An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	Firies Community Childcare Centre
Setting Address	Church Road Firies Killarney County Kerry
DCYA number	09KY0043

Date of Inspection: 24-06-2019

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	24-06-2019
Inspection activities undertaken • Meeting with setting manager • Meeting with practitioners	 • Observation of interactions during a number of sessions • Interaction with children • Review of relevant documents • Feedback to setting manager and practitioners

CONTEXT OF SETTING

The Firies Community Childcare Centre is an urban, community-based early years setting, with a staff team of five practitioners. Early years care and education is provided for sixteen children during the morning session, and for a maximum of twenty-two younger children in the afternoon. Two practitioners are employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM). 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 good.
- The ethos within the setting is caring and warm. The atmosphere is relaxed and inviting. Practitioners are friendly and sensitive and show a positive regard for the children and their families.
- The daily routine consists of too many transition times and child-initiated/led free-play times are interrupted by adult-directed activities.
- Snack time is well utilised as a social occasion, with children and adults, sitting, eating and communicating together. This aids language acquisition and development and the establishment of good, healthy habits for life.
- Relationships are warm, responsive and respectful. Practitioners model and provide some guidance and encouragement towards positive behaviour. They tend to solve the children's problems and conflicts.
- Visually, there are very few opportunities provided for the children to develop an appreciation of themselves as individuals and as members of groups. There are some photos of children in the hall way and some group art work is displayed in the room.
- Diversity is recognised, valued, affirmed and very visible within an inclusive learning environment. There are posters of the word 'welcome' in several languages, a globe surrounded by cultural displays, art work displays based on cultural themes.

Actions advised

- Practitioners are advised to change the daily routine, to create long, uninterrupted free-play periods both in the indoor and outdoor environments. Child-initiated/led, active and interactive free play needs to be recognised and utilised as the main medium through which the children learn and develop. Practitioner-initiated/led activities, such as arts and crafts and experiments can be offered simultaneously as optional activities.
- Practitioners are advised to explore and utilise positive behaviour strategies, which will enable the children to become more efficient and independent in self-regulation and conflict-resolution. The 'Interactions' pillar of the on-line *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* provides very valuable support in this area.
- Practitioners are advised to provide more visual representation of the children, their families and their unique, individual expression through photo and art work displays. This could include a family wall, a birthday calendar, photos above coat hooks, an art display area or a group learning journal.

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.
- The yearly curriculum, with a folder for every month is developed by the manager at the end of every year for the year ahead. There is no evidence of an emergent curriculum.
- An art and photo collection folder which includes a CD, is compiled for each child and sent home at the end of the year. Development checklists are used. In addition, an extra sheet is maintained, which focusses on aims/skills, and sets out planned activities to support deficits and the dates when actions were taken. These are not strength-based. A summary sheet in narrative form at the end of the checklist is attached, summarising all the skills observed and those which need to be further developed.
- The indoor environments are highly aesthetically pleasing, richly resourced and well-structured to provide a broad range of play options.
- The children's emergent language, literacy and numeracy skills are fostered well through the use of songs and rhymes throughout the day, through free art work, including free-drawing and painting and through the interactive exploration of stories, which the children are interested in. During the inspection, one child presented a picture book he knew well to the rest of the group; the group became eagerly involved, using memory, prediction, imagination and language.
- There is a lot of evidence of the use of template-based art, colouring-in and product-oriented art, as well as rote learning of letters, numbers, shapes and colours. These activities are not age and developmentally appropriate.
- There is some evidence that the children have opportunities to engage with activities that build early positive dispositions towards science, the arts and mathematics. On the day of the inspection, the practitioner brought in a variety of seaweed, which she explained and the children eagerly explored.

Actions advised

- Information documented about the children needs to be strength-based, and needs to reflect children's learning and achievements in a range of connected learning experiences, with due regard for their individual interests and learning dispositions. Outcomes of observations need to be used to plan an emergent curriculum. To this end, the practitioners are advised to work with the 'Planning and Assessing' pillar of the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide.*
- Considering best practice research and knowledge, and keeping children's learning and development as the goal, the practitioners are advised to evaluate and reflect on the rational and desired learning outcomes of each activity, the environments, the toys, materials and resources. Practitioners need to ensure that all approaches, activities and materials effectively support the children's learning and development.
- Practitioners are advised to refrain from the use of formal teaching methods and outcome-oriented art work and to focus instead on following children's interests, using teachable moments and co-constructing knowledge.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is good.
- The children demonstrate enjoyment in their learning, particularly during the free-play periods. They are motivated, interested and engaged and very well able to play cooperatively in pairs and small groups.
- Children's increasing confidence and co-ordination over gross and fine motor skills is particularly evident during outdoor play.
- The children are skilled communicators; they use both verbal and non-verbal communication strategies. Language is used effectively to give and receive information, ask questions, negotiate, create and re-create roles and clarify thinking and feeling.
- The interactive play options, provide the children with meaningful opportunities, to develop and refine their personal and social skills.

- The children express their feelings, thoughts, ideas and creativity through a range of activities. These include story-telling and exploration of stories, role play, modelling with play dough, and manipulating the 'dino-world' and the seaweed. The children would benefit from being able to access further resources and materials which enable them to express their creativity spontaneously.
- A second small room is available; however, currently the children can only access this room on request. Some of the boxes of materials are too heavy for the children, and accordingly, they can't access them by themselves.
- A door is being made directly from the main playroom to the outside area. This will enable the children to choose between indoor and outdoor play autonomously throughout the year. Most outdoor materials and resources are stored away on a daily basis and the practitioners bring them out for the children.

Action advised

- The practitioners are advised to ensure that the children have autonomous access to resources and materials, which inspire them to express their unique, individual creativity spontaneously. In addition, the practitioners need to ensure that the children can access all environments and materials independently, throughout the day. In particular, the outdoor environment needs to be prepared as a space where the children can engage, explore and experiment, using their developing physical skills to manipulate objects and diverse materials. More natural, sense-rich, manipulative materials need to be provided on a daily basis.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- Regular team meetings are held. The outcomes of meetings are documented, so they can be shared, acted-upon and reviewed. A daily diary is also kept.
- It is clear, that high standards for the work of the setting are strived for. There is limited awareness of relevant, contemporary research, and no evidence, that the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* is used to inform practice.
- Clear two-way channels of communication are fostered between the early-years setting and the families. These include a parent manual, parent-practitioner meetings once a year, daily informal chats, and a monthly information letter. Parents are actively encouraged to provide feedback about the work of the setting. Parents are the main members of the management committee.
- Transitions into and from the setting are managed sensitively and effectively. Families visit the setting during the afternoon sessions in the summer. Settling-in procedures are gradual and family friendly. Very good working relationships are established with the local primary school. The infant class teacher usually visits the children in the setting. Relevant information is shared in a spirit of openness and trust between the setting and the school.

Actions advised

- The setting is advised to avail of external advisory supports, such as 'Better Start', in particular to support them in the development of an emergent curriculum.
- Practitioners are advised to work in an in-depth manner with all areas of the on-line *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide,* starting with the 'Curriculum Foundations' pillar. This will help them to develop a clear and shared vision for the work of the setting, based on contemporary best practice guidelines and research.
- Effective strategies need to be established to enable and support the continuous professional development of all staff in the setting. In particular, the practitioners are advised to engage in courses about the development and implementation of a play-based, emergent curriculum. The knowledge and varied skill sets of all staff need to be utilised and shared effectively to improve practice.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

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	**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	**Good**

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**

The Staff and Board of Management welcomed the feedback and constructive advice of the inspection Report.

Area 1:

We have changed the daily routine with longer indoor and outdoor uninterrupted playtime. Arts and Crafts and Experiments are now offered as optional activities.

We have created more noticeboard space to display photographic evidence to demonstrate the children's learning and interest's. A Birthday Calendar has been created and individual photos were placed on the coat hooks. Individual learning journals have been put in place.

The 'Interaction' Pillar of the Aistear and Siolta Practice Guide is now being used to provide all practitioners with information on positive behaviour strategies to enable to become more efficient and independent in self-regulation and conflict resolution.

Area 2

We have begun to work with templates and examples from the 'Planning and Assessment' Pillar of the Aistear and Siolta Practice Guide to document more on individual interest and learning dispositions.

Observations on the children's interests are used to plan the emergent curriculum.

Artwork is now not outcome oriented but more focused on the children's likes and interests.

Area 3

An Art table has been put in place with free autonomous access to different materials.

In our outdoor Area, we have added a gardening box with soil, a water feature, a Black Board, a Mud Kitchen with shells, cones, chestnuts to give the children more natural sense-rich materials to explore with. Trees and shrubs were planted in containers to create are more natural environment. A fairy garden was added also.

Area 4

We are in the process of attending an Aistear and Siolta workshop. Following a phone conversation with the Better start team in which we looked for advice and guidance on some points, we are awaiting a visit from the Better Start Team.