An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	Fun Times
Setting Address	Scrouthea Goulyduff Athy County Kildare
DCYA number	10KE0241

Date of Inspection: 29-01-2019

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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	29-01-2019
Inspection activities undertaken • Meeting with setting owner/manager • Meeting with practitioner • Observation of interactions during a morning session	 • Interaction with children • Review of relevant documents • Feedback to setting manager and practitioner

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Fun Times is a private setting which has been in operation for nine years. It provides one morning session for children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. There were nine children and two practitioners present on the day of the inspection. 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 fair.
- The atmosphere at the setting is nurturing and kind. The practitioners use gentle tones and greet families warmly upon arrival.
- A friendly and lively atmosphere is evident. At times during the inspection the noise level in the room was quite loud which impacted on the children who wanted to engage in calmer, quieter activities.
- A documented routine is evident and some positive routines are in place such as the child helper routine. The routines are primarily child-led and a significant minority of children were slow to engage with the routines during the inspection.
- The children choose and organise their own learning and development activities throughout the morning. The lead role of the adults in supporting learning and development is not always evident and a minority of children are slow to respond to adult requests.
- The practitioners use varied transition strategies to support the children to move from one activity to another such as holding hands, using verbal and visual prompts and the use of a hand puppet. Many of the children were observed taking time to settle when moving from noisy to calm activities.
- Snack time is used by the practitioners as an opportunity for open-ended, friendly and relaxed conversations. The practitioners promote healthy eating and open-ended conversations.
- The children take responsibility for hanging up their own coats and putting away their own schoolbags.
- The children's sense of identity and belonging is nurtured through the presence of group photos and individual photos of the children. The children's names and photos are displayed over their coat racks. A pre-school tree is displayed providing further visual representation for the children of their connections as a group. The children have created their own lunchtime placemats and have a photo album of themselves engaging in events at the setting. Photos of families are on display.
- Parents attend a Christmas, Easter and a summer graduation event together with a yearly school tour. Plans to invite parents in to share their talents and skills have not yet commenced.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to implement strategies to ensure there is a balance between quiet and loud times during the day. It would be beneficial also to use wind-down strategies more regularly and effectively to support the children to settle their minds and bodies as they move from noisy activities to quieter activities.

- It is advised that the daily routines be evaluated to ensure that all children engage with them. A circle time routine needs to be introduced to discuss with children what happens next and what is expected of them. This will further support times of transition and enhance a sense of group identity. The child helper routine can also be extended to further support children in assuming responsibilities.
- The practitioners need to assume a stronger role in leading and stimulating learning to ensure that there is a better balance between adult-led and child-led activities.
- The setting is encouraged to provide parents with opportunities to visit the setting to share their talents and skills with the children, as well as information about their occupations and roles in the community.

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.
- A broad-based curriculum is in place that is emergent, enquiry-led and informed by the principles of *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. The curriculum is evaluated and evaluations are recorded.
- Long-term, medium-term and short-term planning is set out. The children are involved in the planning of the curriculum. Currently their contributions are not recorded for them and short-term planning is not displayed for parents.
- Varied assessment practices are used to gather and record information on the children's learning experiences and achievements, including learning records and photos. Each child has an individual folder which they bring home regularly and which contains records of their activities, their mark making and some art work. A group learning journal is in place. All assessment records are shared with parents regularly and parents comment on them.
- The spacious indoor environment comprises two areas and provides for a range of play and learning experiences such as construction, imaginative, mathematical, digital and musical play. There are good opportunities for creative expression and the development of fine motor skills. There is a library area with soft seating: it is well resourced, fully accessible, the books are rotated and reflect the themes of *Aistear.* The consistent use of labelling within the learning environment is not evident.
- The large outdoor environment includes resources which encourage physical activity, such as a playhouse, a slide, swings, ride ons, a petrol pump, sand play and opportunities for climbing.
- The practitioners use a wide range of prompts in a skilful and consistent manner to support the development of children's emergent language and literacy skills. They scaffold and support the children's use of mathematical language and phrases and words in the Irish language. At times however some children talk over each other creating a difficulty in hearing the practitioners. There is scope thus for children's listening skills to be further developed.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the involvement of children in the planning of activities be documented to support the further progression of their learning and to give additional vision to children at the setting. It would be beneficial also to display the short-term planning for parents.
- Increased labelling of the learning environment would further support the informal development of early literacy and language skills.
- The practitioners are advised to use specific strategies to develop children's listening skills to ensure a better balance between speaking and listening as the children and the practitioners interact with each other. Suggestions include the use of 'our listening ears', and exercises to support the children to be aware of and understand the power of their voice.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is fair.
- During the inspection, the children enjoyed playing nurses, doctors and builders and they were well engaged in a group activity where they made paper daffodils using a real daffodil as a guide.
- Many children engage well together in pairs, small groups and as a large group. There were instances throughout the morning of the inspection, where a minority of children were observed having difficulty playing co-operatively.
- Most children understand the rules of the setting. A significant minority of children however do not show respect for the resources available and for their environment. On the day of the inspection, at tidy-up time a significant minority of children were not responsive to the practitioners' requests to tidy up after themselves.
- Many children demonstrate positive emotional regulation skills. Currently specific strategies and visual connections are not used consistently to assist the children to name their feelings and understand their emotions.
- The children are able, competent communicators and are provided with many opportunities to share aspects of their learning achievements and communicate their experiences with others. They were eager to share their thoughts and views throughout the morning.
- The children demonstrate good fine motor skills. This is evident in their use of varied table top activities.
- The children are developing an understanding of their own identity as members of their family. There is scope to enrich their feeling of inclusion by ensuring there are displays within the environment of cultural and family diversity.
- Firm connections have yet to be made with the local community, to support children's sense of identity and belonging to it.

Actions advised

- To further support children's appreciation of their resources and environment, the practitioners are advised to provide clear guidance to the children in relation to, for example, tidying up after themselves and taking responsibility. The child helper system can be used to support these skills and circle time can be used to share good examples observed. The practitioners are advised also to carefully consider where they position themselves in the room, so that they can observe and monitor the children's behaviour. There is a need to invest time in discussing emotions, using visual cues to assist children to name their feelings and understand the feelings of others.
- To depict the diversity of children and families the practitioners are advised to provide more visual representations and displays relevant to the different cultures of the children attending the setting.
- The practitioners are advised to discuss and display photographs of local landmarks and community roles to provide a visual connection for the children of their community and the people in it.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- The practitioners are dedicated to their practice, to the children's learning and to bringing about improvements at the setting. A sense of team is evident.
- The informal staff meetings held to discuss practice are not generally documented.
- Changes and evaluations of practice are documented and the self-evaluation tools in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* have been used in the past to support this.
- The setting is a member of organisations that support the children's learning and development. The owner engages with her local County Childcare Committee.
- The practitioners engage in continuous professional development, most recently in training on diversity.
- The setting has a mission statement and an open-door policy.
- Transition year and early years' students are welcomed at the setting.

- The practitioners communicate with parents informally on a daily basis, through a parent information booklet, a parent noticeboard and by sharing observations of children regularly.
- To support the children to transition into the setting the practitioners gather information from parents at the beginning of the year and use it to support children's learning experiences. To support the children's transition to primary school, the setting implements transitioning strategies and it has links with the local primary school.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the practitioners engage with the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* to prioritise areas in need of improvement at the setting.
- It is advised that formal staff meetings are held regularly and are documented to support quality practice. The practitioners are advised to develop a transitions policy to document the transition practices and procedures at the setting.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the setting to implement the actions advised above is good.

Summary of Overall Inspection

Area	Quality Level
Quality of context to support children's learning and development	**Fair**
Quality of processes to support children's learning and development	**Good**
Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements	**Fair**
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

I would like to thank the inspector for her visit to the preschool and for the comprehensive report. I have studied the report at length and together with my staff member Siobhan, we are going to implement all areas of the report in which there are inefficiencies. We have introduced a “Turn Teddy” at welcome time to help the children understand the importance of listening and not speaking over each other. This is working well. We are also using a musical wind up toy which, when turned on, means a quiet environment. We use this as a transitional strategy before lunch. We have also placed the visual daily routine more in the children’s view and discuss them when its playtime, lunch time etc.

We are working more on the adult positioning in the room. We discuss with each child on an individual basis how they feel about certain things to further understand their individual interests and incorporate these into the programme.

We have had a visit from a local garda and will continue to have others visit the school. We have used the Emotions back which was sent by AIM to help in naming emotions and how we treat each other. We have 7 children heading to primary school this year and we have downloaded Mo Scealta and we are filing this in to give to the primary school. We have also started to read some books about School in story time. We are labelling all the areas with photos and have also cleared out some of the redundant toys.

I have been given a name of a preschool to visit in my vicinity by Tusla, which provides an excellent service, and I look forward to seeing their setup, which will further help me in providing better service myself.

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