An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	Scribbles Montessori Preschool
Setting Address	Ballyveskil Tiermaclane Ennis County Clare
DCYA number	15CE0194

Date of Inspection: 26-09-2018

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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	26-09-2018
Inspection activities undertaken • Pre-inspection meeting with setting manager/practitioner • Interaction with children • Review of relevant documents	• Observation of interactions during the pre-school session • Post-inspection feedback meeting with setting manager/practitioner

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Scribbles Preschool is a private setting that has been in operation for over three years and is located in a rural area outside Ennis, County Clare. The setting is operated by a sole owner/manager and provides a sessional pre-school for children availing of the first and second year of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of inspection, ten children and the owner/manager were present. 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.
- A warm, welcoming home-from-home atmosphere is evident as children and families arrive to the setting. The practitioner greets all children individually while supporting children to hang their coats and bags on dedicated stands in the hall.
- Flexible routines are in place that support the facilitation of sustained periods of free-play. Throughout the session, children are consulted on their play choices and have full access to the areas and resources they wish to engage with. The daily schedule is shared with parents but is not yet represented for children. Sand-timers are consistently used to notify children of time when preparing to tidy-up for transitions in the routine.
- Responsive, respectful relationships are evident as the practitioner uses encouraging and supportive language and gestures. The practitioner nurtures a sense of belonging where all the children sit together in a circle and sing a welcome song. Children come together at meal times and the practitioner joins the children to discuss food and the events of the morning. There is scope to develop the meal-time ritual to support children to prepare for eating together as a group.
- Children's sense of identity and belonging is nurtured and well-represented in the setting. Individual photographs of each child are respectfully framed on the windowsill of the childrens' first day at pre-school. Family photographs, childrens' drawings and creations are strategically placed in the learning environment.
- The practitioner makes very good efforts to reach out to the local community and regularly organises visits from people in the community. These include the local farmer, nurse, Garda and parents. Postcards of familiar landmarks are displayed in the learning environment to encourage discussion between children about their locality.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the practitioner develop a visual representation of the daily routine for the children to access and follow. Providing children with a visual routine that can be independently referred to will support children to anticipate and discuss the days' activities.
- It is advised that the practitioner develop rituals for the children to prepare the environment for snack time. Facilitating the children to come together and set the table and complete tasks in preparing for this social meal time will enhance children's' developing social skills.

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 blended curriculum approach has been developed by the practitioner which incorporates *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the Montessori Method of education.
- A long-term plan outlines monthly seasonal topics and themes to be introduced to children. Learning experiences in the short and medium term are organised by the practitioner based on children's interests but are not yet documented. The practitioner tunes into the children's interests during discussions and free-play time. She uses these spontaneous interests to informally plan experiences in the short-term. A systematic consistent method of planning in the short-term has not yet been fully established.
- Progression in children's learning is captured using developmental checklists, photographs and samples of their creations and artwork. Descriptive observations that capture children's holistic development while identifying strengths and areas for extension of learning are not yet in place.
- Very good interaction strategies are used by the practitioner as she joins children in their play while also guiding, prompting and thinking-out-loud with children.
- Play is central to the pedagogy and all routines and activities support the children's active learning in a playful manner. The practitioner is playful with the children and facilitates a wide variety of exploration and guided discovery through play.
- The indoor learning environment is very well-maintained and resourced and provides many opportunities for children to explore and engage in a range of different types of play. Well-defined interest areas cleverly create secluded spaces indoors for the children to play alone and in small groups.
- The outdoor learning environment provides ample open space for the children to enjoy the natural outdoors and develop their gross motor skills. This area includes a bark section, stone pit and outdoor kitchen. These areas are well resourced with utensils to support exploratory, tactile learning.
- Literacy and numeracy exploration is very well facilitated through the strategic positioning of play props in the interest areas. Antique, wall-mounted and moveable telephones, telescopes, old typewriters, magazines, books, notebooks and pencils encourage children to explore methods of communicating and mark-making in their play.
- The practitioner supports the inclusion of all children and is currently in the process of engaging with the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) support service to develop tailored inclusion strategies for individual children. The practitioner knows the children well and tailors supports for children within the mixed age-group. Extra time and aid is given to the children as they open their food, put on their wellies, shoes and coats when needed.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the practitioner develop her processes for planning in the short-term to identify children's needs and interests while also planning to support their skills, attitudes, knowledge and dispositions. The short-term planning template, available on the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* will support this.
- It is advised that the practitioner develop the methods of observing children's learning progression. The 'Individual Learning Record' from the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* provides an example of how meaningful moments can be narratively captured and progression in learning can be planned for.

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 are engaged and demonstrate enjoyment in their learning during play both indoors and outdoors. A few children are still settling in as they are new to the setting.
- The older group of children demonstrate very good communication skills as they play and interact with their peers and the practitioner. Well-developed language skills are used by the children

during play and conversations. A few children require support to interact with others and to verbalise their needs and intentions.

- The children are very effective at organising and leading their play when alone and in small groups. On the day of inspection, they worked together outdoors as they decided to clean the large wooden table using the bubbles mixture. They enjoyed the sensory texture of rubbing the mixture into a foam and discussed why they were cleaning the table, how they were doing it and supported each other to get involved as everyone played a part.
- The children demonstrated the ability to purposefully use materials from all areas of the room to satisfy their play intentions. They shared their play ideas with others and used the natural rain water found in the outdoor pots and pans together with the bark to make potions, soups and to create puddles.
- The children demonstrate a great appreciation for the natural world; they identify the animals in the adjoining field, take care of their pet fish and use natural elements to enhance their play.
- They discuss the concept of time and independently use sand-timers throughout the pre-school session. They demonstrate understanding that each timer represents a longer or shorter period of time.

Action advised

- It is advised that younger children are supported to communicate with the development of small-group experiences. Establishing a buddy-system, visual aids and planning learning experiences in the short term is advised. This will support the development of communication and social skills and will enable children to interact and socialise.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- The owner/practitioner demonstrates on-going commitment to the improvement of practice in her setting. The manager regularly attends training in the local area and is currently completing the Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) training programme. Part of this programme includes *Lámh* (the manual sign system to support communication with children).
- She regularly liaises with her local County Childcare Committee. The manager is beginning to engage with the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* as part of her training but is yet to embed the use of the guide and self-evaluation practices to develop priorities for improvement into her practice.
- Information is shared with parents through online communication, letters and an information booklet. Pictures are displayed for parents to view the different learning experiences during the year. Curriculum sharing and information on children's developing dispositions, attitudes, skills and knowledge are yet to be consistently shared with parents.
- The manager supports the transition of children into the setting and when moving on to primary school. A settling-in period is facilitated as children transition from the home environment. Communication with home is effective during this time and older siblings are invited in to discuss the transition from pre-school to primary school. The manager makes efforts to contact schools every year and is in the process of developing strategies to strengthen the communication between local schools and the setting to benefit the children.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the practitioner build self-evaluation practices in to the pre-school year in order to reflect on what is working well and develop areas for improvement. The self-evaluation tools available in the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* will support this.
- It is advised that the practitioner communicate the short-term curriculum with parents. This will allow parents to be aware of how their children are developing through their weekly learning experiences.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the setting to implement the actions advised above is very good. The owner/manager attended the post-inspection feedback meeting and demonstrated very good capacity to implement the actions advised above.

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-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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