An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	Spraoi Early Learning Centre
Setting Address	Heather Hill Ballybeg Limerick road Ennis Co. Clare
DCYA number	16CE0217

Date of Inspection: 14-06-2019

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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	14-06-2019
Inspection activities undertaken • Pre-inspection meeting with setting manager • Interaction with children • Review of relevant documents	• Observation of interactions during two pre-school sessions • Post-inspection feedback meeting with setting manager and practitioner

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Spraoi Early Learning Centre is a privately-owned full day-care setting located in Ennis, County Clare. It is part of a chain of settings and the manager reports to an area manager with responsibility for the whole chain. As well as offering full day-care services, two rooms provide a sessional pre-school to children participating in the first and second year of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. These rooms are divided by age range with one room catering for the children in their first pre-school year; and the second room catering to children in their second pre-school year. On the morning of inspection, two practitioners and eight children were present in the first room; while three practitioners and fifteen children were present in the second. The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the 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.
- An open, welcoming atmosphere is evident throughout the setting. Strategically placed noticeboards and displays detail important information in the arrivals area and outside each pre-school room for parents and visitors. The practitioners warmly greet the children and families as they exchange information within their respective rooms.
- Daily routines are flexible and responsive to the needs of children. The practitioners are supportive and attune to the children's' cues as they prompt and join them during the ample free-play time. The additions of visual and audio cues would enhance these routines and times of transition during the session.
- The practitioners respectfully nurture strong, secure relationships with the children. Through a well-established key-person approach, they tailor their responses based on the children's interests, personalities and stage of development. Very good problem-solving approaches are used to maximise the children's opportunity to practice finding solutions, negotiating and working well with others.
- There are many opportunities for the children to see themselves, their families and the local community represented and celebrated in the setting. Throughout the year, visitors from the community are invited to share skills and talents.
- The practitioners prioritise parental involvement as they organise evening events, fundraisers, sports days and seasonal celebrations. These provide very good opportunity for parents and families to join their children and become actively involved.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the practitioners begin to use audio and visual cues to enhance their transition strategies during the daily routine.
- It is advised that the practitioners develop a visual representation of the daily routine with the children. This will support the children to independently interact, predict and review their choices across the pre-school session.

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 curriculum statement reflects the play-based approach to curriculum practice in the setting. This curriculum is strategically linked to *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and is organised on a long and short-term basis.
- Planning for the children's learning and development is effectively informed by the children's thematic and seasonal interests. The practitioner's document the way these themes are developed based on events from the children's lives or their expressed interests. There is scope to develop how the emergent and inquiry-based interests of the children are used to inform curriculum planning.
- The children's successes and achievements are documented through individual learning portfolios, group displays, photographs and samples of their artwork. Narrative observations are captured on a monthly basis for each child; these detail extended ideas around the way the children's learning can be developed further. A large group learning portfolio depicts images and text about learning from a group perspective for the parents to view.
- The practitioners effectively nurture positive interactions between the children as they model the ways the children can work together during their play. A more strategic approach to the use of consistent interaction strategies would benefit how the practitioners guide the children towards new learning.
- Both learning environments are very well-laid out and inviting. A variety of well-labelled and resourced interest areas provide a range of play materials that support the children to explore many different types of play. Photographic displays that represent previous learning experiences are strategically placed in these areas to support reflection and recall.
- A shared outdoor learning environment is located adjacent to the setting and both rooms have direct access to this large outdoor space. Materials and resources to stimulate gross motor skills are available and the children are encouraged to bring materials outdoors to enhance their play as needed.
- The setting is in the process of developing action plans and individual education plans to support the inclusion of all children. Staff are engaged in the Better Start Access and Inclusion Model programme. These plans will be used to support communication between the home setting and the pre-school and to promote a positive partnership with parents.

Actions advised

- It is advised that practitioners review their short-term planning process. A more emergent and inquiry-based approach to curriculum planning would reduce the amount of weekly topical themes being introduced. The practitioners need to create a curriculum that is responsive to the needs and interests of the children.
- It is advised that the practitioners develop a consistent approach to interactions that prompt and support the children to express their thoughts, share ideas and engage in new learning opportunities. The medium-term planning template and the supporting interactions self-evaluation tool from the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* provide useful guidance in this regard.

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 highly motivated and engaged in their play and learning activities. They demonstrate very good leadership and autonomy as they organise their play experiences both alone and with their peers.
- In the older pre-school room, the children effectively co-construct play scenarios as they negotiate roles, actions and their desired play outcomes. The younger children are developing their pro-social skills and observe their peers during play. A purposeful approach to supporting all children to practice these skills in small-group experiences would enhance their learning and development.

- The children enjoy tactile learning and eagerly engage with open-ended sensorial materials. On the morning of inspection, a group of children were observed re-enacting the group experience of making their own play dough. They gathered their materials, measured the items and discussed the texture of their creation.
- The older children demonstrate confidence when they discuss their interests and achievements. A weekly 'show and tell' circle time activity allows the children to share stories and events from their home lives. They are very capable of reflecting on experiences and thinking-out-loud during these group activities and during their free-play contexts. Increased representation of the children's individual voices within the documentation and the environment would afford the children increased opportunity to have their voices heard and valued.
- The children enjoy group learning experiences and a variety of investigative activities based on themes are organised for them during the year. Increasing investigative learning that broadens how the children can independently explore dispositions, skills, attitudes and new knowledge would enhance their creative learning possibilities.

Actions advised

- It is advised that strategies be developed to support the children to explore and develop their pro-social skills. The facilitation of learning activities and experiences that prompt problem-solving opportunities, negotiation skills and collaboration with peers would benefit the children.
- It is advised that the children's voices be made more visible within their individual learning portfolios and the accompanying displays and photographs. By highlighting the children's thoughts, words and ideas, the practitioners will ensure that this documentation is meaningful and relevant to each individual child.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- The manager has responsibility for the day-to-day running of the full day-care service while reporting to an area manager from the setting chain. Any management changes relating to overall practice are shared with the area manager who in turn reports to the owner of the chain. The manager requires support from the area manager in order to make decisions regarding resources or materials or a change in practice for the children.
- Weekly room discussions are held informally as the practitioners discuss their practice and reflect on how the children have responded to the various learning activities. The manager offers daily informal support to all rooms in the setting during breaks and when requested. The establishment of formal opportunities for team reflection across both pre-school rooms would greatly benefit a consistent approach to curriculum implementation and progression.
- Continuous professional development is prioritised within the setting and the practitioners are encouraged to express their preferences for training and local supports. The manager is due to begin the Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) training programme over the coming months. The practitioners regularly access local supports through the County Childcare Committee and have liaised with a local organisation for information and practical supports on the implementation of the Incredible Years pre-school programme.
- The practitioners prioritise their communication with parents and strategically use noticeboard displays to share information about the curriculum and upcoming events with parents. Through an online social media platform, text messages, notices and verbal discussions, the practitioners regularly discuss and share information with parents during the year. Individual meetings are held with the manager and the key practitioner as needs arise or as parent's request. Making the individual learning portfolios available to parents on a regular basis would encourage a shared exchange of information regarding individual children's learning progression.
- As the children prepare for the significant transition to primary school, the practitioners facilitate discussions with the children to review how they are feeling and to share information. Due to the locality of the setting, the children attend many different school settings in the area. They share information with parents and families about these local schools and have begun a review of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) *Mó Scéal* documents to establish a formal method for sharing information.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the practitioners establish formal opportunities for team reflection throughout the year. Using the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* to support and guide these reflections will ensure that the curriculum is regularly reviewed and monitored to support the best outcomes for children's learning and development.
- It is advised that the practitioners make the individual learning portfolios available for parents to review and add to during the year. Allowing parents the opportunity to regularly see their child's learning progression will strengthen parental involvement.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

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

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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