An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	Early Days Crèche
Setting Address	Collegewood Manor Clane County Kildare
DCYA number	09KE0137

Date of Inspection: 16-10-2019

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(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	16-10-2019
Inspection activities undertaken • Meeting with setting manager • Meeting with practitioners	• Observation of interactions during a session • Interaction with children • Review of relevant documents • Feedback to setting manager and practitioners

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Early Days crèche is a privately owned full-day setting. The setting provides two morning pre-school sessions through its participation in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection twenty-three children were present in the pre-school rooms together with five practitioners. The owner of the setting attended the post-inspection feedback meeting. The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the 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 good.
- The atmosphere in the setting is inviting and pleasant. On arrival into the rooms the children commence their activities with enthusiasm.
- Relationships between the practitioners and the children are positive, kind and respectful. The practitioners know each child well; these connections are supported by the key-person system which is in operation. The visual display of the key-person groups supports the children in self-identifying their peer groups and key-person.
- During the inspection, there were some limited opportunities for the children to engage in free-play. The routine observed was mainly adult-led, incorporating activities which were organised and directed by the practitioners. This approach does not afford children adequate opportunities to be active agents in their learning.
- Transitions from one activity to the next, over the course of the day are at times signposted verbally in advance of the change. This practice is not consistent. At times the transition periods are not used to optimal effect to facilitate learning.
- Snack time promotes the meal as a social occasion and provides the children with ample opportunities to prepare the environment and themselves for the mealtime. For example the children perform care routines with little assistance, such as washing their hands, getting their own drinks, setting the table, and passing out items to one another.
- The practitioners often provide guidance and encouragement towards positive behaviour through positive affirmation and guidance, such as 'walking feet or 'kind hands'. At times there are inconsistencies in how the practitioners respond to challenging behaviours.
- Recognition for the uniqueness of the child within the learning environment is nurtured. There are displays of children's artwork, learning story displays which feature the children engaged in activities, a community wall and a family tree. The setting has made connections with the local community. Members of the local community and parents are invited to visit the setting and share their skills and backgrounds with the children. Some visual displays, including photographs, reflect these experiences.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to review the daily routine to ensure that the children have a substantial period of time each day for free play and that there is a balanced approach to adult-led and child-initiated activities; this will afford the children greater autonomy to make choices.
- The practitioners are advised to review their transition practices to ensure that transition times are clearly and consistently signposted and that they are utilised to facilitate learning experiences.

- The practitioners are advised to review the conflict resolution strategies which they use when challenging behaviour occurs. There is a need to ensure that the practitioners have a shared understanding of the strategies. In addition, there is a need to ensure that the strategies are implemented consistently.

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 setting is developing a play-based approach to its curriculum which is aligned to the principles of *Aistear*: *the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. The practitioners document short-term, medium-term and long-term goals. There is evidence that the practitioners are developing their understanding of an emergent curriculum as identified in some of the documented group plans. There is scope to strengthen this practice.
- Approaches to assessment are very good. The practitioners use an on-line data system and they develop individual learning journals for each child. These tools are used to gather information about the children's learning experiences and achievements. They include observations, learning stories, samples of child's artwork, and photographs of the child completing activities. The next steps for child's learning are identified and noted. This assessment information could be used to inform the short-term planning more consistently.
- The practitioners' interactions are often authentic, affirming and encouraging. They engage as the children's play partner, and frequently support and scaffold children's thinking and reasoning. On some occasions during the inspection, the practitioners asked open-ended questions that challenged the children's thinking and supported them to make predictions and comparisons.
- The indoor environments are bright, inviting and presented in a very attractive manner. There are defined interest areas within which all of the materials are accessible to the children, and displayed in a way that promotes their independence. These areas provide many opportunities for creative expression and promote various types of play such as socio-dramatic play, construction, mark-making, and play with manipulatives. Additional opportunities for the children to engage with materials and activities that promote enquiry, investigation and problem solving would be beneficial.
- The outdoor area is used on a daily basis and provides opportunities for the children to engage in purposeful play and to develop their gross motor physical skills.

Actions advised

- To consistently inform their planning processes, the practitioners are advised to optimise their use of the records of the individual child's developmental needs and interests and the identified next steps in their learning. This will enable them to strengthen their emergent curriculum, and to customise the curriculum in a way that is responsive to each individual child. Additional guidance is available in the 'Planning and Assessing' pillar in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide*.
- The practitioners are advised to provide the children with additional materials and opportunities which promote investigation, exploration, curiosity, creativity and problem solving.

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 display enjoyment on arrival and throughout the day.
- The children are confident in expressing their thoughts and opinions; when they have the opportunity to make choices regarding their play they do so competently.
- There are some opportunities for the children to see themselves as active learners who are experiencing achievement and success. This was evident during their learning experiences when the children celebrated and shared their success. The children's art work and learning stories are displayed in the room, and their learning is documented in their learning journals. It would be beneficial to use these materials to support the children to reflect on their progress.

- The children play together co-operatively in small groups and in pairs, they take turns and negotiate with one another.
- There is some opportunity at the end of the day for children to discuss what they would like to do the following day. There is potential to enhance this practice.
- The children's language and literacy skills are supported through their engagement in song, rhyme story-telling, and free mark-making.

Action advised

- The practitioners are advised to provide the children with increased opportunities to appreciate and develop their awareness of their progress. Reflection and discussions on their past and future learning through the use of the children's learning journals would support this.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- The practitioners verbalise their commitment to providing a quality provision, and the stated philosophy of the setting is evident in practice.
- In recent times regular formal team meetings have taken place. The owner/manager plans to re-introduce these meetings. The team have previously used the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* to self-evaluate their practice, with support from Better Start. The owner/manager provides regular support and supervision to the practitioners.
- The team are committed to engaging in continuing professional learning. The owner/manager recently completed the Leadership for Inclusion in Early Childhood (LINC) Programme, the practitioners engaged in a range of professional learning workshops, and one practitioner completed an Early Years Degree programme.
- The children's transition into the setting is supported through an induction period which is dependent upon the child's individual needs. The manager/owner meets the parents and child prior to starting and a parents' handbook is provided.
- Information is shared with parents through informal discussions at arrival and collection times, a monthly newsletter and through an on-line data system. Children's learning journals are sent home periodically and are available in the rooms if parents wish to review them. At the time of the inspection there was no feedback from parents in the journals.
- The setting prepares the children for the transition to primary school by engaging in discussions and activities which support their understanding of school. The setting shares information with the school subject to parental approval.

Actions advised

- The management are advised to recommence the regular team meetings with a view to developing a collaborative approach through the sharing of practice across both rooms and also to develop a shared leadership approach. This will ensure that the skills of all practitioners are utilised.
- The practitioners are advised to develop a self-reflection process through their engagement with the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide.* This will inform team meetings and assist the setting to identify goals for quality development in practices that support the children's learning and development. It is recommended that practice be recorded, monitored and reviewed more systematically; this will assist in developing agreed plans for improvement.
- The practitioners are advised to encourage parents to provide feedback on both their child's development and on the setting as a whole. This could be achieved by requesting parents to provide feedback in their child's learning journal and by issuing questionnaires to parents periodically.

Summary of Overall Inspection

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