An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	Sligo Family Support Ltd.
Setting Address	The Lifestart Building Pearse Road Sligo County Sligo
DCYA number	09SO0046

Date of Inspection: 17-06-2019

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	17-06-2019
Inspection activities undertaken • Meeting with the setting manager and deputy manager • Meeting with the practitioners • Observation of interactions during three concurrent pre-school sessions	• Interaction with the children • Review of relevant documents • Feedback discussion with the setting manager, deputy manager and practitioners

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Sligo Family Support Ltd. is a well-established community-based setting located in Sligo town. It offers three concurrent pre-school sessions to children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme, along with after school and full day care services. The pre-school curriculum is based upon the principles of *Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. During the inspection, a total of three pre-school leaders and four pre-school practitioners provided care and education for fifty-five children. The manager and deputy manager attended the post-inspection feedback meeting. 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 good.
- Practitioners are caring towards the children and are responsive to their requests. They provide frequent affirmation to the children for their achievements and efforts.
- Each room has a visual daily routine on display which heightens the children's awareness and sense of security around the organisation of activities during the session. It outlines opportunities for the children to play outdoors on a daily basis. During one of the inspection days the children did not access the outdoors due to adverse weather conditions. No alternative activity was provided to support physical well-being.
- Snack times provide children with the opportunity to develop independence and self-help skills. Practitioners sit and converse with the children in a warm and relaxed manner.
- Practitioners guide and support the children to develop positive relationships with their peers. On one observed occasion, an effective visual was used to remind the children of the 'agreement' within the room regarding positive behaviour. Transitions are organised using verbal cues as the predominant method for communicating the upcoming change in the routine. During observations, as verbal cues were not used consistently this impacted on some children's abilities to process the change to a subsequent activity.
- Recognition of the children's uniqueness is demonstrated by the provision of a personal space for belongings which is indicated by individual photographs. Each room has a birthday display and some examples of the children's creations are exhibited.
- Practitioners have organised a visit from a chef and a postman. One pre-school room had the opportunity to visit the local institute of technology during the year. There are minimal opportunities provided for the parents to participate in experiences and activities in the pre-school and for the children's cultural diversity to be effectively represented in the environment.

Actions advised

- It is advised that practitioners facilitate daily opportunities for gross-motor movement within the routine to support the children's physical well-being.
- Practitioners are advised to implement a wider range of auditory and visual strategies during transitions to appropriately prepare and involve the children for subsequent activities.

- It is advised that practitioners develop further opportunities to nurture the children's sense of identity and belonging through experiences that promote increased parental participation, community involvement and celebration of the children's diverse cultural backgrounds.

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.
- Practitioners in each pre-school room plan for curriculum implementation on a long, medium and short-term basis. There is evidence of the children's emerging interests in some of the plans. There are no connections between the children's observed next steps in learning and the planned activities. Practitioners are making efforts to evaluate the planned learning activities.
- Practitioners utilise termly learner records as the predominant method of observation and assessment. The children's crafts and paintings, alongside some photographs of their participation in a variety of experiences are contained within the individual learning journals. These are shared with their parents at the end of the year.
- Practitioners make connections between the children's previous learning and new experiences during some planned activities. Interaction strategies such as scaffolding and modelling were observed in some interactions during the inspection.
- The indoor environment in the majority of the pre-school rooms is well-defined and organised into inviting areas of play. All of the rooms value multi-sensory play and there are some authentic materials in a few areas of play. There is scope to provide a wider variety of open-ended materials and authentic resources in the defined areas of interest.
- The outdoor area is organised effectively into three areas of play. There are various sizes of tyres available for the children to climb, a mud kitchen, a gravel area, a boat and an area for wheeled vehicles.
- The children have daily opportunities to look at books, listen to music and to participate in circle-time activities to encourage communication skills. In some instances, children are provided with templates and overly formal worksheet activities which are not appropriate to the age and stage of development of the children availing of these experiences.
- There were some occasions whereby practitioners utilised expanded vocabulary to develop the children's knowledge and language. There were missed opportunities to develop mathematical language and to use expanded language in other instances.
- One of the practitioners is participating on the Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) training and there is an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy in place to promote inclusive practice. The setting is in receipt of mentoring support from the Better Start Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) to support children with additional needs.

Actions advised

- It is advised that planning consistently takes account of the children's emerging interests, cultural backgrounds and progressing learning needs to promote a holistic approach. Broader evaluations outlining the outcome of activities will support the practitioners to plan for connected learning.
- It is advised that practitioners collaboratively review and develop the indoor and outdoor learning environments using the self-evaluation tool from the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide*. This will extend creative, open-ended, explorative and imaginative experiences for the children.
- Practitioners are advised to develop the children's language and communication skills through consistent use of expanded vocabulary, mathematical language and appropriate activities that support positive dispositions to numeracy and literacy.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is good.
- The children demonstrate enjoyment in outdoor play, games, sensorial activities and role-play. Some children demonstrate resourceful dispositions when requesting to build a den with a blanket in a role-play area. At times, some children were not purposefully engaged in the activities on offer.
- Children experience success and achievement during free-play as they persevere to build towers, contribute their ideas and collaborate during games with their peers.
- The children have individual learning journals which are accessible to them in each room. The termly observations contained in the journals provide a snapshot of the children's learning. The irregularity and breadth of this information limits the provision of a holistic picture of their overall learning experiences.
- The majority of children are showing increasing confidence and co-ordination over their gross-motor skills as observed when climbing the tyre tower and when riding on the wheeled vehicles.
- Most of the children highlight confident abilities when communicating their interests, ideas and personal experiences. Some children demonstrate a positive understanding of themselves as competent learners.
- It is evident that the children's voices are heard and are responded to. The majority of children highlight positive self-confidence and self-esteem. They are developing social skills such as turn-taking, co-operation and responsibility during helper roles. Some children require support from practitioners to resolve issues of minor conflict with their peers.
- The children are becoming aware of the natural environment through active experiences such as planting, observing caterpillars growing and the bug-hotel outdoors. There are some opportunities provided during the year to engage in science experiments. There are missed opportunities to provide a wider range of high-quality books, information and communication technology (ICT) experiences and open-ended resources within each room.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the children have the opportunity to develop problem-solving skills and frequently experience enquiry-based learning. This will promote engagement, cognition and the ability to independently resolve minor conflict with their peers.
- It is advised that the information contained within the children's individual journals reflects a holistic picture of their progressing learning, achievements, personal annotations and experiences throughout the year.
- It is advised that there are frequent opportunities provided to broaden the children's knowledge, enquiries and understanding of the world. Use of high quality books, ICT and open-ended resources will promote these shared interests.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- The manager meets with the pre-school leaders on a monthly basis to discuss the general operations within each of the rooms. They discuss upcoming training, events and curriculum activities.
- The manager has established an '*Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide'* self-evaluation folder which some pre-school leaders within the setting have contributed to. There is no consistent or collaborative processes in place for self-review and action planning for improvement practices within the setting.
- There are established policies and procedures in place for support and supervision within the setting and the manager maintains records of the meetings held. Practitioners have the opportunity to attend continuing professional development to support practice developments.
- There is a parents' notice board placed outside each of the pre-school rooms. The curriculum plans and photographs of the children participating in activities are displayed for the parents to view. There are opportunities for informal communication during the daily arrival and collection. No formal

opportunities have been established to consult with parents regarding their children's learning and experiences.

- The settling-in process is supported by offering a visit to parents and children who are enrolling in the ECCE programme. Parents are provided with a comprehensive 'getting to know your child' form and parents' handbook. These have been established to support both the children and parents with the settling-in process.
- The children transitioning from rooms within the setting to the pre-school rooms are supported by the movement of familiar staff with them. Discussions take place between the practitioners regarding their learning prior to the change.
- The deputy manager has started to compile photographs to create 'social stories' to familiarise the children with the various primary schools in the locality. Two junior infant teachers from a local school have visited the pre-school setting to meet the children and to discuss their learning experiences with the lead practitioners. There are no procedures in place currently to provide a formal overview of the child's achievements and experiences to the primary schools to support continuity in learning.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the manager develops opportunities for collaborative review amongst the whole-staff team and in the various pre-school rooms using the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide*. Use of action-planning alongside regular support and supervision to identify individual roles will promote consistent practice with regard to improvement.
- It is advised that the manager develops regular opportunities to establish formal communication between the pre-school practitioners and the parents. Frequent collaboration regarding the children's observations is advised in addition to processes that garner the parent's voice in relation to their child's learning and the pre-school services provided.
- It is advised that the manager and practitioners develop procedures for the sharing of information regarding the children's learning with junior infant teachers to support continuity of experiences for the children as they transition to primary school.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The manager and practitioners demonstrate a strong commitment to improvement and very good capacity to implement the actions advised in the report.

Summary of Overall Inspection

Area	Quality Level
Quality of context to support children's learning and development	**Good**
Quality of processes to support children's learning and development	**Good**
Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements	**Good**
Quality of management and leadership for learning	**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.

This was the first inspection of Lifestart from the Department of Education and Skills. All advised actions have been taken on board and we will continue to work in partnership with parents and the wider community to provide learning experiences and support children's holistic learning and development within our setting.

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

Staff within the setting have reviewed the report outcomes and have implemented some plans and strategies to address the actions that are advised within it. These include:

- Providing mindfulness and yoga activities when the weather prevents us from going outside.
- Introducing new visual cues and have a new song to prepare children to transition from activity to another.
- The short term curricula and plans have changed and now have a greater focus placed on the interests of the child and enquiry based learning.
- There is more consultation occurring between the room leaders and other practitioners within the rooms.
- The children's learning journals will display the each child's holistic journey and will contain more achievements, personal stories and items they have experienced throughout the year.
- The self-evaluation tools found in Aistear Siolta Practice guide are being used on a regular basis by staff and room leaders within the setting.
- We aim to improve our partnership with parents and the local community by inviting different tradespeople and people with different skills to our setting to talk to the children.
- We aim to establish a better link with the parents from the preschool rooms by inviting them to meet with preschool leaders to discuss their child's learning and development.
- We will continue to work on all actions advised within the report.