An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	Discovery Den
Setting Address	The Grove Athlumney Navan County Meath
DCYA number	09MH0026

Date of Inspection: 15-01-2019

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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	15-01-2019
Inspection activities undertaken • Meeting with the setting owner/practitioner • Conversation with early years practitioners • Observation of interactions and activities during a pre-school session • 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 discussion with the setting owner/practitioner and early years practitioners

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Discovery Den, established in 2001, provides a morning sessional pre-school programme for children enrolled on the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. The owner/practitioner, two early years practitioners and twenty children were present on the day on the inspection. The owner and both early years practitioners attended and the feedback discussion following the inspection. 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 an exceptionally warm and welcoming atmosphere in this setting. Parents and children are greeted with warmth and positivity at arrival and the practitioners allow a lot of time for conversation and the two-way sharing of information.
- An effective key person system is in operation and parents know who their child's key person is.
- The practitioners have established very positive and affirming relationships with the children. They interact in a clam manner and demonstrate positive regard for each child. The practitioners' gentle and respectful use of appropriate touch to connect, communicate and reassure the children is very effective.
- The children's independence and development of self-care skills is viewed as an important area of learning by the practitioners and is very effectively supported with unrushed, clam positivity.
- There is a consistent daily routine in place with times allocated for practitioner-initiated activities, child-initiated activities, a snack time and outdoor play. This routine is displayed for the children photographically at their eye level. On the day of the inspection, it was observed that a substantial period of time was spent in adult-initiated, whole-group play and learning activities. Time is allocated to child-initiated, spontaneous, open-ended play was not sufficient.
- The transitions between sections of the daily routine are well-planned, announced clearly by the practitioners and managed very effectively.
- The children's developing sense of identity and belonging is highly effectively nurtured through the use of photographs, displays of learning activities and events in the setting and the allocation of personal space for the children to store their belongings. Parents regularly visit the setting to share information with the children about their occupations.

Action advised

- It is advised that practitioners ensure that a substantial, uninterrupted period of time be allocated each day for children to be active agents in their self-selected play and learning activities.

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.
- A play-based curriculum, aligned to *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum*, is well-established in the setting.
- Planning for the curriculum programme is based on themes selected by the practitioners. Learning activities, template crafts, stories and rhymes linked to these themes are selected, by the practitioners, from resource folders. The practitioners sometimes record the children's emerging interests as they are observed. Each Monday the practitioners engage their key group of children in discussion about the theme for the week ahead and record their comments in two floor books.
- The practitioners record some brief narrative observations and take photographs of the learning activities during the week. These are placed in the floor books and links are made to *Aistear*. This information is reviewed with the children on Monday before the next theme is introduced. This very child-centred approach to engaging the children in planning and review of learning activities could now be used to plan for the support and extension of the children's own current learning interests, at group and at individual levels.
- The practitioners also record monthly narrative observations for each child, maintain a diary with brief anecdotal notes and collect samples of the children's art work. These are all sent home for parents to review and sign each month.
- The indoor learning environment is bright, attractive and very well-maintained. There are distinct interest areas to support different types of play and learning. On the day of the inspection, it was observed that the resources and materials are predominately toy and plastic in nature.
- The outdoor learning environment is a large natural space with big play structures and many loose materials to promote physical play, the development of co-ordination and fundamental movement skills.
- The practitioners use very effective pedagogical strategies to promote the children's learning and development, particularly during the child-initiated, free play period. They play with the children at their physical level, follow their play themes and ideas and offer ideas and vocabulary to support and extend the children's play and exploration.
- Some very effective strategies to support the children's early numeracy and literacy development were observed. They included, counting with the children in real situations, singing songs, reciting rhymes and reading with the children frequently during the session.

Actions advised

- To further the development of an emergent curriculum, it is advised that practitioners use the effective systems in place to intentionally focus on gathering children's knowledge and establishing their interests to plan for supporting and extending the interests and developmental needs that are emerging in the children's play and learning activities.
- Practitioners are advised to introduce real, natural and open-ended materials and tools in all interest areas. It is advised that practitioners also focus on providing materials and resources that will foster exploration and support the development of early numeracy and 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.
- The children are very well-settled in the setting and arrive eager to begin play and conversation.
- The children are building a wide repertoire of songs and rhymes which is supporting their capacity to distinguish sounds in language and to identify initial sounds of words and rhymes.
- The children are very eager to communicate their ideas and their life experiences. It was observed that many children contributed to the whole-group circle time. The introduction of small-group activities would ensure that all children have opportunity to express themselves and expand on their ideas.

- During the time allocated to the children's self-selected play and learning, the children demonstrated dispositions of curiosity, independence and perseverance in their activities. They were highly motivated, imaginative and creative in their self-chosen and directed play.
- The children are demonstrating very well-developed social skills, playing co-operatively, taking turns and sharing.
- Some strong friendships are developing within the group and some children were observed to display care and loyalty for their friends.
- Many of the children are very interested in writing; they are becoming aware of the purpose of writing and that print has meaning and they are eager to explore this.
- The children are experiencing achievement and are developing through their learning experiences.

Actions advised

- It is advised that practitioners provide opportunities for the children to converse in small groups on topics that are currently interesting and relevant to them. Practitioners are advised to support the development of questioning, listening and responding and contributing in these conversations.
- Practitioners are advised to foster the children's emerging interest in writing by providing a wide range of real writing tools and materials, modelling writing for the children and providing opportunities for them to write in real and play contexts.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is excellent.
- A very professional ethos is evident in the setting. The owner and staff articulate a passionate commitment to providing a quality learning experience for the children. The staff engages in very regular informal discussion and self-review. More structured and documented meetings are held monthly. The staff has a very good knowledge of *Aistear* and *Síolta*.
- The owner provides clear leadership to the staff. There is very strong and positive team working between the practitioners. Roles are clear and responsibilities are shared equitably. Practitioners took leadership roles at different times during the sessions observed.
- The setting links with the local county childcare committee for support and advice.
- Information about the setting and its pre-school programme is shared very effectively with parents in many ways. These include; a very detailed web site, a comprehensive leaflet and an information evening where parents are asked what their hopes and aspirations are for their children's learning.
- Information about each child's individual progression in learning and development is very comprehensively shared with parents. Practitioners engage parents in daily, informal discussions about their children and written observations are shared monthly. During annual, planned parent/practitioner meetings, each child's development and learning is discussed with their parent. A written summary of this information is provided to parents. The practitioners actively encourage parents to share this with their children's primary school to support smooth transitions at the end of the pre-school year.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The owner and staff engaged in the co-professional feedback discussion following the inspection and demonstrated an excellent understanding of what was required to ensure ongoing improvement in the quality of provision for children's learning and development. The capacity of the service to implement the actions advised above is excellent.

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	**Excellent**

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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