An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	Cuddles Crèche
Setting Address	28 Copple Crescent Deepforde Drogheda County Meath
DCYA number	13MH0286

Date of Inspection: 24-09-2018

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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	24-09-2018
Inspection activities undertaken • Meeting with the setting owner • Conversation with the early years practitioners • Observation of interactions and activities during two pre-school sessions • Review of educational resources and facilities • Interaction and discussion with the children	• Review of relevant setting documentation • Review of records of the children's learning and development • Feedback conversations with the early years practitioners • Feedback discussion with setting owner and the setting manager

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Cuddles Crèche was established in 2013. It provides pre and after-school care for school-aged children, full day care and two morning sessional pre-school programmes for children enrolled on the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. Four early years practitioners and thirty-one children were present in the two pre-school rooms on the day on the inspection. The setting owner and manager were present in the setting and fully available for the duration of the inspection visit. 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.
- There is a warm and welcoming atmosphere in this setting. The practitioners make great efforts to build positive relationships with the families. An effective key person system is in place.
- Relationships between the practitioners and the children are notably clam, positive and caring.
- There is a daily routine in place in both pre-school rooms. Times are allocated for child-initiated and practitioner-initiated play and learning activities. Daily time allocated to the children's self-directed play and learning is brief and does not support sustained active play, learning and discovery.
- Snack time in both rooms, is a social occasion during which the practitioners effectively support the children to be independent and to develop social skills.
- When necessary, the practitioners provide the children with clear and positive guidance to support their behaviour. They report that when appropriate and necessary they utilise a problem-solving approach to resolving conflict with the children.
- The children's developing sense of identity and belonging is nurtured by the practitioners through frequent conversations and displays of photographs of the children's families.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the practitioners allow a minimum of one hour daily for child-initiated play and learning. It is further advised that the daily routine is displayed in words and pictures at child level in both pre-school rooms.
- To further nurture children's developing sense of identity and belonging, it is advised that the practitioners create photographic displays of the children, their play and learning activities, their families and their local community. It is also advised that the children's creative art and work be displayed in the pre-school rooms and the entrance hallway.

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.
- Cuddles Crèche implements a play-based curriculum which values learning through play. In the senior pre-school room, aspects of the Montessori approach to education are incorporated into the curriculum. The setting's curriculum statement is not representative of the curriculum currently being implemented.
- Planning for learning is based on practitioner-selected topics and very specific learning content such as letters, numbers and shape of the week. This approach to planning for learning does not support an emergent curriculum nor does it cultivate the children's joy of learning through play.
- The practitioners record learner story observations of the children's activities, complete developmental checklists and use photographs to capture their achievements and learning.
- The learning environments are spacious and well-maintained. The current arrangement of both rooms with tables in the centre, does not make optimal use of the space available. A moderate range of play and learning activities is provided in each room.
- The practitioners understand the importance of playful learning for pre-school children. They use many effective support strategies particularly during the child-initiated periods in the session. Some strategies used, such as whole-group teaching of practitioner-selected concepts and phonics, are not well-matched to the children's current developmental capacities.
- The children are learning in an inclusive environment. The practitioners effectively adapt their interactions and support to match each child's developmental level and needs. The setting is linked with the Health Service Executive Early Intervention Team and The Better Start Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) to access assessment and support for children with possible additional needs.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the setting's curriculum statement is revised and more closely aligned to *Aistear*, stating clearly the dispositions, values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding which children will be supported to develop in the ECCE programme.
- Practitioners in both pre-school rooms are advised to begin to record the children's current and emerging interests and to incorporate this information into short-term planning for an emergent curriculum.
- It is advised that both pre-school rooms be re-arranged to create distinct interest areas to support different types of play, learning and discovery. It is also advised that sensory, open-ended, real and natural materials, resources, props and tools be added to both rooms.
- It is advised that practitioners, individually and as a team, reflect on their vital roles in engaging and motivating the children's learning through play with a clear focus on supporting the development of the process of learning rather than specific content.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is good.
- The children in both pre-school rooms were observed to be happy and joyful.
- Both pre-school groups are very well-settled and demonstrate secure relationships with the practitioners.
- The children are very enthusiastic about completing jobs and tasks in the pre-school rooms. Each day the practitioners tell them who has a job and what that job is.
- During the periods allocated to free play indoors and outdoors, the children were actively engaged in meaningful play and learning activities with the resources available. Enhancement of the range of play opportunities such as sensory play, socio-dramatic play, floor play indoors and gross-motor and physical skills play outdoors, would further support the children's development and learning.
- It was observed that the children are developing social skills commensurate with their stages of development. Many children in the junior pre-school room are playing alongside their peers and

many children in the senior pre-school room demonstrate developing capacities to play co-operatively.
- The children are demonstrating an eagerness to express themselves and communicate with others in many ways.

Actions advised
- It is advised that the practitioners create a jobs board clearly indicating, in photographs and pictures, the task that each child is responsible for completing that day.
- To increase opportunities for the children to engage in a wide variety of play and learning activities, it is advised that the practitioners provide increased space and resources for sensory, socio-dramatic play and floor-based construction. Particular priority should be given to providing space and resources for sensory-motor play in the junior pre-school room.
- It is advised that the children be provided with opportunities to engage in many different play and learning opportunities in the outdoor play space. Priority should be given to the provision of developmentally appropriate adventurous play and opportunities for gross motor movement.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- There is a very professional ethos in this setting. The owner, setting manager and practitioners articulate a very clearly developed and passionate commitment to providing a quality learning experience for children. The staff engages in informal planning for quality improvement at monthly team meetings. The introduction of a systematic approach to self-review would greatly support future quality improvements.
- There is very strong and positive team working between the practitioners. Roles and responsibilities are shared very equitably and the practitioners take leadership roles at different times during the session, in both rooms.
- The practitioners are linked to their local county childcare committee for support and advice. They attend required training such as first aid and child protection. In-house training is provided for the staff. The practitioners have not recently attended curriculum or pedagogical practice training or nationally developed training on the *Aistear* and *Síolta* frameworks.
- The setting has established positive relationships with the local primary schools in relation to its pre and after-school programme for school-aged children. At the time of the inspection, the practitioners did not share information about the children's learning with the local primary school. Such sharing of information would enhance the children's transitions and support continuity in their learning.

Actions advised
- It is advised that the setting owner and manager allocate time during monthly staff meetings for systematic self-assessment and action planning for practice and curriculum quality development. Use of the online *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* will greatly support this action.
- The practitioners are advised to access continuing professional development on the *Aistear* and *Síolta* frameworks.
- To support smooth transitions between the setting and primary school, the practitioners are advised to begin to explore ways to communicate and share information between settings.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The setting owner and the manager of Cuddles Crèche attended and participated enthusiastically and professionally in the feedback discussion following the inspection. They demonstrated a clear understanding of the actions discussed to progress the development of quality in the setting. The capacity of the setting to continue to implement the actions advised above is very good.

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	**Very 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.