An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION - FOCUSED INSPECTION

REPORT

Service Name	Creeslough Community Playgroup
Service Address	St. Michael's Terrace Creeslough County Donegal
DCYA number	09DL0045

Date of Inspection: 13-03-2018

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agus Scileanna
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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	13-03-2018
Inspection activities undertaken • Meeting with service manager • Meeting with practitioners • Observation of interactions during one pre-school session	• Interaction with children • Review of relevant documents • Post-inspection feedback meeting with the service manager and practitioners

CONTEXT OF SERVICE

Creeslough Community Playgroup is a community-based service offering morning Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programmes in two separate rooms. Full day-care facilities are also provided. ECCE provision is informed by a play-based curriculum which incorporates the principles of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework.* The playgroup was established in 2006. This inspection report is based on the practice observed in one pre-schoolroom. There were eighteen children present on the day of the inspection along with one lead practitioner and an assistant practitioner. The setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised in this report, and the response submitted on behalf of the setting can 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 excellent.
- There is warm, friendly and relaxed atmosphere in the service whereby the parents and the children happily enter the playroom and converse freely with the practitioners at drop-off and at collection times.
- On arrival, the children are encouraged to independently self-register for the morning session by taking their photograph from the door and placing it on the registration tree along with their name.
- Many opportunities are exploited throughout the session to support the development of the children's independence and self-help skills with job rotas used effectively to share tidy-up tasks.
- The displayed daily routine, which indicates that time is allocated to indoor and outdoor play each day, consistently supports the social and emotional security of the children.
- Relationships between the practitioners and the children are highly sensitive, responsive and reciprocal. The practitioners know each child and their family very well.
- Practitioners praise and affirm the children on an ongoing basis and provide guidance and encouragement towards positive behaviour.
- Transitions during the session are signalled and verbally announced by the practitioners who use these transitions times to engage children in activities and learning in a highly effective manner.
- The environment has been very carefully organised to support the children's developing sense of identity and belonging. There are photographic displays of the children engaged in play and learning activities in the setting, personalised 'photo' bricks in the construction area, photographs of the children on their learning portfolios and photographs are displayed over each child's coat hangers. The children's individual art creations are labelled with their names and are celebrated prominently.
- A wonderful family tree displays pictures of the children and their families. A delightful 'big book' tells the detailed story of the children's learning experiences, activities and events in the playgroup over the year in photographs and in text. This is easily accessible to parents and to the children to explore.
- Parents regularly come into the pre-school room to share experiences with the children. For example, a parent who is a public health nurse came along with an expectant mammy and the

children were all facilitated to hear the baby's heartbeat. The children's reactions to this beautiful learning experience were captured by practitioners.
- The children are taken out for walks in the local environment and accordingly are well integrated in the local community.

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.
- Practitioners consistently prepare and plan for curriculum experiences on a monthly and weekly basis. Plans are informed by *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. Weekly plans and learning activities are informed by the practitioners' observations of the children's interests. Commendably, they also document parental input into the planned activities.
- A variety of assessment approaches is used to gather information about the children's learning. Detailed profiles are maintained for individual children. These contain settling-in stories including information about the children's likes and dislikes. They also include regularly completed comprehensive learning stories with photographs that describe the children's learning dispositions. Very good attention is given to the recording of the voice of the child.
- A 'Big Book of Planning' catalogues all the learning experiences in the setting for sharing with the parents and with the children themselves to observe on an ongoing basis.
- Practitioners know the children very well and are aware of their needs and their various stages of development. They use this information to provide learning activities that are carefully aligned to children's needs and interests and that are sufficiently challenging and ensure progression in learning.
- Free play, indoors and outdoors is supportive of the children's agency and development. Opportunities are provided for various types of play and there is an appropriate balance between child-led and adult-led play.
- Many high-quality, positive interactions were observed on the day of the inspection between the practitioners and the children. Practitioners carefully support language development and thinking skills. Commendably, opportunities for learning provided by occurrences in the environment, for example when a spider appeared in the play room or taking in trays of snow to observe the snow melting are exploited to very good effect.
- Story time is valued by the children and the practitioners read stories in an engaging manner, questioning the children effectively to check their understanding. While it was reported that the children are regularly exposed to rhymes and poems, this was not observed during this inspection.
- The small indoor learning environment is bright and motivating, very well organised into different learning zones with almost all resources at the level of the child. There is potential to supplement the resources in the kitchen area by providing further real materials. The outdoor environment supports a good range of play activities
- Appropriate literacy and numeracy resources are available to children that are showing an interest in reading books and in early mathematics. Among the attractive books in the beautiful library area are those that have been authored and illustrated by the children themselves. The practice of the children creating their own stories on a story board with the practitioner acting as scribe and recording the children's narratives is particularly creative and highly praiseworthy.
- Practitioners recognise and accommodate diversity in the style, pace and focus of the children's learning and development.

Actions advised
- It is advised that practitioners reflect further on how the children's learning can be extended in the 'moving forward' section of the learning stories in all learning portfolios.
- Practitioners are advised to link the photographic and word description of the children's learning experiences documented in the 'Big Book of Planning' to the four *Aistear* themes of Well-Being, Identity and Belonging, Exploring and Thinking and Communicating. This would be supportive of parents' understanding of the learning intentions.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is very good.
- Children are motivated and engaged in their learning activities; they self-register on arrival in the service and choose where they want to play. The use of a visual schedule would support all children to understanding the sequence of the morning's activities, but particularly those with additional needs.
- Children have opportunities to play alone, in groups with peers and with practitioners. They interact very well with their peers, having fun, sharing, and in taking turns with play materials. The children demonstrate an awareness of their own abilities and show initiative and resourcefulness in their play through their decision making, problem solving and the choices they make.
- Children are developing suitable personal and social skills; they capably undertake a variety of allocated tasks such as tidying-up and distributing items to others demonstrating appropriate skills of independence and turn taking. While the children are demonstrating an evolving capacity for self-regulation, noise levels after story time were a little high. The children need to be prompted to use their 'indoor voices' at intervals.
- The children love to paint and make jigsaws with some children persevering to complete complex puzzles. Others love sand play and play in the construction area.
- The children interact with other children and the adults by listening, discussing, questioning and taking turns in conversations. Some children demonstrate good ability in answering open-ended questions.
- The children have daily access to an outdoor area. It provides some opportunities for explorative, imaginative and large movement play. It allows for water play, messy play, climbing opportunities and play with wheeled vehicles.
- Children have access to their individual scrapbooks and they are proud of the work samples contained in them. This naturally encourages an interest in their learning and a positive sense of worth.
- The children's displayed art work indicates very good levels of creativity. The children love handling books and the attractive, cosy reading corner is a favourite space in the playroom. They are very interested in number and can count objects and undertake matching and ordering activities.
- The celebration of the children's families on the playroom family tree supports the children in developing an awareness of their own uniqueness and their self-identity. They benefit from the regular visits of members of the local community into the setting. On the day of this inspection there were very interested in the examples of traditional Irish dance and in exploring the different types of shoes worn by the parent who danced. They also loved trying out the dances, exploring the different sound the shoes made and composing their own 'free style' dance to traditional music.

Actions advised

- It is advised that a visual schedule outlining the morning's activities be used to support all children's understanding of the sequence of events and the various transition points.
- Practitioners are advised to incorporate simple poems and counting rhymes in English and Irish into the daily routine at different intervals to support language development.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is excellent.
- The practitioners are fully aware of their designated roles and responsibilities. This promotes smoothly organised and high-quality experiences within the setting.
- Practitioners appreciate the value of participating in collaborative review which occurs on a very regular basis.
- The manager prepares regular reports to update the board of directors on the work of the playgroup and committee members provide appropriate support to her in her role.
- Parental input is highly valued. Significant efforts are made to communicate with and to involve the parents in the service's practices. Parents are afforded the opportunity to leave messages and suggestions for learning activities for practitioners in the '*Meet and Greet'* suggestion box. The manager welcomes parental input as to how the service could be further improved.

- Parents receive a handbook containing the service's policies and procedures along with frequent newsletters. The children's learning stories are shared regularly with parents. This facilitates parents' knowledge of their child's learning experiences and their overall progression in learning. Practitioners have shared the Talk PANTS materials with parents to help them keep their children safe.
- Practitioners are highly committed to continuing professional development. They have undertaken whole-staff *Aistear / Síolta* training and have recently completed Diversity and Equality training. They are currently engaging in the Leadership for Inclusion in Early Years (LINC) Programme. Practitioners have previously engaged with the Better Start Access and Inclusion Model to promote inclusive practice.
- Practitioners work closely with the local Health Service Executive early intervention teams in support of the inclusion of children with additional needs. As a team, they have undertaken *Lámh* training to support the inclusion of children with communication needs. The manager has close links with the local County Childcare and is currently interested in progressing networking opportunities for service managers in the county.
- Transitions into the setting are supported through the provision of a registration night for parents and an open-day for the children and their families.
- The management and staff of the service report that they have developed commendable professional relationships with the local primary schools facilitate the smooth transfer of children to primary education.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the service to continue to implement the actions advised above is very good given the strong leadership in place, the commitment of practitioners to continuous professional development and the on-going improvements in the learning experiences for the children.

Summary of Overall Inspection

Area	Quality Level
Quality of context to support children's learning and development	**Excellent**
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	**Excellent**

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.**

Area2: Quality of processes to support children's learning and development.

The moving forward section of all learning stories will be completed and staff will continue to reflect on how they can encourage and extend on the interests, abilities, understanding and learning of the child through greater use of the moving forward section. The moving forward section of the learning forward section of the learning stories is then used to complete the Aistear/Siolta curriculum planning tool which in turn informs the monthly planning.

The play and learning experience of the children depicted in the Big Book of Planning through photographic and word description will now be linked with 4 themes of Aistear by using Aistear Aim & Goal stickers and direct reference.

Area3: Quality of Children's Learning Experiences and Achievements

A visual schedule of the morning activities has now been completed and is displayed and in use in the room.

We acknowledge that while simple poems and rhymes were not used on the day of the inspection due to the celebration of a birthday and an Irish dancing session, it would be common practice to use English poems and rhymes throughout the morning routine, during tidy up time, story and circle time and transitions etc. Irish poems and rhymes would not commonly be used but these have now been incorporated into the daily routine to further support language and cultural development.