An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	Early Days Pre-school
Setting Address	St. Paul's Boys National School Lisduggan Waterford City County Waterford
DCYA number	09WY0014

Date of Inspection: 13-12-2019

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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	13-12-2019
Inspection activities undertaken • Pre-inspection meeting with one practitioner • Introductory meeting with the practitioners • Observation of the morning session in both pre-school rooms • Interaction with the children	• Review of available records of children's learning and development • Review of relevant documents • Review of educational provision and materials • Post inspection feedback meeting with the practitioners from both pre-school rooms

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Early Days Pre-school is a community sessional setting managed by St. Paul's Boys National School, Lisduggan in Waterford City. Established in 2004 with one pre-school room in the school, it extended by opening a second room in 2016. The children attend room 1 in their first year and room 2 in their second year of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. The pre-school has access to the school grounds for outdoor experiences. Both rooms were evaluated during the inspection. In total, four practitioners and twenty-eight children were present. 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.
- A very warm atmosphere is cultivated in the setting.
- Practitioners are caring and nurturing towards the children. They show warmth and sensitivity in their interactions and demonstrate respect for children and families.
- The practitioners model respectful language and provide guidance that effectively supports the children's positive behaviour. During the inspection, they offered gentle reminders to reinforce the boundaries.
- A basic key-person approach is used by the practitioners to record the children's learning experiences; each practitioner is responsible for observing a dedicated group of children.
- The routine allocates time for the children to actively choose and lead their own learning during free play and small-group activities.
- On some occasions during the inspection, the children experienced short waiting periods as they transitioned from one part of the routine to the next.
- Some good efforts are made to connect the children with their community. Practitioners organise walks through the woodland area beside the school grounds.
- The children's sense of identity and belonging is nurtured effectively. Photographs of the children and their families, an 'all about me' display and the art work displays support the children to develop an appreciation of themselves as individuals and as members of groups.

Actions advised

- To reduce waiting periods between activities, it is advised that children be further supported to take a more active role during transitions. Practitioners could use songs, rhymes and finger plays with the children as they prepare to move to the outdoors.
- Practitioners are advised to review how the children's backgrounds and their community are represented within the environments. The children would benefit greatly from additional displays that feature their interests and the local community, to further promote reflection and enable them to develop a sense of place.

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, informed by *Aistear; the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and *Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education* very effectively supports the children's learning and development.
- Planning for curriculum implementation is suitably documented by the practitioners on a long-term, medium-term and short-term basis. Plans flexibly respond and build on the children's emergent interests.
- Approaches to assessment for the children's learning are varied. There is scope to develop a consistent approach to the use of the learning story format.
- High-quality interactions with the children are facilitated. The practitioners actively extend the children's thinking and engagement, through the use of a range of appropriate interaction strategies, such as active listening, asking open-ended questions, and modelling the use of materials.
- The indoor learning environments are purposefully structured to enable the children to make choices around their engagement with highly effective resources which support their learning.
- The commendable provision for sensory play supports the children's development in areas such as language skills, mathematical thinking, physical skills and social interaction. In each room the children can freely access sand, water and paint.
- Outdoor play is scheduled daily. The school yard and an enclosed area with astro turf surfacing outside the pre-school provide suitable space for the children to exercise their physical skills.
- The practitioners use strategies very effectively to promote the children's literacy and language skills. They use props to extend and enhance storytelling.
- The practitioners adopt an inclusive ethos. They pay specific attention to supporting communication with children using key phrases from first languages, visual aids and LÁMH, an Irish manual sign system.

Action advised

- Practitioners are advised to work as a team to develop a consistent approach to capturing a rich picture of children's learning experiences through learning stories. Practitioners can use the information they regularly gather to further inform planning to progress the children's learning.

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 appear very at ease in the setting. Overall, they demonstrate sustained involvement and focused engagement in their playful learning experiences.
- The children confidently play in pairs and small groups. Through their personal choice the children direct their learning. On the day of the inspection, a number of children initiated painting at the easels and a group of children played collaboratively making complex structures using a set of gears.
- The children competently communicate their interests, opinions, feelings and personal experiences. Their voices are captured by practitioners in the art work displayed. This positively reinforces for them that they are heard and valued.
- At the time of the inspection, the art and craft activity undertaken did not fully support the children's independent engagement and unique creative expression.
- Access to rich reading materials and regular opportunities to listen to stories enable the children to broaden their knowledge of the world and understand that print has meaning. Photographs of past experiences are available to the children in displays and a book format. This supports the children to reflect and to engage in discussions.

- The children enjoy singing and are familiar with a range of songs and rhymes. The use of actions with song enhances their language skills and hand-eye coordination, and stimulates memory.

Action advised
- Practitioners are advised to organise art and craft experiences that further support the children to explore and experiment with accessible materials to support individual expression.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- The practitioners demonstrate a professional approach to providing quality learning experiences for the children. Practitioners meet separately according to their room teams to informally share and discuss their reflections on a daily basis. At the time of the inspection, opportunities for practitioners to meet as a whole team were limited.
- The practitioners engage in review practices which centre on updating policies and procedures at the end of the pre-school year. There is scope to further develop review practices.
- Previously, practitioners engaged in training through their local county childcare committee.
- Effective two-way channels of communication between the setting and the families are established. These include daily informal conversations, an informative visual display of the children's past experiences and a parent handbook. Information documented on children's learning and achievements is shared with parents.
- The practitioners purposefully share information about the children to promote continuity of experiences as they move from room 1 to room 2.
- A positive working relationship is established with the adjoining primary school. Practitioners complete a summary of children's experiences and achievements which is shared with parents as they move from pre-school to primary school. The *Mo Scéal* materials from the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment inform this practice.

Action advised
- The practitioners are advised to engage in regular whole-team meetings to structure self-review practices leading to informed quality improvement initiatives. Working with the online *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* is advised for this purpose.

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	**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.

Published July 2020

APPENDIX

SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT
SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report.

The Board would like to express its appreciation to the staff of Early Days Preschool for their diligence and commitment to the children in their care. The board is delighted that the high standards of care, support and education offered have been acknowledged. We accept the contents of the Early Years Inspection, its findings and recommendations.

***Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection* activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.**

In response to the recommendations a consultation process between all practitioners has been undertaken with particular reference being made to the Aistear and Síolta Practice Guide. Using the Action Planning Template – Creating and Using the Learning Environment (Birth- 6 years) , the team have recorded and agreed on strategies on each of the actions advised including:

- Strategies to enable ease of transition between activities using music, finger plays, action rhymes/songs, games-children pick up an object(coloured lollipop stick, button feathers), "everyone with a yellow feather join the line".
- A community map (displaying local landmarks/community amenities of interest to the children) and a Family wall (family members, children's descriptions of the important people in their lives) have been developed to give the children a sense of place, identity and belonging. The diversity in cultural backgrounds, languages, family structures that exist in the setting are also being represented in this way. A questionnaire is currently being distributed, seeking information on the different national days/ cultural celebrations relevant to families/children running in tandem with St Patricks Day celebrations. A world map will also depict the children's family and cultural links across the world.
- Both rooms are now using the same learning stories format (group and individual child) and displaying these as appropriate to relate to the children's learning (wall displays, individual learning journals, "All About Us "storybooks, photos at child level)Short and medium term curriculum planning are being streamlined using the same templates to inform planning and assessment to scaffold children's learning.
- The Arts areas have been further developed to enhance children's creativity and individual artistic expression. Materials freely available include chunky crayons, paints including those that match the children's skin tones, various kinds of paper, large brushes, sponges, markers glue, blackboard and chalk, playdough safety scissors, clay natural materials(twigs, leaves, stones, seashells) ink pads and stamps.
- There is a strong staff commitment to an ongoing process of self-review and continuous professional development by attending training and relating knowledge back to the team. Practitioners have engaged in the following training

- Diversity ,Equality, and Inclusion
- Representation in Waterford's Inclusion Network
- Lámh Programme
- Hanen Teacher Talk

and engaging with online resources particularly the Aistear Síolta Practice Guides. Team meetings will be a focal point for sharing information in these and other areas to inform quality improvement and help implement best practice