An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	Happy Kids at Mary's Playschool
Setting Address	Kilnantogue Rathangan County Offaly
DCYA number	18OY0120

Date of Inspection: 02-04-2019

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	02-04-2019
Inspection activities undertaken • Meeting with setting owner and ECCE practitioner • Observation of interactions during the morning ECCE session	• Interaction with children • Review of relevant documents • Post-inspection feedback meeting with setting owner and ECCE practitioner

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Happy Kids at Mary's Playschool has been in operation in Rathangan, Co. Offaly for fifteen years. The setting is under new ownership since January 2018. It has one main pre-school room where the owner/manager provides care and education for local children availing of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, the owner/manager and ECCE practitioner were present with eighteen children. 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.
- The practitioners greet parents and children at the door in the morning time. The parents are welcomed into the setting to speak with practitioners and settle in their children.
- There is an effective key-worker system in place which supports the creation of respectful and caring relationships between all children and practitioners.
- The children are active agents in their daily routine. The use of a helper chart supports them to have responsibility and ownership of their learning experiences. Transitions between activities are initiated using verbal prompts which some children respond to. Clean-up time is supported by singing a song. However, not all children engage in this period of the day as they continue to complete the tasks they are engaged in.
- Children are viewed as active agents in their learning and have choice in activities throughout the morning routine. This promotes their independence and provides opportunity for deep engagement in play.
- Snack time is seen as a social occasion and practitioners use this time to discuss healthy eating. The children are encouraged to wash their hands and organise their utensils and food. The practitioners pour drinks, serve fruit and clean up for the children; there is potential to include children in these activities and to extend their independence.
- The practitioners support and resolve conflict for children; they explain the nature of the conflict and the feelings of the children who are involved in the conflict. The children are encouraged to express their feelings throughout the morning. At times, during the inspection, they experienced challenges in dealing with their emotions.
- The children's individual identity and belonging is nurtured and celebrated in a variety of ways. Photographs of the children and their families are displayed throughout the environment, and community members visit the children throughout the year. The children also go for walks in the local area during which they explore farming life.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the practitioners ensure that there is sufficient time for children to complete their free-play activities before clean-up time. The use of props and the extension of the helper role will enhance this period by helping to ensure that the procedures are clear for the children.
- It is advised that the practitioners continue to optimise snack time as a time for building children's independence and self-help skills. This will ensure snack time is a learning opportunity for all children.

- The practitioners are advised to continue to support children to explore and understand their feelings and emotions. Children need to be guided to resolve their own conflicts and express their feeling in a positive and confident manner.

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 curriculum is informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and a play-based curriculum is evident in the daily activities and experiences. The children engage in various types of play during the hour long indoor free-play period, demonstrating a keen interest in construction play and role play.
- Long-term, medium-term and short-term planning is in place. There is a group floor book and individual journals which document the various activities and experiences children engage in. The practitioners plan for outdoor activities. They review and document the overall planning on a daily basis incorporating a focus on themes and children's emergent interests. Linking the names of the children with the relevant emergent interests would help to embed this good practice further.
- The practitioners complete anecdotal observations on a continuous basis. They also include targeted observations as necessary. The inclusion of the *Aistear Learner Record* would help to extend this good practice further.
- The indoor environment supports the play-based curriculum. There are defined play areas, a good range of resources is available to support imaginative play and role play, and a large range of construction play materials is available. On the day of the inspection the children enjoyed playing shop with recycled materials and cash-registers. It would be beneficial to extend the literacy and numeracy resources in the setting.
- The practitioners and children engage in meaningful play experiences as practitioners scaffold the children's learning using open-ended questions and purposeful commenting.
- One practitioner is currently completing Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) in the Early Years and this is having a very positive impact on inclusive practice in the setting. Children with additional needs are availing of supports and individual learning goals and plans are purposefully designed to support their needs.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the practitioners review the short-term planning to ensure that there is consistency in planning for the children's emergent interests. Short-term plans should clearly name the child associated with the interest and the focused plan to support the interest.
- Practitioners are advised to use the *Aistear* Learner Record in their observation assessments and to include them in each child's individual journal.
- The practitioners are encouraged to include additional resources to support language, literacy and numeracy in the environment. Items could include real-life kitchen materials, construction resources and recycled materials. The 'Learning Environment' pillar of the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* will support this development.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is very good.
- All the children demonstrate skills and dispositions of exploration and engagement in their play.
- The setting is involved in the *Heathy Ireland* Natural Outdoor Play Project in conjunction with the county childcare committee. They have created an outdoor environment which supports gross motor development, risk-taking and imaginative play. There is a strong focus on caring for nature and sensory play which is blended into the learning experiences in both the indoor and outdoor learning environments.
- The children have open access to mark-making materials which they enjoy exploring during the morning routine. There are mark-making facilities outdoors and on the day of the inspection the practitioners and children drew a road to drive their tractors and bicycles on. A range of template-

based activities is used to support learning. These types of activities are limited in scope and need to be eliminated. The high-quality, hands-on learning opportunities which are currently offered to the children on a daily basis are of greater benefit to the children.
- The children enjoy reading books; on the day of the inspection one child enjoyed recalling a story to his friends. The child demonstrated confidence as he turned the pages showing the pictures to his friends and telling the story which he had memorised.
- Songs and rhymes are included within the daily routine and children enjoy singing songs and dancing to music. The use of songs supports children to identify key times of the daily routine.
- The children have access to their group learning journal and reflect on the activities recorded within this book. There is potential to extend the use of the individual journals.

Actions advised
- The practitioners need to reduce the use of templates as a basis for activities. Practitioners are advised to replace template-based activities with hands-on learning opportunities.
- The practitioners are advised to extend the use of the children's individual learning journals. These could be used to record the children's self-reflections, and parents could be encouraged to record their comments about their child's learning in the journals.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- The practitioners demonstrate a sense of professionalism, and there is a good sense of teamwork in the setting. The owner delegates tasks and responsibilities to the ECCE practitioner. They work well together as a team; they have regular staff meetings and complete a professional reflective diary.
- Since taking over the business the current owner has made many changes to the setting including environmental developments and moving to a play-based curriculum. The practitioners continue to extend the outdoor area and implement new planning to support an emergent curriculum. The *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* is not used systematically to support this developmental work and self-reflection.
- There is a very good range of communication channels established with parents including through social media, a parent handbook, and daily informal meetings. Parents attend events in the setting during the year. To further extend communication, the practitioners could gather end-of-year feedback from all stakeholders in the setting.
- The children's transition to primary school is supported by a visit from the local school principal. The practitioners share information with the principal regarding the children and their development. The setting has explored the 'Mo Scéal' resource and intends to use it this year to support the transition to school. The setting has a transition box; this resource is being further developed.
- The practitioners have an open-day for new children attending the pre-school and at this event they share the group journal, policies and procedures and a transition to pre-school booklet with parents and children. The transition booklet could be adapted to support the transition to primary school also.

Actions advised
- It is advised that the practitioners take steps to support self-reflection, and to record, more formally, the changes and developments in the setting. The *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* will provide valuable guidance in this regard.
- It is advised that the setting develop a practice of gathering feedback from all stakeholders to continue to promote quality development in the setting.
- Practitioners are advised to include information and guidance on the transition to primary school in its current transition booklet.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the setting to continue to implement the actions advised above is very good. The owner and practitioner communicate well with each other and work together in the interests of the children.

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.

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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**

Following on from our Early Years Education Inspection the following actions have been put in place

- A 5 minute warning using a visual timer is given for clean-up time to ensure that there is sufficient time for children to complete their free-play activities, we also use a clean-up song to encourage everyone to participate.
- Star Helpers are assigned every day to assist at clean up and snack time.
- We have extended the learning experiences at snack time by letting the children help themselves to bread, ham, cheese and fruit. They also have the opportunity to pour their own milk or water.
- We have group discussions about feelings and use props such as happy and sad faces to help children to explore and understand their emotions. We encourage turn taking using visual timers.
- Our short-term plans are updated with emerging interests and the child's name is clearly noted with the interest and plans to extend their learning.
- Aistear Learning Records are used within the children's Learning Journals.
- The kitchen area has recycled real-life items for children to explore and going forward we are sourcing additional items such as real pots, pans, utensils and old telephones.
- Visual aids, board games and card games have been introduced to support language, literacy and numeracy in the environment.
- Templates are now only used when requested by the children.
- Large scrapbooks are now used for the children's learning journals and we can record a richer insight into children's playschool experience.
- We continue to use our daily reflection book to support self-reflection.
- We are considering using Mo Scéal as a transition tool for going to Primary School and will collaborate with parents and local schools for this.

A lot of hard work has gone into our playschool over the past 18 months and we are really proud to have received the result of 4 Very Goods in this inspection. Over the coming months we will endeavour to further increase the standards and quality of service that we provide for the children attending our setting.