An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	Baby Bear's Pre-school
Setting Address	Clondarig Court Bellingham Portlaoise County Laois
DCYA number	18LS0139

Date of Inspection: 13-03-2019

An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
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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(s) 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	13-03-2019
Inspection activities undertaken • Meeting with owner/practitioner and practitioner • Observation of interactions during a session • Interaction with children	• Review of relevant documents • Post-inspection feedback meeting with the setting owner and practitioner

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Baby Bear's Preschool is a privately owned sessional setting. The setting provides a morning pre-school session through its participation in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, six children were present in the pre-school rooms together with the owner/practitioner and an Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) practitioner. The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the report, and the response of the setting will be found in the appendix of this report.

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.
- The atmosphere in the setting is warm, calm and caring. The children are welcomed into the setting by the practitioners. The parents and practitioners chat informally at arrival and departure times.
- Relationships between the practitioners and the children are responsive, kind and respectful. The practitioners know each child well.
- The practitioners model good behaviour strategies, they encourage the children to be courteous and kind to each other, and to join one another in their play activities.
- There is a visual schedule of the daily routines on display which is referenced as the children transition throughout the day. There is an extensive period of time allocated to free-play; a more appropriate balance between free-play and adult-initiated learning activities would be beneficial.
- During the inspection visit, transitions between activities were signposted verbally, with the use of a sand-timer. The practitioners encouraged the children to be involved in the transition periods through gentle prompts and supports.
- Snack time promotes the meal as a social occasion. The practitioners eat with the children and engage in natural, relaxed conversations with them.
- Some steps have been taken to nurture the children's sense of identity and belonging. For example the children's photographs are displayed, their names are included on the emotion chart, the children have explored 'all about me' as part of their settling-in activities and maps of Ireland and the flag have recently been explored and discussed. The development of further strategies that reflect the children's backgrounds and their community would be beneficial. Parents are invited into the setting to attend various events and celebrations. They visit the setting to share information about their roles in the community and their occupations with the children.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to review their daily routine, to provide an appropriate balance between free-play activities and adult-led activities.
- It is advised that practitioners plan and provide for resources, activities and interactions that will support the children to gain a deeper sense of identity and belonging as an individual and within the group, and to explore their community and cultural diversity.

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 practitioners plan a programme of learning activities that is thematic, and organised around the seasons, celebrations and ideas selected by the practitioners. The curriculum is documented through long-term, medium-term and a weekly plan. There is much scope to develop the planning practices so that they provide for the children's emergent interests and developmental needs.
- The practitioners gather information about the child's learning using daily narrative observations which capture a broad outline of the children's learning experiences. The next steps for children's learning are not currently identified. The observations are not currently used to inform planning. The practitioners are developing an individual journal for each child; at the time of the inspection, these contained artwork and photographs of learning activities.
- A number of effective interaction strategies were observed during the inspection. These included practitioners engaging as a play partner, modelling activities, providing new information, and naming and affirming children's actions, thoughts and ideas. There was some use of recall questions and effective approaches to support the development of the children's language and numeracy skills.
- The limited size of the learning environment means that providing defined interest areas is challenging. Good use is made of the space; a home area and a book area are provided. There are some resources that are not freely accessible to the children. There are plans in place to extend the pre-school room and this will facilitate additional space to develop defined interest areas.
- The outdoor area is used on a daily basis and provides opportunities for the children to develop their physical skills, and engage in exploratory play. The area includes a mud kitchen a construction area with blocks, a blackboard, and a sand area.
- On the day of the inspection, the children engaged with books, songs and movement activities. At times some of the children became disengaged with the activity provided and this resulted in them disrupting the activity for the remaining children. To prevent this, the use of small group activities which are informed by the interests and needs of the children would be beneficial.
- The setting is working in partnership with parents to access additional supports through their work with outside agencies such as *Better start.*

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to develop their assessment and planning practices to ensure that the planning processes are directly informed by the children's developmental needs and interests. When planning to extend learning, practitioners are advised to incorporate the child's voice in the planning and documenting process. Additional guidance is available in the 'Planning and Assessing' pillar in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide*.
- The practitioners are advised to carry out an audit of the indoor environment with a view to developing interest areas and ensuring all play materials and equipment are freely accessible to the children. The 'Learning Environment' pillar of the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* offers further guidance on this point.
- The practitioners are advised to review how group activities are planned. The information gathered in observations could be used consistently to inform adult-initiated, small-group learning activities, which are aligned with the children's interests, needs and dispositions.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is good.
- The children demonstrate enjoyment in their play. For the majority of the time they are engaged and motivated in their activities.
- The children generally select the equipment and materials of their choice during the free-play periods and they show perseverance as they work individually or in partnership with the

practitioners or other children to complete tasks. For example children they build train tracks, and construct buildings with Lego.

- The children are developing friendships and they demonstrate an evolving capacity for negotiation and collaboration in developing imaginative play scenarios.
- The children have some opportunities to explore their feelings and share their thoughts with the practitioners and each other.
- The children are enabled to represent their ideas and feelings in a creative way, through the sand and rice provided. Additional opportunities for free-mark making and free art would be beneficial for the children.
- There are some opportunities for the children to see themselves as active learners who experience and achieve success. This was observed through the affirmative feedback provided by the practitioners and through the reflection on the day prior to going home.
- A few of the children display an awareness of numeracy and early mathematics. This was evident when they counted cars and drew shapes in the rice and sand.
- Many of the children are competent and capable of describing their likes and dislikes, families and recent events.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to extend the opportunities for the children to express themselves creatively through enhanced engagement with materials for process art, painting and free mark-making.
- The practitioners are advised to make the children's learning journals which are currently being developed available to them on an ongoing basis. These journals could incorporate the child's voice. This would enable them to reflect on their achievements to date and review their progress.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- The team have regular informal discussions to develop their curriculum and to reflect on their practice and day-to-day issues. There is a daily reflection diary maintained. Although these measures help to promote reflection, there is scope to develop this practice through review and discussion utilising *the Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide.*
- The practitioners are committed to continuous professional development. The owner/practitioner is completing *Síolta* training and has applied to complete the Leadership for Inclusion, (LINC) training.
- Although the team is newly established there is evidence of good teamwork with clarity of roles. The leader is a good role model and is committed ensuring quality provision.
- The children's transition into the setting is supported through an induction period which is dependent upon the child's individual needs. There is a one-to-one meeting with the parents and child prior to starting and an information pack is provided.
- Information is shared with parents through informal discussions at arrival and collection times. Children's observations and learning journals are available in the rooms if parents wish to review them. They are sent home at the end of the year. Monthly newsletters inform parents about previous activities and up-coming events.
- To support the children's transition to primary school, the practitioners plan to develop a transition box with a uniform and photographs of the school and to engage in discussions about school with the children.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to engage with the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* with a view to enhancing their current reflective practices. The recording, monitoring and review of practice will assist in developing agreed plans for improvement.
- The practitioners are advised to formally share the children's learning journals and observations with parents at intervals throughout the year, and to elicit parents' comments and opinions on the materials shared.

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-focused 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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APPENDIX

SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection **activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.**

We have taken on board all recommendations given in our inspection report and we have begun to put the following in place to meet the recommendations:

- We are documenting conversations between children or to the staff to ensure we discover any emerging interests within the group. We use post-its to write down what we hear and each day we hang the post-it on each child's individual page on the wall. We can reflect back on the week to discover any emerging interests within the group. We document the child's learning story through the use of observations and short term planning.

- We have also started to extend the playroom before September. Once it is completed, we plan to have an identity and belonging display permanently on display. We also plan to have arts and crafts material available for each child's use and to get more defined areas within the room. The children's learning journals and books will be placed in individual pockets on the wall at their level so they can reach them and look at them at any time.