



Trinity College Dublin

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

**Report to Board on the Quality
Review of the College Day Nursery**

March 2015

This report presents the outcome of a Quality Review of the College Day Nursery which was undertaken from 6-7 October 2014 by Ms. Brigid Doyle, (Queens University Belfast), Ms. Christine Connolly (NUIG Creche, Galway) and Ms. Nicola Amies (Bright Horizons Family Solutions, UK). The internal facilitator was Dr Emma Stokes, TCD

The report attached includes (i) the External Reviewers' report received on the 22nd December 2014, (ii) the response from the Day Nursery Manager received on the 22nd January 2015 and (iii) the response from the Chief Operating Officer received on the 19th January 2015.

The main purpose of the Quality review is (a) to provide a structured opportunity for the Unit to reflect on its activities and plans for development, while benefiting from a constructive commentary by senior colleagues external to College; (b) to ensure that quality and standards in service and provision are being maintained and enhanced and that areas of concern in this regard are identified and addressed.

The Review Report and recommendations, along with the responses from the Manager of the College Day Nursery and the Chief Operating Officer, were discussed at the Quality Committee on the 5 March 2015.

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Reviewers' Report

1. Introduction/Executive summary

The review of the Trinity Day Nursery was undertaken by a team of three independent peers in the early years sector in Ireland, Northern Ireland and England. The reviewers have extensive experience of leading and managing early years services for the university sector.

The reviewers were supplied with a self-assessment report and supplementary evidence ahead of a two day on-site review. The two day on-site review included two visits to the Nursery to observe practice and assess how well the Nursery met the needs of the children. A number of stakeholders including staff and student parent users, Nursery management and Nursery staff, heads of services including Human Resources, College Health Service, Student Services, Estates and Facilities, Fire Safety and Sports and Recreation were also interviewed during the two days. Substantial supplementary evidence was provided upon request during the two days.

The amount of evidence gathered over the two day period gave the reviewers an opportunity to undertake a preliminary review of the quality of the service provided by the Trinity Day Nursery. The reviewers strongly recommend that a more in-depth review of the service is undertaken as there was insufficient time to review the substantial evidence gathered.

There was overwhelming support and praise from all stakeholders interviewed of the quality of care and support the Nursery provides. The reviewers found the Nursery to be a warm, welcoming and caring environment for the children, all of whom were observed to be very happy and emotionally secure due to the strong bonds formed between staff and children. The reviewers were impressed by how confident and independent the children were and this is testimony to the caring support provided by a long serving dedicated Nursery staff team.

Away from the exceptional customer facing service provided the reviewers identified a team that had low morale and a lack of trust with Nursery management. The team lacked a sense of cohesive team work each operating in a silo culture providing the best for children in their individual rooms. What was impressive was the professionalism displayed by the staff in ensuring the low morale did not affect the children and parents.

The review team identified significant weakness in leadership and management of the service that clearly impacted on the effective running of the service in terms of meeting user demand for the service, financial viability and risk mitigation in relation to regulatory compliance.

2. Organisational structure and management

Based on the organisational and line management reporting structure it appears that the Nursery Manager has sixteen direct reports which in the opinion of the reviewers is far too many for effective line management. The norm would be no more than ten direct reports. In comparison the day Nursery supervisor has just one direct report. From interviews with the Nursery staff it became evident that they have only had one staff meeting in the past two years and do not have regular 1 to 1's and appraisals. Most talked of communication being through written notes. It appears that there is a culture of a 'them and us' divide between management and room based staff which could account for the frequent comments made during interviews about the low morale. A thorough investigation into staff engagement levels and the correlation with sickness is strongly advised. High level of sickness could impact the financial performance of the Nursery due to the need to use agency staff to maintain compliance with required ratios.

The Nursery is one of nine staff and student support areas that reports directly to the Chief Operating Officer. The Nursery Manager has opportunities to meet regularly with management peers.

During interviews with some of the peers it became apparent that the Nursery Manager has been unable to attend most senior heads meetings due to the need to cover in the Nursery. These meetings would give the Nursery Manager the opportunity to build cross functional working relationships that could help raise the profile of the Nursery and the value the service provides to the student community at Trinity. The meetings also provide scope for the Nursery Manager to develop higher level business and strategic thinking in relation to the Nursery role in delivering the College's strategic plan. It was stated in the self-assessment report that the Nursery does not have a strategic plan or a business plan. It is advised that the Nursery Manager works with the Chief Operating Officer to develop a strategic business plan for the Nursery in line with the new strategic plan 2014/2019 currently being developed.

3. Resources

3.1 Staff composition;

The self-assessment report states that the Nursery employs 20 staff of which 14.81 are FTE. Based on the staffing evidence provided to the reviewers there are 18 staff employed to work in the Nursery of which:

- 3 are full-time non ratio mangers
- 8 are full-time room based ratio staff
- 4 are part-time room based ratio staff
- 1 full-time float cover
- 1 lunch cover 10 hours a week
- 1 part-time cook.

Full time is 37 hours per week. Part time is 20 hours 45 minutes per week

The profit and loss ledger provided to the reviewers indicated that a further 13 staff are listed as employees working in the Nursery mainly as agency cover during April to September.

Given that the Nursery is a 52 place provision that runs on occupancy from 69% to 80% the reviewers were surprised to see three non-ratio staff managing a small Nursery; this is not the norm for the sector. For a Nursery of this size with occupancy levels below 80% the expected management composition would be a full time non ratio manager and full time deputy working 50% non-ratio and 50% in ratio.

The staffing composition for room based in ratio staff is correct for compliance with regulated ratios however, due to low occupancy levels there are clearly staffing inefficiencies that would benefit from further investigation. The expectation is that staffing composition should flex to accommodate fluctuating occupancy levels thus reducing the need to employ cover staff or take on agency staff.

3.2 Staff training & development;

Under the Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No 2) Regulations 2006, no minimum qualification is currently required for staff caring for children, however new requirements from January 2015 have been set out by the Department for Children and Youth Affairs.

A majority of staff employed at the Nursery hold a qualification in childcare ranging from level 2 to level 9. The staff qualifications and training record made available to the reviewers indicated that some staff appeared to have only completed some units of a full qualification; the accuracy of staff qualifications that are considered full is therefore unclear.

The lack of a thorough training needs analysis raised concern as to the clarity of information to evidence that the nursery will meet the September 2015 qualification requirements set out by the Department for Children and Youth

Affairs. <http://dcya.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=%2Fdocuments%2Fchildcare%2Fqualifications.htm>

The requirement is that all staff must hold a full level 5 qualification as listed on the NQF (National Framework of Qualifications in Ireland) and all leaders delivering the ECCE programme to hold a full level 6 qualification as listed on NFQ. The reviewers noted that staff due to retire within 5 years will be exempt from the requirement to gain the required qualifications. It will be important that the manager ensures these staff register their intention and receive an exemption.

The ECCE programme is delivered in the Montessori room. A requirement of the ECCE funding is that the teacher leading the ECCE programme holds at least a full level 6 qualification as listed on NFQ. Both staff in the Montessori room hold Montessori qualifications. Written clarification on the qualification amnesty granted by DCYA is recommended to ensure compliance with ECCE funding.

The most recent training undertaken by the majority of staff was Paediatric First Aid in 2013. Staff interviewed talked about the desire for further training. It was evident that staff value the opportunity to grow and develop, this was also identified through staff evaluations undertaken as part of the self-assessment report.

The reviewers noted through interviews with staff and the training records that there was no evidence of Aistear and Siolta training having been undertaken. Given that Aistear and Siolta have been available and promoted in the sector as best practice for many years, and an expectation of providers accessing the ECCE funding, the reviewers were surprised at the lack of evidence of Aistear and Siolta in the Nursery. Some staff indicated that they were aware of Aistear and Siolta and were keen to gain training.

The reviewers were unable to find evidence of systematic identification of staff development needs through staff 1:1's and appraisals. Staff interviewed indicated that there had not been regular staff meetings or 1:1's for at least two years.

It was noted that one of the recommendations for change listed in the self-assessment report is for staff to engage with the performance development scheme currently in development at the college.

3.3 Physical facilities/infrastructure:

The Nursery is housed in ground level purpose built premises within student accommodation on the Trinity campus. There is immediate access from the Nursery onto two soft surface play spaces. First impressions are of a spacious, bright, clean and welcoming Nursery with significant potential for structural changes to further enhance childcare provision. The building was observed to be in good decorative order. On walking around on two on-site visits the reviewers noted that corridors and most available space was being used for storage of equipment, much of which had potential to be a risk to safe evacuation from the building or a trip hazard for young children.

The reviewers noted frequent reference in the self-assessment report to the Nursery being prone to flooding, however during the two onsite visits no flood damage such as wall damage or damp smell was evident. There had been significant rainfall the day before the first onsite visit.

Kitchen – As this not equipped as a full service kitchen for onsite preparation of fresh homemade meals, midday meals are provided by Little Dinners and heated in microwaves by a chef. Mid-morning snacks and teas are prepared by staff in the kitchen using food delivered by local suppliers. There is a small seating area for groups of children aged 21 months upwards to eat their meals. Mealtimes are staggered to accommodate three rooms of children. A lunch session observed by the reviewers noted that whilst the area is clean and comfortable for the children it is a cramped space for staff who end up standing whilst the children eat. Many day care settings promote family style dining with staff eating alongside children to model positive

attitudes to food and create a social context. Due to the cramped space this cannot easily be created in the kitchen area.

Baby room - A spacious, light and clean room providing play space for six children aged three to twelve months. Nappy change and sleep rooms are off this play room across a corridor. Staff leaving the room to settle children to sleep or change nappies inevitably leaves staff out of ratio. This was raised by the HSE at the inspection in November 2008. The recommended solution of employing a third staff member would increase cost. There is potential to open up the space so that sleep and nappy change could be part of the room with vision panels though this may involve substantial building work.

Wobbler room - The room is next to the baby room with a half wall and half glass dividing wall. This provides the wobbler room with more natural light and enables staff to support each other when needed as they can communicate through the glass. The room accommodates ten children aged twelve to twenty months. Staff reported that it is very rare to have children under six months starting in the Nursery so there is potential to combine the baby and wobbler room by removing the partition wall and creating a baby and wobbler unit. This would reduce down the number of room transitions that children make and the impact this can have on children's emotional security. The sleep and nappy change areas are across a corridor so there is a similar risk of staff being out of ratio.

Toddler room – This room accommodates ten children aged twenty one to 30 months. This room has only one small window providing natural light and is therefore reliant on artificial lighting for much of the day. Children also sleep in this room after lunch so much of the furniture is moved to allow space for sleep mats to be placed on the floor. Toilets and nappy change are accessed by going through four doors down a corridor. Given that children in this room would be of toilet training age, concerns were raised as to how effective the layout is for supporting children who are mastering bowel and bladder control. With staff having to leave the room to take children to the toilet or nappy change there is a risk of staff being out of ratio.

Playroom - This room has very little natural light making the room feel dark. The dark decor and substantial amount of equipment in the room further adds to the room feeling uninviting. The room accommodates twelve children aged two and a half to three and a half years. A small soft surface play area is accessed directly through a glazed door. The toilet is off the room via a lobby. The location of the toilet raised questions as to how well lone staff could supervise the room whilst taking children to the toilet, as the location and access through two doors does not support child independence. Due to low numbers it is not unusual for staff in this room to be lone working.

Montessori room – Square room with good natural light equipped in line with Montessori philosophy with low open shelves storing Montessori equipment. The room accommodates fourteen children aged three and a half years to four and a half years. This room has a toilet cubicle in the room accessed by a sliding door. During the visit the sliding door was open thus

contravening ventilation regulation 20 of the Child Care (Pre -School Services)(No 2) Regulations 2006. This non-compliance was noted in the November 2008 HSE Inspection report.

There is scope for the Montessori room and the playroom to be connected by utilising the small outdoor play space between the two rooms. Combining the two rooms would create a multi age room for children from two and half to four and a half that could offer more spaces and improved toilet provision; this would also reduce the risks of staff lone working.

Nappy change and toilets for baby, wobbler and toddler room sleep rooms, staff room, store room and parent room. These rooms are situated along the length of the Nursery towards the back and each is accessed through a corridor.

Office – The isolated location of the office hinders management accessibility and visibility. There is potential to swap this space with the buggy store thus immediately making management visible and accessible to parents, staff and children. This would help improve communication with staff and reduce the ‘them and us’ culture between management and room staff that the reviewers picked up on during the two days.

Outdoor spaces – There are two purpose built outdoor play spaces both with soft impact safety flooring. The second play space is much smaller and situated between the Montessori and Playgroup room. The reviewers noted the low fencing and gates and advised that a thorough risk assessment is in place to ensure that the area is safe to prevent a child potentially getting out or an intruder getting into the garden.

The self-assessment report indicated a number of issues with the premises mainly being prone to flooding, limited natural light and a lack of sufficient storage. Whilst the reviewers did not evidence any flood related damage all agreed that natural light was limited and that the Nursery would benefit from a thorough review of equipment and a disciplined de-clutter. Overall the reviewers were impressed by the potential that the Nursery space presented and would recommend that building plans are consulted with a view to opening up some of the spaces to create more room, more natural light and reduce down the number of doors that need to be accessed.

The self-assessment report made no mention of the frequent fire evacuations that have to be made due to the fire alarms going off as a result of students in accommodation above the Nursery burning toast or porridge. This was mentioned frequently by staff and was a key concern raised by the parents met with. It appears that this occurs mostly during the first term of the new academic year. The concern relates to the frequent disruption to the children’s day, especially if they are sleeping or having a meal, and the risk of getting wet and or cold if evacuating during inclement weather. Shared use of a building can cause frustrations between neighbours and this is best managed if students could be more aware of the impact of their behaviour on others, in this case the youngest community members on the Trinity campus.

The Health Centre

The reviewers were informed of the potential availability of another ground level space in the same complex adjacent to the Nursery. The space would be available when the Health Centre relocates to another university building in the vicinity. The footprint of the Health Centre is the same as the Nursery and would be ideal for creating a second Nursery on the campus. The reviewers proposed that consideration be given to creating an under threes unit and a pre-school unit thus doubling the capacity of the Nursery and reducing the waiting list. From an operational perspective there would be no requirement to add to the existing management structure as each unit could be managed by a unit manager with a Nursery business manager overseeing both units.

3.4 Financial resources, budget, including self-financing activities.

Situation Overview

Childcare facilities at the College are available to both the student and staff population, delivered on one site, providing 52 childcare places based on a complement of 18 staff.

Actual occupancy in October 2014 was 69% compared to January 2014 when occupancy was reported in the Self-Evaluation document to be 80%. Over the past two years the level of occupancy at the College's Nursery facilities has not been as strong as anticipated however the waiting list for childcare remains high.

There is a current waiting list of 93 applications from parents requiring a childcare places mainly in the 0 – 2 year category. The challenge is to match childcare provision with the demand for specific age categories in order to increase occupancy levels and thus increase fee income.

Based on the current occupancy and cost structure, the reviewers noted the significant projected deficit in Academic Year 2013-14. This should therefore drive the need to undertake a business case review to determine market demand as well as address issues of viability and sustainability.

The Nursery should adapt a customer-first approach to service delivery. This will require a rigorous analysis of the market and an assessment of the value for money aspects of the University offer. Accordingly as part of this review a competitive analysis should take place with other Universities as well as private sector Nursery providers within the locality of the College.

4.Systems and Processes

4.1 Evaluation of existing business processes;

On review of existing business processes there appears to be a disconnection between Nursery Management and the Finance Department. Weekly and monthly meetings should be taking place in relation to fee Income, pay budgets and external food costs. The Nursery Manager would benefit from regular sweep meetings with Finance staff to ensure financial information is fit for purpose and the childcare provision is on track to deliver a quality service to the student and staff parent from the College community.

No evidence of outstanding accounts or fee-debt was reported during the review period.

4.2 Evaluation of IT support and information systems;

Due to time limitations this area of the service was not reviewed. Reviewers noted that the Nursery had indicated they were experiencing difficulty in tracking payments which impacted clarity in budgeting and reporting back to Government Departments.

4.3 Procedures and policies.

The policy and procedure documents currently in use by staff were considered to be inadequate and in breach of regulations. The policies and procedures had nothing to indicate that these were policies and procedures specific to the Trinity College Nursery. This indication would normally be in the header of each policy document. Policies were not dated and there was no evidence of these having been reviewed. Usual practice is to indicate the date of publication and date of review in the footer of each policy. A number of policies had hand written amendments that were not signed or dated.

In line with best practice there was evidence of staff having signed to confirm their agreement to comply with the policies, however signatures were undated and there was no indication of which policies and procedures they were agreeing to. Reviewers noted that some of the current staff had not signed to confirm their agreement to follow the policies and procedures. This raised a concern that these staff may not be aware of the policies and procedures therefore potentially placing Nursery users and themselves at risk.

There was no evidence available to indicate that parents were informed of required policies and procedures.

Reviewers were provided with draft copies of revised policies. It is recommended that these are finalised and implemented as a matter of urgency.

5. Alignment to Strategy

5.1 How do activities meet the mission and objectives of College?

5.2 How does the area assess itself against the College's strategic plan? (Evidence of available performance indicators or key deliverables).

The self-assessment report stated that the Nursery does not have a strategic plan or a business plan however an assessment of how the Nursery has delivered against the 2009 – 2014 College strategic plan was provided. The summary of how well they felt they had delivered against the strategic plan lacked sufficient detail and often contradicted other evidence provided to reviewers.

The Nursery considered that they had met a number of the actions including the following:

Implementing the College's access plan. The Nursery considered that by having approval from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs they increased access for parents who would be eligible for ECCE/CSS/CETS funding. The reviewers identified that information on eligibility for the programme is not clearly available for parents so would question how widely accessible the Nursery is to parents who would be eligible for support.

Make Trinity a green campus. The Nursery state they only use recycled toilet paper and hand towels. During the onsite visits the reviewers observed children using a cotton terry towel to dry their hands.

Further deliver value for money. The self-assessment report indicated this had been met however the significant deficit identified by the reviewers question the reliability of this statement.

Ensure that staff members participate in development programmes supported by the College and maximizing their potential to achieve excellence. The Nursery state that they, 'work with staff in the Development Office and Dublin City Childcare Committee to engage in training programmes. The College Day Nursery also organises in-house training for items such as paediatric first aid'. The reviewers acknowledged that a majority of the staff had attended recent paediatric first aid training. The lack of appraisals, regular 1 to 1's and a training development plan questions the accuracy of the statement made.

The reviewers were of the opinion that Nursery team is not fully aware of their role in supporting the College in delivering the Strategic Plan.

6. Performance

6.1 Performance against industry quality standards and benchmarks;

The Nursery is registered with the Child and Family Agency TULSA to deliver child care services and is therefore required to be fully compliant with the Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No 2) Regulations 2006. The last inspection undertaken by the HSE was in November 2008. The inspection found the Nursery to be non-compliant in fourteen regulations out of twenty three regulations. A total of forty four actions were listed in the report.

The self-assessment report states that all items raised have been corrected. Based on evidence gathered during the review the reviewers are not confident that the Nursery is fully compliant with the Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No 2) Regulations 2006. A lack of any evidence of self-evaluation against the standards, and an improvement plan to further improve the quality

of provision, indicated that the manager is unsecure in her understanding of how well the Nursery is performing against required compliance in the sector.

The Nursery delivers the ECCE programme and receives funding however the Nursery had no evidence that they are using Siolta to assess the quality of educational provision for funded children. It is strongly recommended that settings delivering ECCE programmes engage with the Siolta Quality Assurance programme. Resources to support self-assessment of quality using the Siolta framework are widely available on line.

Currently there is no national data available on the quality of provision in Ireland thus making it difficult for the Nursery to benchmark against other childcare providers.

6.2 Has the area met stakeholder expectations (as evidenced through user/client survey results, or service indicators)?

The review panel met with student and staff parent representatives using the Nursery. Overall, the parents value the service provided by Trinity Childcare facilities and ranked the staff team as one of the key factors influencing their decision to use the campus Childcare service. They praised the staff team and were happy with the care their children received.

Key reasons identified as to why parents felt they were not receiving value for money were in relation to:

- Out of term opening hours when there is a reduction in service of 1 ¼ hours per day and no reduction in fee invoice (especially problematic for staff parents).
- Student parents pay two-thirds of staff parent fee, therefore staff parents feel they subsidise student parents.
- Queries in relation to children's menu and quantities of food served.

Other issues raised :

- Children watching TV just to pass time and not for educational purposes.
- Communication within the Nursery needs to be more transparent and timely.
- Problems with storage for buggies.
- Issues in relation to fire evacuations, with alarms in student accommodation blocks
- Queries in relation to exclusion periods when children are unwell.
- More parental feedback on daily activities for the child.
- Line management reporting structures.

6.2 Evaluation of service level agreements;

On examination of the Childcare Service Level Agreements the Nursery Management operates a thorough system of circulating and collecting child and parental information as required by the Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No 2) Regulations 2006.

Parents are given the opportunity to share all background information on their child, this process is backed-up by the opportunity to meet with Managers and discuss the package of care needed for each individual child.

Records are filed and kept in a confidential storage area. General information on the service is shared with parents by the use of an on-line Parent Handbook which contains information in relation to settling-in periods, opening hours and Health & Safety information.

6.3 Relationships with other college areas, academic and administrative;

The representatives of other college areas spoke highly of the Nursery as a key service for supporting staff and student parents. One referred to the Nursery as a 'life line' in enabling students to achieve their potential. It is evident that the Nursery holds a special place in the history of Trinity College and being the first work place Nursery in Ireland is a significant legacy.

Heads of Services that were interviewed indicated that they had little opportunity to meet and work with the Nursery Manager at the cross functional Head of Service meetings; all appreciated that her greater need was that of covering in the Nursery. There is certainly considerable scope to work more closely with Sports and Recreation to further develop the extensive range of revenue generating innovations lead by the visionary Head of Department for Sports and Recreation.

6.4 Value for money and efficient use of resources.

Based on the current Nursery provision and costs structure, a thorough review needs to take place on all lines of expenditure with budgets agreed for pay, equipment and the supply of children's meals. The preparation and introduction of a business plan specifically for the Nursery on campus would help develop effective operational strategies and determine if the service has a sufficient market to support it.

5. Communication

7.1 Communication with users/clients, and other stakeholders.

There is an active Parent Representative Committee established at the Nursery with meetings regularly taking place with the Management Team. Parents have rated this committee to be a useful communication tool with successful outcomes reported in relation to queries in menu planning and food changes.

The Review Panel met with representatives from student and staff parents' who highlighted the need for more timely responses to their enquiries and a request for a more open line of communication between staff and parents on a daily basis.

7.2 Publications.

The self-assessment report acknowledges that the Nursery has limited publications and that policies and procedures are being reviewed. The current Parent Information Booklet is dated 2010 and the website page was last updated in 2007. The website page links through to the 2010 Parent Information Booklet. It was noted that information on the website is available in Gaelic though not in other languages used by the student population such as Polish. The Nursery had indicated in the self-assessment report that the long term goal would be to translate key policies into Polish. The booklet mentions that the Nursery is registered with the National Children's Nurseries Association (NCNA), which is now known as Early Childhood Ireland of which the reviewers were informed the Nursery is not registered with.

The Parent Information Booklet provides parents with a minimum level of information on opening hours, late collection policy, Health and Safety, behaviour management and outings. There is no information in the booklet regarding the Nursery's child protection policy and who parents should contact if they had any concerns regarding child protection.

The reviewers noted that the booklet and the Nursery website do not provide information for parents on eligibility for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), Childcare Education and Training (CETS) or Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) schemes. It was not clear how parents would know if they would be eligible for this subvention.

The information on Nursery charges is dated 2007/2008 and had handwritten amendments which had not been dated or signed. The fees listed on this document differed from the fees detailed in the self-assessment report. The reviewers were unclear on what information parents are given regarding current weekly fees.

The opinion of the reviewers is that the information available to parents is in urgent need of review and updating in terms of accuracy and accessibility of information. The website is likely to be a key source of information for home and international students with young children who may be considering Trinity College as their preferred University of choice for higher education.

7.3 Information to users/clients, and other stakeholders

Each room provides parents with a range of information about the daily routine and the staff caring for the children. The Montessori room provides the most comprehensive information packet for parents and is a strength that others could build upon. This was noted in the self-assessment report.

A couple of parents that were interviewed by the reviewers expressed that they would like more information about what their children do during the day. A few had raised concerns about the use of the televisions in the rooms and this was also highlighted as a concern in the parent survey. Based on the information seen during the on-site visits and looking at child observations there is scope to improve upon the information provided to parents to inform them of the educational validity of activities and experiences provided for their children. The lack of information for parents on Aistear and Siolta was a concern for the reviewers given the current direction of travel from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to improve the education experience for three and four olds in receipt of ECCE funding. A strengthening of the pedagogical dialogue with parents would reassure parents that their children are gaining a firm and developmentally appropriate foundation for future learning at school.

A meeting with a representative of the Tutorial Services indicated that in the past there had been an active Day Nursery committee and a student parent group that kept the student services team updated on the quality of the service provided. It would appear that this had been a valuable way for the Nursery and Tutorial Services to work closely together to support student parents. The representative mentioned that the opportunity to connect took place at the senior heads meetings though unfortunately the Nursery Manager is not always able to attend due to the need to provide cover in the Nursery.

8. Governance compliance

The Inspection of childcare services comes under the remit of TULSA, (The Child and Family Agency) which was established on the 1st January 2014 and is now the dedicated State agency responsible for improving wellbeing and outcomes for children. It was noted that the Nursery was last inspected in November 2008 and is therefore highly likely to be inspected imminently.

Through reviewing documentation, interviewing stakeholders and undertaking two site visits it became evident that the Nursery risks being found in breach of a number of areas of compliance under the Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No 2) Regulations 2006.

Previous HSE inspection reports, including the last one undertaken in November 2008, highlighted a number of areas found to be non-compliant and listed recommendations and actions to improve service quality. These included actions linked to fire safety. In the self-assessment report it states that 'all items raised were corrected', however further in the report this is contradicted by acknowledging that not all policies and procedures are in place despite this being a clear action in the HSE inspection report in November 2008.

The lack of evidence of Aistear and Siolta being implemented in the Montessori room delivering the ECCE programme further affirmed the reviewers opinion that there is a lack of robust governance in relation to compliance with Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No 2) Regulations 2006 and ECCE requirements.

9. Reviewers' recommendations

The reviewers have made six key recommendations based on the review of the service provided by the Nursery at Trinity College.

1. Finances

The underperformance reported in 2013/14 should drive the need to undertake a business case review to determine market demand as well as address issues on viability and sustainability. A critical priority for Trinity College is the running of Nursery provision which is linked to future strategy and reflects the importance of delivering childcare solutions on campus.

2. Child Protection

The lack of any child protection training for all staff and the lack of a coherent and up to date child protection policies and procedures in line with Children First is a concern. Whilst the reviewers were assured that all staff would inform Nursery management of any concerns, the lack of trust between staff and management would raise concerns as to how confident staff would be in raising concerns if they suspected a colleague was harming a child. The lack of awareness of a whistle blowing policy was a significant concern.

The Nursery is currently operating with an undated child protection policy that is clearly not written in line with the Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children published in July 2011. During the review it was brought the attention of the reviewers that there is a Trinity College Child Protection Policy.

It is strongly recommended that Child Protection policies and training are reviewed.

3. Staff relations and morale

The Nursery staff team has become somewhat fractured in recent months and therefore staff morale is low and would benefit from third party mediation. It is recommended that Human Resources identify what the issues are and implement a plan to support staff relations.

4. Fire and H&S

It is recommended that particular attention is given to undertaking a robust assessment of fire safety and Health and safety in line with legislative requirements. Reviewers identified and raised a number of potential risks during the onsite visits. Actions included ensuring corridors

are decluttered to provide ease and speed of access in the event of an emergency evacuation, an adequate system for swiftly unlocking external doors and gates in the event of an emergency evacuation and checking that all Fire and Health and Safety actions raised as non-compliance in previous HSE inspections have been met and maintained.

5. Compliance and mitigating risk

The reviewers recommend that urgent attention is given to undertaking a thorough self-evaluation of how well the Nursery is meeting requirements under the Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No 2) Regulations 2006. Given that the Nursery was last inspected in November 2008 it is likely that they may be inspected imminently. There are a range of resources available to support effective self-evaluation against the Child Care standards. Following this self-evaluation a robust action plan for improvement should be implemented and monitored.

A similar self-evaluation and action planning exercise should be undertaken using the Siolta Quality Assurance Programme. Again, the resources to support the use of the Siolta framework are widely available.

The reviewers recommend that the self –evaluation activities are led by an independent external expert in the sector. Early Childhood Ireland would be an ideal starting point for sourcing an independent consultant.

6. Leadership and Management

Key to the success of a Nursery is the quality of leadership provided by the Nursery Manager. The reviewers recommend that the manager is provided with support to develop effective management and leadership skills.

There is considerable scope to leverage the support of peers within the Head of Services team to act as mentors.

Urgent attention should focus on a thorough self-evaluation of compliance with Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No 2) Regulations 2006 and ECCE requirements. A robust quality improvement plan should be developed that takes into account the significant changes facing the early years sector in Ireland. Membership of Early Childhood Ireland and a re-engaging with Dublin City Childcare committee is strongly recommended.

2. Response from the Day Nursery Manager

Opening Comments:

The review that was carried out by experts in the field and contains recommendations that display this knowledge and experience is very much appreciated by my team and myself. We would like to express our appreciation of the time and effort the reviewers took in delivering this report and for a set of recommendations that we can now give our full attention to understand and implement. In addition, the review identifies a number of issues where we must put in place changes to ensure full and complete compliance. It was satisfying to have much of the work we do recognised and to receive the positive comments of parent representatives and others regarding our commitment to the children in our care.

Comments on Recommendations of the Review

As Manager of the Day Nursery I intend in this section of my response to comment on initial steps that I can take to implement the recommendations of this review. I will specifically deal with some of the actions that I can and have already taken where possible:

Policies and Procedures:

The need for a set of agreed policies and procedures in childcare is without question. While the review did state that these were not in place I can confirm that a great deal of work has been completed in this area since the review. The timeline for implementation of these revised policies will be outlined in the Implementation Plan and will include strategies around document control and publication of policies on the Day Nursery website, where they can be accessed by the College community

Child Protection

The issues raised in the review and the recommendations in the area of child protection training for all staff, and the absence of a Day Nursery-specific child protection policies and procedures is something I recognise. Support and training for staff will be provided to ensure we are compliant. I do consider the College's Child Protection policy as serving the needs of the Day Nursery to date, however I will include a customised adaption of the College's Child Protection Policy in the policies and procedure which are currently being developed and revised.

Training, staff relations and morale

The issue of internal staff training and morale is one where College support and assistance will be required. Our current operation is more confrontational than I would prefer and the demand for trade union involvement in most issues makes for a slower implementation of national requirements and the implementation of change within the Day Nursery. I have been given hands-on support from College's staff relations staff but I consider that deeper engagement will be required and I welcome the involvement of the Change Capability Manager in the feedback of the reports recommendations to staff of the Day Nursery. Training in Soilta and Aistear will be sourced and timeline for training will be outlined in the Implementation Plan.

Fire and Health & Safety

I have been working with the College's Health and Safety Manager to assess the recommendations as they pertain to fire safety, and Health and Safety in general. In addition, a review internally of legislative requirements is underway with specific recommendations around alarms and de-cluttering being implemented.

Compliance and HSE Inspection

I note that the reviewers recommended that urgent and thorough self-evaluation of how well the Nursery is meeting requirements under the Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No 2) Regulations 2006 is required. They suggest a self-evaluation with an independent external expert and I am moving to have that external pre-HSE review completed.

Strategy, Leadership and Management

I take the recommendations about our need to develop a strategy aligned to College's Strategy 2014 – 2019 very seriously. I intend to work closely with the new Director of Student Services on the strategy, and seek support and training for myself and for my immediate team to make us more effective in the management and organisation of what can be a complex and difficult working environment.

Conclusions:

As the Day Nursery Manager I appreciate the work of the Review Committee and feel that their recommendations will make us a better operation. I intend to work with my colleagues to develop an implementation plan that will take the recommendations, break them down in actions and implement them in the Day Nursery operation. I will also be working to ensure that the learning from the review can drive our approach to service delivery for College.

3. Response from the Chief Operating Officer

Opening Comments:

The Quality Review report which has been supplied to me is in my view a comprehensive, valuable and insightful review carried out by experts in the field and containing excellent analysis and recommendations. I am anxious to have my appreciation for the obvious time and effort taken to engage in the review and provide us with a strong independent analysis of the opportunities for change and improvement in the Day Nursery operation noted.

On reading the review there are a number of areas where we must immediately move to re-establish the clarity of purpose and ensure full and complete compliance. However I was genuinely pleased with the comments on the overall level of service and the care and attention given by the manager and her staff to the children who use the facility.

Review of High Level Recommendations of the Review

As mentioned above while there were many areas of good performance within the operation of the Day Nursery the recommendations I will address hereunder refer to the serious areas where performance improvement is achievable. These recommendations include:

- **Finances**

The need for a business case/business model review to determine market demand as well as address issues on viability and sustainability is timely in that as College budget remains under extreme strain there is a clear need to examine the operating model and I would intend to have such a review completed in the very near future.

- **Child Protection**

The issue of the full implementation of the College child protection policy with particular reference to day nursery operations will be addressed. We will liaise with the College Secretary and other key stakeholders on the appointment of Child Protection Officer and deputy.

- **Staff relations and morale**

The issue of internal staff relations and morale is one of major concern to me and in many ways goes to the heart of the recommendations of the review. It is my intention to initiate a review of internal organisational culture within the Day Nursery and I will seek to engage the Trade Union in this review due to the intense industrial relations environment that I observe in my dealings with the Day Nursery.

- **Fire and Health & Safety**

I can confirm that working through our Estates and Facilities function a robust assessment of fire safety, and Health and safety in line with legislative requirements is underway. Specific recommendations are in the process of being implemented.

- **Compliance and mitigating risk**

The reviewers recommended that urgent attention is given to undertaking a thorough self-evaluation of how well the Nursery is meeting requirements under the Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No 2) Regulations 2006. The reviewers recommend that the self-evaluation activities are led by an independent external expert in the sector and I can confirm that, in conjunction with the Day Nursery Manager, I am in the process of completing a tender to have that external pre-HSE review completed.

I note the reviewers' recommendations with respect to demonstration of the implementation and training of staff on Aistear and Siolta and will seek to engage resources through Early Childhood Ireland to address the reviewers concerns expressed in the report.

- **Leadership and Management**

The recommendations in this area are very serious and the urgent need to provide more in-depth and hands on support to the Manager and her team is clearly an issue requiring immediate attention. Apart from initial support being provided by the HR team, including the facilitation of the Review feedback to the staff, I believe that the imminent appointment of the Director of Services, reporting to me will enable us to act as outlined in the recommendations.

Conclusions:

Recognising that there are real challenges for the Day Nursery in the implementation of the recommendations of this review I am very pleased to have a clear roadmap that the Day Nursery Manager and her staff, as well the Director of Services and myself in a strong supporting role, can use to develop our implementation plan. We will be acting as a matter of some urgency to address the recommendations and ensure that the valuable learning from the review can be used to deliver an excellent and compliant service for the children of our students and staff.

Geraldine Ruane,
Chief Operating Officer.
19th January 2015.