**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

# EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

# REPORT

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| **Setting Name** | Na Leanbh |
| **Setting Address** | 39 The Hermitage<br>Macroom<br>County Cork |
| **DCYA number** | 09CC0015 |

## Date of Inspection: 22-05-2019

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

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| **Date of inspection** | 22/05/2019 |
| **Inspection activities undertaken**<br><br>• Meeting with setting manager<br>• Meeting with practitioner | <br><br>• Observation of interactions during one session<br>• Review of relevant documents<br>• Feedback to setting manager and practitioner |

## CONTEXT OF SETTING

Na Leanbh has been in operation in Macroom since 2002. There is one main pre-school room where the owner/manager and practitioner provide care and education for local children availing of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. The setting operates one morning session. On the day of the inspection, the manager and practitioner were present with ten 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 excellent.
- An extremely homely and warm atmosphere is evident, and families are relaxed and comfortable in the learning environment. The children are greeted at the door by the practitioner and the soft music playing in the background sets the relaxed tone for the day ahead.
- Routines are well established and children are secure and content in the setting. The pictorial daily routine is flexible and visually represented in both rooms, and the practitioners use the visual routine to support the children throughout the session.
- Snack time is seen as a rich learning opportunity. Children help to prepare the environment and they engage in social discussion with their peers and practitioners. Some discussion topics include, the importance of a compost bin and the difference between half and quarter of a sandwich.
- The practitioners offer commendable support for the children's developing sense of identity and belonging. Respect for the uniqueness of each child is supported through responsive interactions which recognise the children's individual interests and needs.
- Children are learning in a highly inclusive environment. On the day of the inspection, children joined in celebrating one of their peer's birthdays, they sang and signed 'Happy Birthday'. This type of activity helps the children to gain an awareness of the many modes of communication.
- The setting supports children's awareness of the local community and the wider world through visitors to the setting. These visitors include a fireman, a dentist, a *Garda*, and a parent of a child from another country. Images of local landmarks such as Macroom Castle, the local primary school, the local playground and the GAA grounds are hung at child height.

## 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 Montessori based curriculum has been documented; it is informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework.*
- Planning for the children's learning and development is organised on a long, medium and short-term basis. Practitioners record individual children's skills and they make conscious efforts to build on the children's skills and knowledge. To further develop this good practices, the practitioners could focus to a greater extent on supporting the children's emergent interests.

- Documentation of children's learning and development is varied and comprehensive. Practitioners conduct and use group learning stories, individual learning journals and anecdotal observations. The valuable information is used to support the planning for the future development of children's skills and dispositions.
- Children's individual folders feature some work sheets focused on mathematical concepts. More age-appropriate means of supporting children mathematical language could be explored.
- Play is the main medium used to support children's learning and development. There are appropriate activities provided for children to engage in play activities alone, in pairs and in small groups.
- The indoor environment is well laid out with defined interest areas and it offers a wide range of resources. The outdoor area is safe and secure and it provides plenty of opportunities for children to explore and to develop their gross motor skills.
- The practitioners skilfully model appropriate language in their everyday playful interactions with the children. They spontaneously weave an expanded use of vocabulary into the conversations in a commendable manner. This was observed for example when one child wrote in an old diary and retold a story to his peers, and the practitioner said 'you have written a story, so you are an author'.
- The children's early understanding of literacy is very effectively supported by the practitioners throughout the session. During the inspection, they engaged in animated story telling with a small group of children, supporting the children's exploration of sounds such as 'w' for 'wet water'.

*Actions advised*

- To further embed an emergent curriculum, it is advised that the practitioners respond more proactively to the children's current interests and incorporate these interests to a greater degree into the short-term planning.
- Practitioners are advised to eliminate the use of non-age appropriate worksheets and templates as a means of consolidating learning. In place of this approach, they are encouraged to support the children's acquisition and understanding of pre-school numeracy skills through the exploration of Montessori materials and through the use of open-ended materials.

## AREA 3

## QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is very good.
- Children demonstrate enjoyment and pleasure in their interactions and activities with their peers and the practitioners both indoors and outdoors.
- The children present as confident and capable communicators. The children use language to lead play, to describe their interests and to recall the morning's event at snack time.
- Children very effectively manage their own care needs. During the inspection, they took control over placing their snack in the fridge, they used the toilet and reminded their peers that they are able to 'put on your own wellies'.
- Children respect and enjoy the reading area. They appreciate books and storytelling time during the daily routine. The children and practitioners spontaneously recite rhymes and songs in play relating to the exploration, for example singing 'rock a bye baby' when playing in the home area with dolls.
- Children demonstrate co-operation and persistence as they wash the mud kitchen in the outdoor area.
- Children confidently recall previous learning and competently discuss it with practitioners. Children use this previous learning to make links with current explorations in play.
- Children explore the rich mark-making materials which are freely available. These include a large black board, colouring pencils and paper of varying sizes.
- Many of the children demonstrate a heightened interest in exploration, experimentation and enquiry as they work with the materials in the home area, creating a play scene of a family restaurant. They eagerly use open-ended materials in the outside play space. A limited range of real materials is available in the home area.

*Actions advised*

- Practitioners are advised to increase the children's access to real materials within the indoor environment, particularly in the home area.

## AREA 4

## QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is excellent.
- The manager articulates a vision for the setting which is shared clearly with the practitioner. Combined, the team have worked hard to share the ethos for learning with parents and families.
- The practitioners are actively engaged in continuous professional development and maintaining their current understanding of effective practice. They have recently completed the Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) Training, a Healthy Ireland Programme and training in Lámh.
- There is a suitable range of communication channels established between the setting and the parents. Some strategies include conversations at collection time, and bi-annual formal one-to-one meetings. A text application is used regularly to share the child's play experiences so that the child can reflect on these play experiences at home.
- The manager and practitioner meet formally on a monthly basis to engage with the self-evaluation tool in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide.* The setting has adopted a strategy which it explored at a training event. This enables the setting to complete action plans, and accordingly, it remains accountable for the changes derived from self-evaluation.
- Highly commendable efforts are made to support the children's transition to the local primary school. The setting arranges numerous visits to the local school for those that will transition the coming year: this promotes regular contact with the school. The setting and school share information in an organised manner through the use of 'postcards'.

## CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

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

## Summary of Overall Inspection

| Area | Quality Level |
|---|---|
| Quality of context to support children's learning and development | **Excellent** |
| 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-focused Inspection reports

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| **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 September 2019*

# APPENDIX

# SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

# SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

**Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The staff of Na Leanbh Montessori pre-school welcomes the findings of the Early Years Education Inspection dated 22.05.2019.

We found the inspection to be very supportive and child centered. It was encouraging to have the importance of our work in the early years sector acknowledged and validated. We are thankful to have had our strengths highlighted through positive comments and to be provided with advice on appropriate action in the minor areas that needed to be addressed.

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

- Using real materials in the home corner is an area that has been address with great success.
- Templates and worksheets are no longer used through the school curriculum, other means such as art time and open ended play are now used to help children understand the concepts of numeracy and literature.
- The staff are focusing on the short term planning, using the children interest and leads to determine future work and planning.