An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION - FOCUSED INSPECTION

REPORT

Service Name	Cairde Nua
Service Address	Scoil Iosaf Naofa Moy Lahinch County Clare
DCYA number	15CE0196

Date of Inspection: 15-03-2018

An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

WHAT IS AN EARLY YEARS EDUCATION-FOCUSED INSPECTION?

The Early Years Education-focused Inspection (EYEI) model is used to provide evaluative information, advice and support in relation to education provision in a pre-school service 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 service.

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 service's provision in each area.

Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

Date of inspection	19-04-2018
Inspection activities undertaken • Meeting with service manager/practitioner • Observation of activities and interactions during the pre-school session • Interaction with children	• Review of relevant documents • Post-inspection feedback meeting with the service manager/practitioner

CONTEXT OF SERVICE

Cairde Nua is a private early-years' service that has been in operation since 2010. The service is located in a room within Scoil Iosaf Naofa in Moy, County Clare. The service shares the outdoor playground with the local gael-scoil and provides a sessional pre-school for children participating in the first and second year of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of inspection, there were six children present along with the owner/practitioner. The setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised in this 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 very good.
- A warm, welcoming atmosphere is evident as children and families arrive to the service. A commendable sense of community is created as children and families are greeted by the practitioner. Parents and families are welcome to stay until children are settled or longer.
- The practitioner demonstrates sensitivity, warmth and positive regard for children as they engage in a calm respectful manner with children. The practitioner nurtures children's natural sense of curiosity and supports children to play, explore and collaborate.
- Meal times are a social occasion where meaningful discussion is facilitated. The children and practitioner sit together and speak about healthy eating and the food they eat. The practitioner uses this time to use the Irish language when describing and discussing food.
- Transitions are consistently child-centred as an advance verbal announcement is given when tidy-up is going to happen. A tidy-up song is played as the practitioner and children sing along while preparing for the next part of the day. On the day of the inspection, a few children asked the practitioner when they would be going home and what is coming next in the routine as there was no visual routine for them to follow.
- Regular opportunities are provided for the children to visit the local rural community. The practitioner arranges walks, visits to local farms to see animals and to go picking blackberries. Visitors are frequently invited in to the service and parents are invited to attend these days or share any skills or knowledge they have with the children.
- Children are well represented in their visual learning environment through a range of photographic displays, these are carefully placed in the learning environment to showcase group-learning experiences. Recognition of children's families, visitors and the community are also part of the visual displays.

Action advised

- It is advised that the practitioner develops a visual timeline of the daily routine for the children to use and follow as they anticipate and prepare for the routine and changes during their day.

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 very good.
- The service has a broad-based curriculum that is informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. Planning for children's learning is effectively organised on a long, medium and short-term basis. These plans support the development of the children's dispositions, skills, knowledge and attitudes. Consistent reflection ensures that children's interests and emerging needs inform planning for children's learning and development.
- Children's interests and investigations are identified by the practitioner. Processes are in place to gather children's responses when describing topics or concepts explored. The practitioner effectively embeds children's words and explorations within the planning process and also as part of the photographic displays.
- Individual folders and learning portfolios document children's successes and achievements. An online application is used by the practitioner to frequently capture images using a service mobile phone. Photographs are captured and later the practitioner adds narrative text to these images to illustrate the learning taking place. The practitioner shares these records with parents through the online application.
- The practitioner skilfully embeds the Irish language in meaningful contexts during her interactions with children. An appropriate balance between child-led and adult-led interactions supports children to respond, reflect and share their thoughts and intentions during play and playful interactions. The practitioner effectively uses a range of strategies to prompt thinking and the facilitation of new learning during planned and unplanned learning. These include, prompts, suggestions, open-ended questioning and purposeful negotiation and repetition of children's language to expand children's thinking processes.
- The learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, offers a range of resources and areas of interest for children to engage in a range of play opportunities. A well-resourced sensory area indoors provides tactile open-ended materials that can be used as children decide. These include, shells, sponges, sticks, pinecones, felt, pom-poms and stones. Outdoors, the practitioner has established natural areas where children can explore and appreciate the natural surroundings of the rural setting. Areas for planting, a community garden and 'bug house' all support children to care for and explore the natural environment.
- Learning through play is a central feature within which children learn and develop. A well-thought out learning environment provides opportunity for children to engage in creative, construction, socio-dramatic and pretend play. Planned learning experiences focus on hands-on learning through experiential play. The practitioner skilfully identifies opportune moments to extend and introduce new language and concepts during children's free play expressions.
- A print-rich environment supports meaningful identification of letters and writing. Posters and signs from the local supermarket are intentionally positioned in the shop play area with calendars, noticeboards, markers and freely available paper and pencils. A richly resourced book area and large story posters all support children's exploration of mark-making and creative language explorations. Formal templates and worksheets are sometimes used by the practitioner during group time; these closed tracing sheets limit the children's meaningful understanding of pre-literacy and mark-making skills.
- The practitioner supports individual children to ensure the engagement of all learners in the service. Accommodations are made for children within the mixed age-group as the practitioner tailors instruction to individual children.

Action advised

- It is advised that the practitioner reviews the use of phonics programmes and focused template sheets as tools for children's learning of pre-literacy concepts. Extending the very good practice of open-ended mark-making activities which has already been established, will enhance children's interest and understanding of letter concepts and support their independent use of pre-literacy skills.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is very good.
- Children demonstrate interest, enjoyment and motivation in their learning experiences. Children are eager to share their thoughts, intentions and outcomes of their play with peers and the practitioner.
- Children use learning resources to explore their lived experiences and act out real life themes in their play. Children confidently gather resources, direct, lead and organise their play both as individuals, and as play-partners with their peers.
- The children show pride in their creations and constructions as they eagerly ask the practitioner to take photographs of their completed floor jigsaws and the free-drawings they create using the whiteboards and markers. The children are aware that these photographs capture their creations and will be shared with their parents. The children did not make connections between their learning portfolios and adding these images for their own value.
- Children vocalise stories and share moments of their home life with their peers and practitioner. Reflection and forward thinking are key parts of children's expressions as they calculate their age and the age of their peers making statements such as, 'I am four and three-quarters'. Children describe future plans of what they intend to do and where they intend to go on holidays, trips and at the weekend.
- Children show care and consideration for the feelings of their peers and recognise the value of their own belongings. One child in particular took some time to settle in to the morning routine and the other children were mindful that this child had remained in the coat area. Children asked, invited and conversed with their friend as they encourage each other to join in play.
- Children show high levels of imagination as they engage in socio-dramatic play experiences, gathering all of the milk cartons as they complete their 'shopping'. The children identified who each carton of milk is for and how many people they are shopping for. Children organise and work together to create play experiences.
- Children independently initiate conversation during snack time as they collectively eat together. Children respectfully listen to each other and engage easily in shared discussion and thinking-out-loud practices.

Action advised

- It is advised that children be encouraged and have free access to their individual learning portfolios so they can regularly decide to add to and review their learning experiences, success and achievements.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- The manager is very proactive in her leadership of the service and demonstrates a clear vision and dedication to the improvement of practice to support children's learning and development. The manager is committed to upskilling and has recently completed training for the Leadership for Inclusion in Early Years (LINC) programme. The sole practitioner has also engaged in introductory workshops supporting the implementation of Aistear and Síolta with the local County Childcare Committee.
- The practitioner regularly reviews the curriculum and uses a weekly diary to make reflective notes on a daily basis. These notes inform practice for individual children and the group as the practitioner identifies the emerging needs and interests.
- Parents are consistently recognised as the primary educators of children. Frequent consultation and the sharing of information on children's learning and development occur through the use of a secure online application. A suggestion box is used to encourage parents to share ideas, thoughts and potential activities to enhance the programme available.
- The practitioner has commendably documented and displayed their vision, ethos, and curriculum statement for parents to view in the arrivals area and where parents support their child to hang their coats.
- The practitioner has established a strong connection with staff of the primary school within which it is located. The pre-school service and primary school come together throughout the year to share celebrations, school trips and walks within the community. In order to support children with the transition from pre-school to primary school, the practitioner facilitates a visit for children to the

junior class and engages in discussion about this significant change in their lives. A transition sheet, which captures positive information on the holistic learning and development of children, is shared with parents and accompanies the child to the primary school.

Action advised

- It is advised that the practitioner builds on recent self-review practice in light of their training completed by continuing to monitor and review practice in the service through the use of the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide.*

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the service to continue to implement the actions advised above is very good. The manager discussed actions advised in the post-evaluation feedback meeting.

Summary of Overall Inspection

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

Published October 2018