and our written policies. Regular open communication between staff and parents helps staff to support the holistic development of each child.

## Policies on safeguarding and behaviour management

### Safeguarding

<b>Designated Safeguarding Officer</b>	
gerardine Munroe - Naíscoil Leader	07786782083 <a href="mailto:naiscoil@scoilnaseolta.org">naiscoil@scoilnaseolta.org</a>
<b>Designated Safeguarding Officer (Committee)</b>	
gerardine Munroe	Fao gerardine Munroe <a href="mailto:naiscoilnaseolta@outlook.com">naiscoilnaseolta@outlook.com</a>
<b>Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officer (Committee)</b>	
Caoimhe O'Connell	Fao Caoimhe O'Connell <a href="mailto:naiscoilnaseolta@outlook.com">naiscoilnaseolta@outlook.com</a>

Naíscoil na Seolta is committed to safeguarding the well-being of children, promoting their rights and best interests.

#### Safeguarding Policy

We at Naíscoil na Seolta have a primary commitment to and responsibility for the welfare, safety and holistic development of each child in our care.

We aim to carry out this duty by providing a caring, supportive and safe environment in which the individual child is given time, encouragement and support to learn and develop to their full potential. The welfare of each child is our paramount consideration.

We at Naíscoil na Seolta want to ensure that children are protected and kept safe from harm while they are in our care. We ensure our staff and volunteers are carefully selected, trained and supervised. We will endeavour through discussion and written guidelines and forms to ensure parents/carers/guardians know how to voice their concerns or complaints if there is anything they are not happy about. This policy has been developed in line with the Regional Child Protection policy and procedures, and the UNOCINI referral template is attached.

This policy outlines the protection of children by identifying clear instructions in accordance with the legislative framework of The Children (NI) Order 1995, taking into consideration the five main principles of the Order, the first being “the welfare of the child is paramount”.

Everyone at Naíscoil na Seolta who comes into contact with children and their families have a duty to safeguard and promote the well-being of children. At Naíscoil na Seolta management/ staff/volunteers will work with children, parents/carers/guardians and the community to ensure the rights and safety of children and to give them the very best start in life.



Throughout this Policy and Procedures, we use the term “Parents/carers/guardians” to mean those with parental responsibility as defined by the Children (NI) Order 1995.

- Naíscoil na Seolta promotes children's right to be strong, resilient and listened to by creating an environment in our setting that encourages children to develop a positive self-image, which includes their heritage arising from their colour and ethnicity, their languages spoken at home, their religious beliefs, culture traditions and home background.
- Naíscoil na Seolta promotes children's right to be strong, resilient and listened to by encouraging children to develop a sense of autonomy and independence.
- Naíscoil na Seolta promotes children's right to be strong, resilient and listened to by enabling children to have the self-confidence and the vocabulary to resist inappropriate approaches.
- Naíscoil na Seolta helps children establish and sustain satisfying relationships within their families, with peers, and with other adults.
- Naíscoil na Seolta works with parents/carers/guardians to build their understanding of, and commitment to, the principles of safeguarding all our children.

Our full Safeguarding Policy is available upon request and available on our website.

## Behaviour Management

Naíscoil na Seolta believes that children flourish best when they know how they are expected to behave and should be free to play and learn without fear of being hurt or unfairly restricted by anyone else.

### **Aim**

We aim to provide an environment in which there is acceptable behaviour and where children learn to respect themselves, other people and their environment.

At Naíscoil na Seolta, we recognise that childrens’ unacceptable behaviour is a reaction to an aspect of their environment. Stressed, worried, unhappy or bored children may behave inappropriately. For younger children, poor behaviour may be a trial and error, part of learning what is and is not acceptable. Other reasons for poor behaviour are insecurity, unexpressed feeling and in rare cases, abuse, food intolerance, allergies or special educational needs.

### **Methods**

- We have a named person (Gerardine Munroe) who has overall responsibility for issues concerning behaviour.
- We require the named person to:

- remain up-to-date with legislation and research and thinking on handling children's behaviour;
  - access relevant sources of expertise on handling children's behaviour; and
  - check that all staff have relevant in-service training on handling children's behaviour.
- We require all staff and volunteers to provide positive examples of behaviour by treating children, parents and one another with friendliness, care, and courtesy.
  - We require all staff and volunteers to use positive strategies for handling any conflict by helping children find solutions in ways which are appropriate for the children's ages and stages of development – for example, distraction, praise and reward – balls in pot, Barra Beár, Réalta an lae, Réalta na seachtaine and specific jobs for children.
  - We familiarise new staff and volunteers with the Naíscoil's behaviour policy and its rules for behaviour.
  - We expect all members of the Naíscoil – children, parents, staff and volunteers to keep to the rules, requiring these to be applied consistently.
  - We praise and endorse desirable behaviour such as kindness and willingness to share.
  - We avoid creating situations in which children receive adult attention only in return for undesirable behaviour.
  - We recognise that codes for interacting with other people vary between cultures and require staff to be aware of, and respect, those used by members of the Naíscoil.
  - When children behave in unacceptable ways, we help them to see what was wrong and how to cope more appropriately.
  - We never send children out of the room by themselves.
  - We never use physical punishment, such as smacking or shaking. Children are never threatened with these.
  - We do not use techniques intended to single out and humiliate individual children.
  - We only use physical restraint, such as holding, to prevent physical injury to children or adults and/or damage to property. Details of such an event (what happened, what action was taken and by whom, and the names of witnesses) are brought to the attention of our pre-school leader and are recorded in our Incident Book. A parent is informed on the same day and signs the Incident Book to indicate that he/she has been informed.
  - In cases of serious misbehaviour, such as racial or other abuse, we make clear immediately the unacceptability of the behaviour and attitudes, by means of explanations rather than personal blame.
  - We do not shout, or raise our voices in a threatening way in response to children's behaviour.
  - We handle children's unacceptable behaviour in ways which are appropriate to their ages and stages of development, for example, by distraction, discussion or by withdrawing the child from the situation.
  - We work in partnership with children's parents. Parents are regularly informed about their children's behaviour by their key person. We work with parents to address recurring unacceptable behaviour, using objective observation records to help us

understand the cause and to decide jointly how to respond appropriately. We record serious behaviour incidents through the use of a behaviour incident form which states what happened and where. Parents and staff will sign and receive a copy of this.

- If recurring unacceptable behaviour continues and is witnessed as being dangerous to the child who is misbehaving, to other children, to staff and/or to Naíscóil property, the Leader will deem it necessary to ask the child's parent to take the child home immediately. The unacceptable behaviour will be reported to the parent by the Leader, a way forward will be discussed in order to reflect and encourage desirable behaviour in the setting and at home. Such desirable behaviour will be reiterated by the Leader to the parent in accordance with Naíscóil na Seolta's Code of Conduct.

Our full Behaviour Policy, and Management of Aggression and Challenging Behaviour Policy are available upon request and available on our website.

### What does this policy prohibit?

The Children Act 1989, Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters, The Child Care Act 2006, The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage and Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage and the UN Convention for the Rights of Children prohibit the following:

- Smacking
- The use of any type of physical force
- The threat of physical force as a deterrent
- Shouting at a child
- Bullying children as a form of discipline
- Direct and hurtful criticism
- Unnecessary criticism
- Insulting a child
- Withholding food, milk or drinks or forcing children to ingest anything they don't want to
- Leaving a child to cry themselves to sleep.

Physical intervention will only be used to manage a child's behaviour if it is necessary to prevent personal injury to the child, other children or an adult. Any occasion where physical intervention is used to manage a child's behaviour will be recorded and parents/guardians of the child will be informed.

### Bullying

Bullying involves the persistent physical or verbal abuse of another child or children. We take bullying very seriously. (See Bullying Policy)

## Any policy on excluding children from the setting

Children will only be excluded from the setting for one of two reasons: either through illness, as defined by RIDDOR, and included in the Health and Safety Policy, or if behaviour issues have not been successfully managed through the processes and procedures outlined in the Behaviour Policy and Managing Aggression and Challenging Behaviour Policy. In the case where all potential strategies have been tried, and in discussion with the person with parental responsibility, the Committee may have no further option but to exclude a child, particularly if there is a risk that the welfare of other children in the setting could be affected.

## The complaints policy

At Naíscoil na Seolta, we take complaints seriously. We have the best interests of all our pupils and their families at the centre of all we do. We encourage anyone with a worry to speak to us as soon as possible. If issues are dealt with at an early stage, then they are more likely to be resolved leaving no unnecessary dissatisfaction.

We welcome communication with our staff. Parents / carers can do this by contacting staff as outlined below:

We take all issues seriously and make every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible.

Contacts:

Naíscoil Leader - gerardine Munroe

Tel no. 07786782083

Email- [naiscoil@scoilnaseolta.org](mailto:naiscoil@scoilnaseolta.org)

Committee Chair: Aodán Mac Séafraidh

Email fao Aodán Mac Séafraidh [naiscoilnaseolta@outlook.com](mailto:naiscoilnaseolta@outlook.com)

Naíscoil na Seolta has adopted a Complaints Procedure which sets out the steps to ensure that all complaints are dealt with in a fair and equitable manner, with time limits in place, and details of how to appeal, where appropriate. The Complaints Procedure highlights the facility to involve outside agencies where appropriate, and gives details of how to contact The Gateway Team and the NI Ombudsman, inter alia.

A full copy of the Complaints Policy and Procedures is available on request.

## How to access the other policies within the setting and what they are

Naíscoil na Seolta has the following policies as outlined in the minimum standards. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list and we have added further policies which are available upon request. Policies are provided to parents within a registration pack. All parents will be asked to read the policies and procedures and sign to confirm they have done so.

We endeavour to publish all our policies on our website [www.scoilnaseolta.org](http://www.scoilnaseolta.org) , accessible via a password portal. A further copy of all the policies listed below is held in the Naíscoil for parents to inspect and read if they request to do so.

Those policies marked \* are available to staff and to Committee members.

\*Absence of the Manager

Accidents – Prevention, Reporting, Recording and Notification Additional Needs

\*Allegations against Staff

CCTV

Complaints

Confidentiality

Consent

Data Protection Equality

First Aid

Infection Prevention and Control

Intimate/Personal Care

Maintenance and Replacement of Play Equipment

Managing Aggression and Challenging Behaviour – including bullying

Managing Emergencies

Management of Medicines

Management of Records

Management of Risks Associated with the Care of Individual Service Users

Menu Planning

Mobile Phones

Parents' Access to Records

Participation

Photography and Videography

Play

Provision of Food and Drink

Reporting Adverse and Untoward Incidents

Safeguarding and Child Protection

Security of the Setting

Smoking

Social Networking

\*Staffing:

- Behaviour and Conduct
- Clothing /Uniform
- Discipline
- Grievance
- Induction
- Meetings
- Records
- Recruitment
- Rotas
- Supervision and Appraisal
- Training and Development

Transport for Service Users – Provision and Use

Whistle Blowing

The above policies were approved by meetings of the Naíscoil Committee in October 2021, and are on a rolling program of review. Each Policy will be reviewed annually and revised accordingly.

## Information about activities provided for children

As outlined in the details of the Naíscoil day, children will have access to a wide range of activities designed to develop their physical, social, emotional and intellectual abilities. The room is laid out to include a range of activities, with mixed seating areas to encourage independent and collaborative play.

Although the activities may be themed, there is an opportunity for children to engage in dramatic, sand, water, table top, small world, construction and creative play, as well as giving opportunities for reflection through circle time. Children are encouraged to play through the

medium of the Irish language, and each activity and activity area is labelled in Irish with pictograms to support learning. In addition there is a small library of books in Irish. Naíscoil na Seolta values equality of opportunity and experience and therefore recognises that play activities should not promote stereotypes of gender, race, disability or other protected characteristics. Physical play is facilitated through the use of a large sports hall adjacent to the Naíscoil, and outdoor play will be facilitated through regular planned outings, which meet the needs of the themed curriculum. Information about the type and range of activities is communicated regularly to those with parental responsibility via our notice boards, and through regular telephone communication with parents/carers. In the event of activities taking place off site, permission will be sought from those with parental responsibility.

## Information on how children with additional needs are accommodated within the setting

Naíscoil na Seolta is committed to providing a learning environment which, following from the ethos of integration, is also inclusive. At its broadest, inclusion in the early years is about practices which ensure that everyone ‘belongs’: from children and their parents, to staff and any others connected with the setting in some way.

However, Inclusion is sometimes taken to apply specifically and only to those children identified as having special educational needs, learning in mainstream settings. Although Naíscoil na Seolta would aim to include all members of the Naíscoil community who have additional needs, we recognise that there are some risks which need to be assessed.

Additional needs come in many forms, and are visible and invisible. Therefore it is important to recognise that our presence in a rented space may mean that not all additional needs can be accommodated.

The setting itself is accessible to a wide range of users. Doors are of a suitable width, and ramps are available where appropriate. However, certain features, for example toilets with disabled access, may not be accessible, without having to leave the immediate Naíscoil vicinity. For this reason, although the staff and the committee of the Naíscoil would aim to accept children and their families with additional needs, it would be prudent to assess each case on its merits, and conduct individual risk assessments to ensure that all possible risks can be mitigated.

## The range of resources available

Naíscoil na Seolta has secured a range of resources to meet the needs of the curriculum, including physical, creative and imaginative play resources, as outlined in the section above on activities.

Resources can be used to provide learning on a range of themes, and are appropriate to the age of the children (eg, large bricks for construction, large piece jig saw puzzles, washable paints, height appropriate sand and water trays, art easels etc). The furniture in the room is also

appropriate for the age of our children – coat hooks at their level, small chairs for children, floor mats and cushions to sit on, and storage trays which are accessible to children.

The resources can be used to meet the themes outlined in the curriculum, and provide a wide variety of opportunities.

Resources are stored in the room occupied by the Naíscoil, either in large lockable cupboards, or smaller locked units. Further storage space will be required as the Naíscoil expands, and this will be negotiated.

## Deployment of staff

Currently two staff are employed, with the relevant qualifications to work with children in this setting. The ratio for carer:children complies with the guidance given in the Minimum Standards. In addition to this, Naíscoil na Seolta has a small number of volunteers, who hold relevant qualifications and who have been appropriately vetted, who are able to assist or to stand in for absent colleagues if necessary, ensuring that in such circumstances, at least one person in the setting holds a paediatric first aid certificate.

Two committee members, who have also been vetted, hold current qualifications as Designated Officer.

## Activities provided;

Naíscoil na Seolta aims to provide a wide range of activities for children, as outlined above in the sections on Information about Activities and Range of Resources.

The program of activities will be provided to those with parental responsibility and shared on our website.

## The inspection role of the HSC Trust Early Years Team

At Naíscoil na Seolta we aim to provide high quality care and learning opportunities for our children. We recognise that Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts are responsible for registering and inspecting these services against the requirements laid down in the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, and welcome inspection as a ‘critical friend’ to help us to develop strategies and improve our provision.

All appropriate records will be available for inspection (eg, registration certificate, insurance policy, staff records, records of children’s progress as well as policies, risk assessments and records of fire drills).

## Recording practice and access to these records by the HSC Trust.

Naíscoil na Seolta recognises that the purpose of compiling any documentation is to:

- Meet children’s needs
- Put policy into practice within the Naíscoil
- Keep account of significant data



- Maintain necessary documentation relating to management, premises, staff, children
- Ensure that documentation is accurate, relevant and succinct.
- Develop efficient systems for the management and upkeep of documentation so that the process is not cumbersome or time-consuming.
- Keep records stored safely and securely (locked fire safe cabinets for specific documentation)
- Ensure that documentation is accessible for those with authority of access.
- Ensure that confidentiality of records is maintained.
- Share records about individual children with their parents.
- Record the following significant changes and notify the Trust Early Years Team of:
  - Changes to the premises
  - Allegations of abuse
  - Significant events
  - Changes to the overall management and organisation
  - Serious illness or accidents
  - Death of a child or member of staff
  - Police or Social Services involvement in Naíscoil na Seolta.
- Implement procedures to transfer children’s records to their next setting.
- Make all documentation available for any inspection.

For further information, and for details of how records will be stored, and for how long, the Naíscoil Management of Records Policy is available on request.