An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	Craoibhín Áis Chúram Páistí
Setting Address	Termon Letterkenny County Donegal
DCYA number	09DL0101

Date of Inspection: 23-10-2019

An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

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	23-10-2019
Inspection activities undertaken • Meeting with setting manager • Meeting with practitioners • Interaction and discussion with the children	• Observation of interactions during two sessions • Review of relevant documents • Feedback to setting manager and practitioners

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Craoibhín Áis Chúram Páistí is a community-based facility located in purpose-built accommodation in Termon, County Donegal. The setting provides two pre-school sessions for children participating in the ECCE programme along with full day care and after-school services. On the day of the inspection, the manager, the pre-school room leader, a practitioner, a student from Letterkenny Institute of Technology and twenty children were present in one ECCE room. The pre-school room leader and nine children were present in the junior ECCE room. This second ECCE room opened in the current academic year. As the setting is located in the Gaeltacht, the practitioners aim to implement a bilingual programme. The setting manager was onsite and fully available during the inspection. The manager, the two pre-school room leaders and one practitioner attended the post-inspection feedback discussion. 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 very good.
- The organisation and atmosphere of the setting nurture a strong ethos of respect and warmth. This is evident in the sincere, caring and affirming exchanges between the practitioners, the children and their families.
- A daily routine includes substantial time for the children's freely chosen play and learning activities in the indoor environment, in addition to practitioner-guided group activities, circle time and snack time. The daily routine is clearly displayed for the children in pictorial form.
- The children appear very happy and are very well supported to manage their own hygiene needs. They are developing independence and a wide range of associated skills and dispositions through the completion of many helper tasks during the daily routine. A '*Cé atá ag obair?'* jobs chart is visually displayed to support the children's understanding of the tasks to be completed.
- Relationships between the practitioners and the children are sensitive, positive and responsive. A key-practitioner approach is established within the setting. This promotes strong relationships between the children and the practitioners who interact with and observe designated groups of children. Snack time is a warm, social occasion where the practitioners and children enjoy shared conversations.
- The transitions between parts of the routine are announced clearly and signalled by the practitioners.
- There are many beautiful samples of the children's unique creative work on display. The many photographs of the children in the environment, including some of their family members in one of the rooms, helps to give them a strong sense of belonging in the setting.
- Parents come into the setting to share information with the practitioners and to attend events and celebrations throughout the year. The children enjoy visits from members of the local community; recently local guards visited the setting and plans are in place to invite more community visitors. The children go on nature walks and they visit the primary school in preparation for their transition.

Action advised

- To further nurture the children's developing sense of identity and belonging, the practitioners are advised to introduce family displays to each of the learning settings, to display key worker groupings for parents to view in the learning environments and to invite parents and grandparents more regularly into the setting to share their skills and life experiences with the children.

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 informed by the principles and approaches of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework.* While there is reference to the children's current and emerging interests in planning documentation in one room, curriculum planning in the other rooms is mainly built around themes, cultural events and seasonal topics. Monthly evaluations of curriculum provision are undertaken in each room.
- The children's progression in learning and development is documented using observations and learning stories. Samples of the children's work and photographs illustrating their participation in various learning experiences are included in their individual portfolios. Practitioners utilise the learning story approach to record the children's learning. There is scope to focus further on each child's specific interest and his/her unique learning journey in the completion of individual observations.
- Play is central to the children's learning. The practitioners view the children as capable and competent learners. They facilitate high quality interactions and engage very well as play partners with the children. They also place valuable emphasis on supporting the children to develop their range of oral vocabulary. Laudable attempts are made to operate a bilingual session in the senior ECCE room, where a good proportion of the language used by practitioners is Irish.
- Multi-sensory play is valued and daily opportunities are provided for the children to play with sand, and water, although the water trays in both rooms are very small. One of the indoor learning environments is large, bright, attractive and well-resourced. It provides for a good range of play and learning activities in defined interest areas, located mainly around the periphery of the room. The other room is very small with two large tables and chairs taking up a large proportion of the space available. There is a large outdoor play space available as well as a sports hall and a polytunnel.
- The practitioners foster the children's emergent literacy and numeracy skills through the use of quality books, a print-rich environment, mark-marking materials, rhymes, songs and jingles. While some beautiful books and other literacy resources are available, additional mathematical resources could be provided.
- The practitioners promote an inclusive environment to support the engagement of all children; they encourage the children to participate at a pace that is suited to their levels of ability.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to further develop enquiry-based, short-term planning with the children to ensure that the learning activities provided continue to be aligned to their needs and current interests.
- Practitioners are advised to provide more details of the children's unique interests and achievements in their learning journal observations as well as the clearly outlined next steps in the child's learning journey. Child and parent reflections on the learning activities could be included on a regular basis
- The practitioners are advised to continue to review the use of floor space and to develop the learning environments, prioritising the provision of mathematical resources and the addition of literacy resources to interest areas beyond the reading corner. Extending the provision of real, natural and open-ended materials in discreet interest areas, both indoors and outdoors will further enhance the children's spontaneous investigation, enquiry and creativity

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is good.
- The children present as engaged, happy and connected in the setting. Most appear motivated, and interested in their play and learning activities.
- The children's social skills are developing well. During the time allocated for free play, some children choose to play alone to focus on and pursue their own learning agendas, others play in pairs and in self-selected small-groups. A few children require additional support in terms of the regulation of boisterous behaviours.
- The children show great enthusiasm for socio-dramatic play and for sensory activates, including play with water, sand and playdough. They enjoy making jigsaws and constructing with wooden blocks.
- They demonstrate a love for books and a keen interest in the Irish language. They enjoy singing songs and reciting little poems in Irish. They enjoy how the practitioners promote the Irish language in a fun way during snack time. The children's understanding of the language is developing very well in the senior room.
- It was noted during the review of the learning journals that the children were very interested in the contents. They could clearly talk about their learning experiences, a recent visit from the local guards and their trip to the garden where they dug potatoes in the polytunnel and later ate them for dinner. They enjoyed retelling the story of a caterpillar they discovered in the outdoor environment
- The children enjoy having their work along with their annotated stories celebrated on the walls. They have personalised cubby holes for their materials. They are supported in making decisions about their play and the jobs that they would like to undertake in the pre-school.
- The large hall and the outdoor areas provide ample space for the children to develop physical skills. These were not utilised during the inspection.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to use further visual prompts to support some children in terms of alerting them to the need to use gentle, indoor voices in the indoor learning environment.
- The practitioners are advised to provide children with opportunities to review their learning stories with their key practitioners and their parents to allow them to develop a growing awareness of their progress in learning.
- It is advised that children are provided with daily opportunities for outdoor play and learning.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- Practitioners have a very good understanding of their roles and responsibilities and both sessions were very well organised. There is a very positive ethos of team work evident in the senior room where staff is long established and practitioners demonstrate a high degree of respect and support for one another. As the practitioner in the junior room works alone, there is scope to increase opportunities for collaboration between the rooms by sharing activities and approaches to early learning, including language learning.
- The manager is proactive and positive in supporting the practitioners and a system of annual appraisals is in place.Time for documenting observations is provided to practitioners on a weekly basis, planning time is provided on a monthly basis and quarterly staff meeting are held. This solid foundation for practice improvement could be developed further by the documentation of self-evaluation initiatives.
- The manager and practitioners frequently engage in continuing professional development (CPD). There is a strong commitment to providing a quality ECCE programme. Plans are in place for a mentor support visit from the Better Start Quality Development Service.
- Parents are informed about their child's learning experiences regularly through informal discussions, the use of frequently updated notice boards which display the daily routines and planning, a text messaging service, a parents' opinion/suggestion box and newsletters. The

children's individual folders that document their learning experiences are sent home at the end of the year. Plans are in place to provide formal opportunities for parents to meet with their child's designated key-person regarding their child's learning and development at Easter.

- Parents are invited to share information about things that are important in their children's lives in an *'All about me'* profile that they complete at the beginning of the year. The setting has established positive relationships with the adjacent primary school. The children visit the school regularly and participate in joint seasonal events.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to build on the current arrangements for collaborative review through the provision of increased opportunities for sharing effective practice between the rooms and to use materials from the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guid*e to support the documentation of self-review initiatives.
- It is recommended that audio clips of the songs, poems, stories and Irish phrases and sentences that the children are learning are shared frequently with parents along with their learning stories. In addition, the practitioners are advised to seek the reflections and views of parents on their child's learning and development on a regular basis.
- In order to support effective transitions and enhanced continuity in children's learning experiences, the practitioners are advised to share information about children's learning with the teachers of junior infants. The '*Mo Scéal'* reporting templates and support materials, available in the early childhood section of the website of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, (www.ncca.ie) would be very useful in this regard.

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	**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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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.**

Area 1

Quality of context to support Children's Learning and Development.

Actions taken:

- A family tree was introduced to both rooms and parents were asked to bring in a family photo. Most parents have brought them in, there are just a few left to come. We have asked a few parents and grandparents to come in to the setting. We have one grandparent who is going to come in to do story time with the children. We had all parents and a few grandparents in at Christmas time to hear all the children sing. They loved it. A visual key worker display was introduced for parents to see at a glance who their child's key worker is.

Area 2

Actions taken

- Practitioners in both rooms encourage the interests of the children within "Child's Voice" every Monday morning during circle time for the week ahead. If they see something during that week that a particular child is interested in, they will add it to the curriculum. This is now added to the child's journal. Learner journals are now in each child's cubby hole so they can take them out and look at them whenever they like. The kids love to look at their journals and talk to their wee friends about it. We also sent the learner journal home over the Christmas holidays to the parents so they could have a look at the journals to see how their children are progressing. We sent a feedback sheet for the parents to fill in with the journals and got really positive feedback from all the parents.

- We have looked at the layout of each room and have changed them around to make better use of the floor space. Smaller Tables and chairs were added to the small Naíonra room. The children make more use of the outdoor area and our Polytunnel. They have planted their own fruit, vegetables and flowers which they can watch grow over time. This will enable the children to learn about the natural environment and its features and take on responsibilities as carers while making sense of the world around them.

Area 3

Actions Taken

- Visual prompts are all around the room to help support children to be aware to use their indoor voices. Children have now brought in all weather gear that can be kept in the Naíonra so that they can go out in all weather and they love it. They go for nature walks, down to the poly tunnel to plant stuff and out to our large outdoor area to play and discover. They even got out to build a snowman. As they say there is no such thing as bad weather it's bad clothing.

Area 4

- Fortnightly meetings between practitioners are taking place to ensure that the quality of practice in our provision is improving through the use of the self-evaluation tool from the Aistear & Siolta practice guide.
- A copy of songs, poems and Irish phrases will be sent home with the children on a regular basis for parents to read through and sing along with their child.
- We are now introducing transition activities to help the children with the transition from pre-school to primary school.
- We also bring the children over to the school to meet the teachers and have a tour around the school before the end of the year.
- We will be having a parent-teacher meeting in April so that the parents can share ideas of how we can help with the children's transition. We will be asking the parents for their permission to take part in Mo Scéal to help with the move from preschool to primary school.