An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION - FOCUSED INSPECTION

REPORT

Service Name	Spraoi Playschool
Service Address	Reddanswalk Dundrum Road Tipperary Town County Tipperary
DCYA number	09TS0034

Date of Inspection: 26-04-2018

WHAT IS AN EARLY YEARS EDUCATION-FOCUSED INSPECTION?

The Early Years Education-focused Inspection (EYEI) model is used to provide evaluative information, advice and support in relation to education provision in a pre-school service 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 service.

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 service's provision in each area.

Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

Date of inspection	26-04-2018
Inspection activities undertaken • Pre-inspection meeting with the service owner manager • Observation of interactions during the session	• Interaction with the children • Review of relevant documents • Post-inspection feedback meeting with the service owner/ manager and practitioners

CONTEXT OF SERVICE

Spraoi Playschool is a privately-owned and managed, sessional pre-school service. It has been established for ten years, operating from a purpose-built premises on the grounds of a private dwelling outside Tipperary town. On the day of the inspection, the manager, a practitioner, and eighteen children were present. In addition, there was a staff member employed through the Access and Inclusion Model. (AIM). 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 visibly warm and friendly atmosphere established in the setting.
- Practitioners display sensitivity and positive attention towards the children. At the time of the inspection, a key person approach was not in place. The manager takes responsibility for monitoring the progress for all the children attending the service.
- The practitioners skilfully model and provide guidance to nurture children's positive behaviour. They use appropriate language to recognise and acknowledge children's efforts and achievements.
- There is consistent access for children to drinking water and a promotion of a healthy approach to nutrition is evident.
- There is a flexible daily routine that offers children a suitable range of experiences to support their learning and development. The children were observed to refer to practitioners, on a small number of occasions during free play, seeking permission to use the more open-ended material, such as, the home corner.
- Commendable opportunities are made available to connect children's home life with their experiences in pre-school. For example, a bedtime book share project has been successfully established to involve parents, children and pre-school staff in a shared reading initiative.
- The practitioners organise activities to celebrate a variety of cultures which supports children's value and recognition of diverse families.

Actions advised

- Practitioners are advised to develop a key person approach to strengthen relationships and deepen their understanding of the needs of children. Each key practitioner will be responsible for monitoring and planning experiences based on their recorded observations a specific number of children.
- It is advised that further opportunities for children to make independent choices during free play periods be facilitated by practitioners. By allowing children to choose the materials they would like to explore from the shelves, it will greatly support their ability to make decisions about their learning.

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 play-based curriculum informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* effectively supports children's learning and development.
- The owner/manager reported that the use of scrapbooks to gather information about children's learning was introduced September 2018. There is an overemphasis on recording and including assessment examples of children's fine motor skills.
- The planning for children's learning and development suitably builds on their emergent interests, previous experiences and achievements. The implementation of the curriculum is monitored and reviewed on a weekly basis.
- The practitioners evidently know each child and respond to them using respectful and caring interactions. On a small number of occasions, practitioners offered support to children that reduced the opportunity for children to be independent and find their own solutions to challenge. They frequently use open-ended questions to inquire into children's thought processes and enhance their understandings.
- The indoor learning environment comprises of two interconnecting spaces that provide children with access to a very good range of materials to support, stimulate and extend their learning and development. There are resources to engage children in a variety of play types, including pretend play and language play using real play items.
- The outdoor learning environment offers children high effectively experiences to explore and experiment with natural resources, such as, sand, water and wooden blocks. The newly added sensory garden enriches the experiences for children with access to a mud kitchen,a maze and planting areas.
- There is a commendable use of song and rhymes to foster children's developing language and literacy skills. The practitioners effectively use props and puppets to deepen children's engagement in storytelling.
- The owner/manager actively links with the Better Start Mentoring service to optimise educational provision for children with additional needs. She works in partnership with parents to ensure specific supports are provided for children.

Actions advised

- In order to reflect the breath of experiences and achievements of children, practitioners are advised to further develop the use of the scrapbooks to include evidence of a wider range of learning areas. This will provide children and their parents with a richer picture of the learning journey experienced during their time in the pre-school.
- Practitioners are advised to use additional interaction strategies that facilitate and support children to be more independent and also strategies that further develop their problem-solving skills.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is very good.
- Children actively engage in their learning through play. They display positive well-being, interacting with the environment, peer and practitioners.
- The children avail of highly effective opportunities to strengthen, refine and enhance their fine and gross motor control. A number of children were observed to practice their balancing skills on real tyres.
- Children are developing their understanding of the boundaries of behaviour. On a few occasions, children were supported to independently manage their behaviour; for example, being mindful of their bodies when dancing in a large group.

- The children frequently express themselves through imaginative role play. They successfully coordinate with peers to take on familiar roles using their language skills to pretend, for example, using available props from the kitchen and hairdressing areas.
- At the time of the inspection, the majority of art experiences provided for children involved colouring-in sheets and templates.
- Children are inquisitive, confidently experimenting with materials. On the day of the inspection, a small group of children explored the pouring of water into different spaces during play at the water tray.
- The children competently use their language skills to share personal stories, ideas and thoughts.

Actions advised
- It is advised that the use of template-based art activities be greatly reduced. Practitioners can build on the opportunities to allow children to express themselves creatively using art materials that focus more on process and individual expression.
- Practitioners are advised to enable and support children to develop their capacity to purposefully use the props to promote turn taking, such as, the sand timers.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- There is a highly professional ethos evident in the setting. This is illustrated in the whole-staff approach to self-reflection and quality improvement. The practitioners completed their formal engagement with *Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education*. A review of the outdoor learning environment resulted in improved provision for exploratory play.
- Commendably, a survey of parents is completed annually as the management seek feedback as part of ongoing self-assessment on the practices within the service.
- The owner/manager is a positive role model for the staff. She encourages ongoing professional development among staff and attendance at training events. Participation in professional development courses such as, Leadership for INClusion in Early Years (LINC) and the Healthy Ireland Smart Start Programme has contributed to improvements in areas of practice and provision.
- The practitioners work in partnership with parents to ensure a smooth transition for children starting in the setting.
- A number of activities and resources are made available to children to support their transition to primary school; these include specific story books, photographs of uniforms and local school buildings. At the time of the inspection, the sharing of information between pre-school and school was being considered.
- Considerable formal and informal communication strategies are in place to proactively engage with parents. A prominent notice board is updated for parents to share information on the curriculum and routines. Parents are invited into the setting during the year to spend time with their child.

Action advised
- Practitioners are advised to further develop practice to ensure continuity of experiences for children between pre-school and primary school. This could be achieved through the sharing of strengths-based information about children dispositions, skills, understanding and values at pre-school.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the service to implement the actions advised above is very good as demonstrated in by the owner/ manager and staff's commitment to ongoing quality improvement.

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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