An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	ABC's and 123's Playschool
Setting Address	Scoil Íosagáin Spa Glen Mallow County Cork
DCYA number	11CC0387

Date of Inspection: 13-02-2019

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WHAT IS AN EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION?

The Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI) model is used to provide evaluative information, advice and support in relation to education provision in a pre-school setting participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. These inspections affirm good practice and advise actions, where appropriate, to aid the further development of education provision in the setting.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated and reported under the following headings or areas of enquiry:

1. Quality of the context to support children's learning and development
2. Quality of processes to support children's learning and development
3. Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements
4. Quality of management and leadership for learning

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the setting's provision in each area.

Early Years Education Inspection

Date of inspection	13-02-2019
Inspection activities undertaken • Meeting with setting manager • Observation of interactions and activities during both sessions	 • Interaction with children • Review of relevant documents • Feedback to setting manager and practitioners

CONTEXT OF SETTING

ABC's and 123's Playschool is a privately owned setting. It is located in a modified bungalow with a safe outdoor area. It provides an after-school programme and two morning sessions for children availing of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, thirty-one children and four practitioners, one of whom is the owner/manager and one who is employed through the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM), were present. The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the report; the setting chose to accept the report without response.

AREA 1

QUALITY OF CONTEXT TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- The quality of the context to support the children's learning and development is good.
- A very warm, caring and friendly atmosphere is evident in the setting. The children appear relaxed and familiar with the welcome routine where they are encouraged to take off their own coats and find their labelled area for their bag.
- The daily routine successfully promotes children's physical, social and emotional security.
- The practitioners are responsive to the children and show positive regard for them and their families. There is potential to develop and expand on the approaches for supporting each practitioner to build positive relationships with children and families.
- The daily routine offers children some opportunities to make decisions about their learning. It is predominately adult-directed with limited opportunities for the children to engage in open-ended, spontaneous free-play.
- The practitioners predominately use verbal cues before a transition to inform children that a change is forthcoming. While the majority of the children appear calm during and after transitioning, a number of children appeared unsure of what was coming next on the day of the inspection.
- Snack time is effectively utilised as an opportunity for socialisation and for promoting healthy eating.
- Numerous examples of practitioners modelling and providing guidance to children towards positive behaviour were observed on the day of the inspection.
- Several aspects of the daily routine support the children to independently manage their own self-help and self-care needs.
- The practitioners make a good effort to support children's developing sense of identity and belonging. Opportunities are provided for the children to get to know people in the local community and in the adjoining school and they explore a range of cultural topics throughout the year.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to utilise the visual of the daily routine further to establish expectations for the children. This will support all children knowing what is planned to happen each day and it will alert them to any changes.
- Introducing more strategies, such as timers, music, and visuals before and during times of transitions will further support children in managing transitions and in preparing for the next activity. The resources and self-evaluation tools included in the 'Supporting Transitions' pillar of the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* will be a good support in this regard.

- To further support children's developing sense of identity and belonging, it is advised that more images of the children, their families, their group learning experiences and the wider community be displayed in the room. Having these displayed at children's eye level will facilitate more discussions and foster the children's sense of self-identity and their appreciation of themselves as members of families, the group and the local community.
- To build on the positive relationships established with children and families, the practitioners are advised to introduce a key person approach. Further information and ideas on this approach is available in curriculum foundations of the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide*.

AREA 2

QUALITY OF PROCESSES TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- The quality of the processes to support the children's learning and development is good.
- The curriculum is broadly informed by the themes of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. The practitioners promote a play-based curriculum where children learn and develop predominately through play.
- Planning for curriculum implementation is organised on long-term, medium-term and short-term bases. These are based in the main on seasonal events or specific topics chosen by the practitioners, such as friendships, healthy eating, exploring cultures and hibernation. These are transferred into weekly plans where the theme is explored through circle-time discussions, individual and group art and craft activities, and songs and stories. The planning reflects a strong focus on the daily teaching and reciting of discrete letter names, sounds and numbers, days of the week and months of the year; these activities predominately happen during circle time. This approach is not reflective of the learning goals of *Aistear*. Progressing the development of an emergent, enquiry-based curriculum is at an early stage of development.
- A range of assessment approaches is used to gather information about the children's learning and achievements. A number of these are general narrative observations which are strengths-based while others are checklists. These predominantly focus on how children are progressing or not progressing in recognising letters, in counting, reciting the alphabet, cutting with a scissors, or colouring and tracing.
- The indoor environment is spacious with lots of natural light. It has a number of interest areas set up for imaginative play and construction play. Books and chill-out areas, along with tables for puzzles and manipulatives are in both rooms. The resources and interests areas effectively support a variety of types of play. There is potential to expand on the time scheduled for children to utilise these resources and learning areas within the programme of activities.
- The setting has developed a large outdoor area, with gravel patches, walkways, a balancing beam, stepping stones, planting areas, a water wall, a mud kitchen and an area to ride bikes and cars. This was not utilised on the morning of the inspection.
- The practitioners facilitate physical activity indoors using an obstacle course and Bizzy Break exercises.
- The practitioners provide some opportunities for the children to participate in mark-making activities and open-ended creative art activities. There is, however, an overuse of colouring-in templates and product-focused art projects.
- The practitioners engage and motivate the children very respectfully. They use a variety of effective interaction strategies and methodologies to scaffold children's learning which include, for example, smiling, listening, questioning, following children's lead in play and providing timely guidance.
- The children's emergent language and literacy skills are fostered successfully. Many opportunities are provided for children to hear an expanded use of vocabulary. They have opportunity to participate in discussion and conversation during snack time and during play time, they sing songs and listen to stories. A variety of books is attractively displayed and available to the children throughout the sessions.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to develop a more emergent, enquiry-based curriculum. This will ensure that all activities and experiences are meaningful, relevant and responsive to the children's learning and developmental needs and interests. In this regard, utilising self-evaluation tools, tip sheets and templates included in the 'Planning and Assessment' pillar of the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* is advised.

- The practitioners are advised to schedule a large block of time every day for open-ended, child-initiated play indoors and outdoors.
- The practitioners are advised to focus less on teaching children discrete letter names, sounds and numbers through rote learning and instead to capitalise on the natural opportunity play provides for fostering children's emergent language, literacy and numeracy skills. In this regard, the learning through play resources and tip sheets in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* will be a great help.
- The practitioners are advised to engage with the environment audit included in the pillar, 'Creating and using the learning environment (3-6 years)' of the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide*. This will support reflection on the current resources available in the indoor and outdoor environments and will provide a catalyst for improvement.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is good.
- The children appear comfortable and relaxed. They initiate natural conversations with the practitioners and enjoy each other's company.
- The children confidently initiate imaginative play themes on their own, with peers and with the practitioners during play-time.
- The children are developing the ability to look after their own belongings and personal care needs. They have limited opportunity to take a responsibility for cleaning the room, sweeping the floor and cleaning tables.
- The majority of the children communicate very well with their peers and with the practitioners and they are developing positive, pro-social skills.
- The children are supported to develop a positive understanding of their identity as competent learners. There is potential to build on the ways in which each child is supported to see themselves as members of a unique family, the wider community and the current pre-school group.
- The children display many positive learning dispositions. For example, sharing their thoughts when drawing, persisting with challenging puzzles, using their imagination and inventing role play games.
- A number of the children use the language of feelings appropriately when interacting with each other each other and the practitioners.
- The children demonstrate a growing awareness and knowledge on heathy food and personal routines such as brushing their teeth after lunch-time.
- A number of the children can recognise their own name and appear to have an awareness of the meaning of symbols and print.
- Children experience a sense of achievement through timely encouraging commentary from the practitioners.
- A small number of children were observed expressing their own ideas and thoughts through creative mark making and role playing. There is potential to provide children with a wider variety of opportunities to express their thoughts, ideas, feelings and creativity.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to support the children to take more responsibility for looking after the environment. In this regard, the creation of a pictorial jobs chart with the children will establish expectations and will promote fairness and a sense of belonging to the group.
- The practitioners are advised to provide the children with a wider variety of opportunities to express their thoughts, ideas, feelings and creativity through story-telling, open-ended art projects, mark-making, moving to music, role playing and problem solving. Having a distinct creative art and mark-making area stocked with a wide range of materials and tools, such as card of different colours and sizes, lined and graph paper, junk art materials and clay, along with real writing materials and tools, will be helpful in this regard.
- The practitioners are advised to facilitate more opportunities for the children to talk about their learning achievements, experiences and play intentions. This could happen in small groupings with their key person who could share observations with them and support them to discuss their thoughts. Utilising the children's individual learning journals as discussion tools and adding their comments to their art work and learning experiences will support this further.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- There is a good sense of teamwork and professionalism evident among the practitioners. Daily informal discussions on the curriculum take place between the practitioners and monthly staff meetings are also held. Engaging in self-evaluation and review practices is at an early stage of development. At the time of the inspection, the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* had yet to be used as part of the practitioners' self-review and reflection practices.
- Continuing professional development is valued in the setting; a number of the practitioners engage in on-going education to gain higher qualifications. The manager is currently engaging with the Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) Programme in Early Years. The staff in the setting has engaged with the Healthy Ireland Smart Start Programme and are members of Early Childhood Ireland.
- The practitioners regularly share information on the children's learning with parents. An annual one-on-one meeting is facilitated with parents to discuss children's learning and achievements. The children's folders are sent home termly, parents receive updates and photographs through texts and a social media page, and notices are displayed in the welcome area and on the outside door.
- Prior to children commencing the setting, they and their parents are invited to visit the setting to meet the practitioners. Informal links have been established with the principal of the adjoining infant school and there are plans to strengthen this relationship.

Actions advised

- The manager and practitioners are advised to implement formal self-review and professional reflection practices. In this regard, the practitioners are advised to utilise the self-evaluation tools and action planning templates in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide*. These will ensure that all areas of practice and provision are guided and aligned by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum* Framework and *Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education*.
- It is advised that the manager and practitioners review and update their policies, procedures and handbook for parents to include more information on *Aistear*, how and what young children learn in the early years and more information on play-based learning.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the setting to implement the actions advised above is good.

Summary of Overall Inspection

Area	Quality Level
Quality of context to support children's learning and development	**Good**
Quality of processes to support children's learning and development	**Good**
Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements	**Good**
Quality of management and leadership for learning	**Good**

Language used in Early Years Education Inspection reports

Excellent	Provision that is excellent is exemplary in meeting the needs of children.
Very good	Provision that is very good is highly effective in meeting the needs of children.
Good	Provision that is good is effective in meeting the needs of children but with some aspects to be developed.
Fair	Provision that is fair requires practice to be improved to meet the needs of children.
Poor	Provision that is poor is inadequate and requires significant improvement to meet the needs of children.

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