An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	St Finian's Cooperative Childcare
Setting Address	22 St Finian's Green Lucan County Dublin K78 PF72
DCYA number	11DS0309

Date of Inspection: 03-02-2020

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agus Scileanna
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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 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	03-02-2020
Inspection activities undertaken • Meeting with setting manager • Observation of interactions during the sessions • Interaction with children	• Review of relevant documents • Feedback to setting manager and practitioners

CONTEXT OF SETTING

St Finian's Cooperative Childcare, is a community-run setting. It is part of a chain of early years settings operated Co-operative Housing Ireland. The setting was established in 2000 and is located in a residential suburb in Lucan, County Dublin. It provides a morning and an afternoon session for children enrolled in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of inspection, the manager, six practitioners, one of whom is employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM), and thirty-one children were present. 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.
- There is a commendably welcoming atmosphere. The children and family members are greeted warmly and with enthusiasm by practitioners, and time is allocated for meaningful and relaxed conversations.
- The daily routine includes an adequate period of free-play time, as well as opportunities for the children to engage in adult-led and outdoor activities.
- Snack time is a pleasant and relaxed occasion. The practitioners sit and eat with the children, encourage healthy eating and engage in many general discussions.
- The children successfully manage their own self-help and personal hygiene needs. For example, they retrieve their lunches, pour their own drinks and wash their hands independently.
- The practitioners know the children well. They relate to them in a nurturing and responsive way and are sensitive to their needs. A strong emphasis is placed on supporting the children's emotional development.
- A documented daily routine and a timer are available to support children with daily transitions. On the day of inspection, a five-minute advance verbal reminder was used by the practitioners to bring the children's attention to the impending changes of activities.
- A key worker approach is in place. Each key practitioner is responsible for gathering and recording information on the learning of a small group of children and for meeting with parents to exchange information on their learning and development.
- The uniqueness of each child is represented in displays of his/her photographs, a family wall, and samples of his/her art work. This helps to nurture the children's sense of identity and belonging,
- The practitioners are highly committed to ensuring parents feel welcomed and they encourage them to become involved in their children's learning. There is an open-door policy and parents and family members are regularly invited to attend events. Parents read stories with the children, share their cultural experiences, help out in the garden and organise a fund raising 'Book day' event, where books are exchanged for donations.
- The practitioners have made good links with the community. Parents and members of the community, such as the local *Garda*, a nurse and dental nurse have shared their work experiences and knowledge with the children.

Action advised

- The practitioners are advised to be more consistent in their use of the daily schedule and timer to enhance the children's awareness of transitions during the 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 good.
- A play-based curriculum, informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework,* is implemented.
- Short-term plans are used to guide the children's learning and development. Planning is thematic and based on interest topics which are selected by the practitioners.
- Information on the children's learning and development is recorded using observations, samples of children's work and photographs. Records of the children's interests and the next steps in their learning are not used to inform plans.
- The learning environments consist of two rooms and two outdoor spaces. The indoor area provides opportunities for the children to engage in activities of interest, such as creative play, sensory play, small world play, pretend play, and table-top and gross motor activities. Some areas of interest, particularly in the outdoor area, were in need of development as there was a limited range of real resources available.
- The practitioners' approach to assisting the children's movement between learning rooms varied. In the afternoon session, the children had less time and opportunities to engage with the full range of available activities.
- The practitioners regularly use many suitable strategies to support, scaffold and extend children's learning; these include sitting at the children's physical level, purposefully engaging with them in their chosen activities and using open-ended questions to encourage their thinking skills.
- The practitioners view play as the central medium through which children learn and develop; they follow the children's emergent play interests and playfully engage in child-led activities. For example, they played 'Doctors' and 'Hide and Seek' with the children.
- The children's emergent literacy and numeracy skills are fostered through the practitioners' use of stories, songs, rhymes, and books.
- The management team and practitioners promote an inclusive environment. Partnerships with parents and links with external agencies have been established to support children with additional needs. The manager has availed of support under AIM.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to use the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* to assist them in developing a curriculum statement in line with the ethos of the setting and the learning programme. They are also advised to review their current approaches to planning and observation with a view to including the children's interests and the next steps in their learning in short-term plans.
- The practitioners are advised to carry out a review of the indoor and outdoor play areas using the 'Environment' audit tool in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide*. As part of this process, the provision of more clearly defined areas of interest and additional real-life resources will be beneficial.
- The practitioners are advised to ensure that the children in the afternoon session are afforded ample time to engage in free-play activities in both of the learning rooms.

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's sense of positive well-being is evident in their high levels of engagement, motivation and enjoyment in their learning.
- The children appear comfortable and secure in the environment. Many display very good concentration skills and the ability to choose activities of interest. A small number of children found it difficult to settle and to remain focused on any one particular activity.
- The children's social and communication skills are developing well; they successfully share and take turns with their peers. Good friendships are apparent as they play in pairs and small groups. Opportunities for the children to share their learning with others in small groups are limited.
- The children demonstrate a good sense of their own identities. They confidently introduce themselves and others, refer to their likes and make references to their homes and families.
- Children's sense of achievement and their observation and problem-solving skills are developing well. For example, when the children were making playdough, they informed the practitioner that the playdough was 'sticky' and that more flour was needed.
- The children demonstrate a very good awareness of the rules and boundaries of acceptable behaviour and highly effective, self-regulation skills.
- The children display highly developed imaginations and confidence in their fine and gross motor abilities. For example, during their play two children pulled two chairs together and used them to make an aeroplane, and children used the climbing apparatus and played chasing games with self-assurance.
- The children's emergent language, literacy and numeracy skills are developing well. Many children regularly access books and mark-making equipment. They use mathematical vocabulary relating to shapes and colours appropriately and show an understanding of number as they count the items on the jigsaw.
- The children were particularly interested and engaged in the mark-making, sensory and creative activities, and skilfully used resources to make items, including aeroplanes and playdough.

Action advised

- The practitioners are advised to provide regular opportunities during the daily routine for the children to plan for and reflect on their learning activities. This will help support their engagement levels and abilities to link their previous and new learning interests.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- The manager and practitioners present as a professional team who work well together; they show support and respect for each other and many of them have worked together for several years.
- Regular staff and management committee meetings are held to share information, reflect on practice and to discuss training needs and the day-to-day operation of the setting. *The Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* is currently not used to reflect on practice. The manager provides regular supervision meetings for individual staff members to affirm good practice and to support their ongoing development.
- External support, advice and training are availed of through the local county childcare committee, Early Childhood Ireland and NABCO. Links with other local childcare providers have also been established.
- The practitioners have participated in professional training and workshops in areas, such as special needs, AIM, and the Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) in Early Years programme.
- There is clarity around individual roles and responsibilities and all practitioners are given opportunities to take a lead role in promoting the children's learning.

- Information about children's learning and development is shared formally and informally with parents. Communication channels include the use of newsletters, a parents' noticeboard and handbook and mobile phones.
- The practitioners implement a highly-effective, phased, settling-in period to assist children in their transition from home to the pre-school. Parents are encouraged to visit before their child starts, there are staggered settling-in times and they are welcome to stay with their children until they settle.
- The practitioners undertake a number of activities towards the end of the year, including a graduation event, to support the children's transition to primary school. Links with the local primary schools have been established and parents are encouraged to share the children's 'Journey books' with the schools; these include photographs of the children at play and samples their creative work. There is some use of National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) *Mo Scéal* resources to support the children's transition to school.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to use the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* to reflect on practice and to carry out self-reviews.
- The practitioners are advised to extend their use of the NCCA *Mo Scéal* resources to include all children moving to primary school.

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	**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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