An Roinn Oideachais

Department of Education

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	Little Explorers
Setting Address	Two Mile Community National School Aughaleemore Killarney V93WD82 County Kerry
DCEDIY number	17KY0211
TUSLA REG NO.	TU2017KY501

Date of Inspection: 20-09-2021

This inspection took place in the context of public health restrictions necessary to limit the spread of Covid-19

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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	20-09-2021
Inspection activities undertaken • Meeting with setting owner/manager • Meeting with practitioners	 • Observation of interactions during one morning session • Interaction with children • Review of relevant documents • Feedback to setting manager and practitioners

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Little Explorers Pre-school was established in 2017. The setting provides a sessional pre-school service to the local community, located within Two Mile Community National School, outside Killarney. On the day of this inspection, eighteen children enrolled in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme were supported by the owner/manager and four early-years practitioners. The setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised in this 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 very good.
- There is a very warm and relaxed atmosphere in the setting. Relationships between the practitioners are children are effectively supported through the key-practitioner approach.
- The well-established daily routine features many short spurts of active play, greeting time, circle time, outdoor play, snack time and adult-initiated activities. Children would benefit from an extended period of active play.
- Practitioners have very good relationships with the parents and children; they know the children well and are very aware of individual needs and personalities.
- The children are viewed very much as active agents in choosing and organising their learning and development activities.
- Snack time is a relaxed social occasion. Practitioners promote children's well-being by eating with the children and engaging in natural and free-flowing conversations.
- Recognition for the uniqueness of the child within the learning environment is nurtured. There are displays of children's artwork and an interactive 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.

Action advised

- The practitioners are advised to review the daily routine to ensure that the children have a longer uninterrupted period of time each day for active play, during which time they freely choose and organise their learning and development activities. The practitioners also need to ensure that there is a balanced approach to adult-led and child-initiated activities.

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 practitioners implement a play-based curriculum which is aligned to *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework.*
- Planning for the curriculum is based on themes and emergent interests; there are monthly and weekly plans. The children's emerging interests are often responded to in play and supported through the introduction of resources.

- The practitioners use the *Aistear* learner record to document the children's skills and developmental needs. Currently these observations are not used to inform future planning and provision for learning. To generate a broader more holistic view of the children as learners, additional observations of children would be beneficial.
- The practitioners have used the space available to effectively provide distinct interest areas which support a variety of play and learning experiences.
- Play is valued and encouraged by the practitioners. The indoor environment is spacious and offers a variety of play resources, all of which are accessible to the children. On the day of the inspection, the practitioners supported the children's play and engaged them in playful conversations.
- The outdoor learning environment is large, easily accessible and used on a daily basis. It includes a well-developed nature-rich garden, a large sand pit, a cubby house and small word play. It provides children with opportunities for physical play, group play and socio-dramatic play, and a very comprehensive and wide range of nature-based play and learning opportunities.
- The practitioners skilfully promote language to broaden children's early language and literacy development and their understanding and use of vocabulary. Throughout the inspection, they effectively used *Lámh* a manual sign system which supports communication**,** rhymes and songs, to encourage the children to practise and develop their early language competencies.

Action advised

- Practitioners are advised to expand the methods used to observe and record the children's learning, emerging interests, strengths, and achievements. The information which is currently documented in the *Aistear* learner record could be used more purposefully. Use of the Planning and Assessing pillar in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide*, would support practitioners in 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.
- The children demonstrate enjoyment and pleasure in their interactions and activities with peers and practitioners.
- The children demonstrate an awareness of the value of their own creativity. It is evident that the majority of the children are confident in free mark-making using the paint, large easel, pencils and loose materials available to them.
- Most of the children are very interested in early numeracy and mathematical concepts and they take great delight in displaying their abilities to engage in the activities introduced by practitioners.
- Children present as confident and capable learners and enjoy participating in activities. They are very secure in the indoor and outdoor learning environments.
- Children demonstrate a heightened interest in exploration, experimentation and enquiry as they work with the open-ended sensory materials available to them in the home area during active play.
- The children are confident communicators. Creating opportunities for all children to engage in group reflection would be a welcome introduction to the daily routine.
- The children display very secure relationships with the practitioners and their peers. Many of the children display an emerging understanding of the rights and views of others; this was noted when the older children offered assistance to the younger children when transitioning from indoor to outdoor play.

Action advised

- To support the children to develop a stronger sense of themselves as competent learners, it is advised that practitioners plan opportunities for them to reflect on and share their learning with their peers. This self-assessment could be incorporated into the children's learning portfolios.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is excellent.
- The commitment and professional ethos of the setting has been established through collaborative team work. The setting's practitioners are wonderful role models for one another, benefiting from a culture of positive relationships. There is clarity around their roles and responsibilities.
- The setting has accessed support from external agencies such as their local county childcare committee and Better Start Quality Development Service. Practitioners are committed to improving the quality of provision for children's learning and development.
- There is a suitable range of communication channels established with parents. Parents are involved in various activities within the setting which promote identity and belonging. Practitioners also share information with parents through social media, weekly curriculum recaps, notices and daily photographs.
- Whole-team meetings are held frequently. During these meetings, the implementation of the curriculum is discussed and plans for quality improvement are developed.
- The setting has introduced many strategies to support children in their transition from the setting to primary school. These include the use of social stories, visits from the junior infant teacher and completion of *Mo Scéal* templates

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	**Excellent**

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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