An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	St. Oran's Pre-school
Setting Address	St. Oran's National School Cockhill Buncrana County Donegal
DCYA number	09DL0025

Date of Inspection: 12-09-2018

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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	12-09-2018
Inspection activities undertaken • Meeting with setting leader • Meeting with practitioners • Observation of interactions during one pre-school session	• Interaction with children • Review of relevant documents • Feedback to setting leader and practitioners

CONTEXT OF SETTING

St Oran's Pre-school is a privately owned setting, located within a primary school in Buncrana, County Donegal. One daily pre-school session is offered to children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education Programme. On the day of the inspection, the owner/leader, two assistant practitioners and thirteen children were present. All members of staff attended the post-inspection feedback meeting. 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.
- The atmosphere of the setting is warm, caring and welcoming. A visual daily routine of experiences is displayed in the pre-school room and in the hallway for parents to view. Whilst the routine is visually represented, authentic representation of activities using photographs would support the children's growing awareness of the daily events.
- Children actively choose and organise their preferred areas of play. They are supported to develop independence and self-help skills during the settling-in period.
- The children are provided with an optional healthy snack during free-play. The elective element of this experience creates no specific organised space for the children to eat, resulting in missed learning opportunities for socialisation and autonomy.
- The large group snack time promotes social interaction through relaxed conversations. Practitioners position themselves effectively to support the children during this experience.
- There is an established key-person approach in place whereby designated practitioners observe key groups of children to support their learning and development. Practitioners interact with the children in an authentic manner, using their knowledge of the children to engage in meaningful conversations.
- The practitioners offer support and guidance to children during minor conflict situations and offer praise and encouragement to them for their efforts during play. During the inspection there were minimal opportunities provided for independent problem-solving during times of minor conflict. Furthermore, praise offered by practitioners did not specifically acknowledge the child's efforts.
- Practitioners recognise the significance of nurturing the children's sense of identity and belonging within the setting. There are opportunities during the year for the parents to share their skills and to attend events within the pre-school.
- Practitioners organise a wide range of visits from members of the local community to help integrate the pre-school into the locality. Recently the children received an invitation to visit the local community hospital to engage in a six week programme with senior citizens in exploring technology collaboratively using a 'Tovertafel' table.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the practitioners utilise a range of visual representations to heighten the children's awareness of the daily experiences and that the elective snack time is better organised, providing increased opportunities to extend the children's autonomy.
- It is advised that practitioners offer strategies to the children that will promote independent conflict resolution and develop feedback practices that specifically acknowledge the children's efforts and accomplishments.

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.
- The practitioners utilise a play-based approach and make visible links to the learning goals of *Aistear*: *the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. Monthly plans are pre-dominantly adult-led outlining an inappropriate balance of formal instruction including phonics and recognition of letters and numbers. There are some opportunities provided within the weekly plan to extend the children's emerging interests.
- The children's progression in learning and development is recorded regularly using the learning story approach, snapshot observations and by collating the children's mark-making creations. The methods by which the practitioners utilise this information to progress the children's learning is not currently apparent in medium or short-term planning.
- Practitioners record next steps in learning for each child and parents receive the observations in a portfolio at the end of the year. A form to garner parents' views on their child's experiences and development is distributed once a year.
- A room is allocated for multi-sensory activities within the indoor environment whereby the children can explore sand, water, playdough and paint. The large playroom offers opportunities for socio-dramatic play, construction, table-top play and a book area. There are limited natural resources and open-ended materials available to further stimulate the children's learning.
- The outdoor learning environment is accessed regularly and provides opportunities for gross physical movement using a range of equipment and wheeled vehicles. Raised planting beds have been introduced to offer children the opportunities to dig and plant. There are minimal opportunities for the children to investigate and explore open-ended, authentic materials outdoors.
- Practitioners model mathematical language intuitively during play. They provide opportunities for the children to develop vocabulary using song, rhyme and story and offer mark-making experiences in the creative area. Practitioners occasionally use modelling, scaffolding and some questioning to support the children in their play.
- Practitioners have previously received mentoring support through the Better Start Access and Inclusion Model (AIM). The leader has completed the Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) training to promote inclusive practice within the setting.

Actions advised

- It is advised that practitioners adopt a consistent, emergent approach to planning that exploits the children's varied interests and learning stages. This will promote progression through appropriately pitched experiences.
- It is advised that practitioners review and develop the indoor and outdoor learning environments to stimulate, consolidate and extend the children's learning through the provision of open-ended and authentic play materials.
- Practitioners are advised to strengthen the variety of interaction strategies used and adopt consistent opportunities for modelling, questioning, scaffolding and co-constructing during play. This will promote and extend the children's learning, language and cognition.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is good.
- Children display self-confidence as they freely choose from a range of activities on offer during free-play in both the indoor and outdoor learning environments.
- The majority of children are developing the ability to play co-operatively indoors. Some children who were involved in minor conflicts during play require further opportunities to develop empathy with peers and an understanding of the language of feelings.
- Children experience a sense of achievement through encouraging commentary provided by the practitioners. Some children demonstrate an awareness of their competent abilities when using self-help skills during the session.

- A sample portfolio was observed during the inspection which displayed a wide variety of observations highlighting the child's learning achievements. As the majority of the observations focused on more formalised numeracy and literacy experiences, the information collated does not adequately reflect a connected, child-led journey of development.
- Children are building an awareness of their uniqueness through provision of spaces for their personal belongings, a visual family tree and discussions about family during play. They have the opportunity to develop an awareness of the local community through the range of planned outings and visits from members of the locality during the year.
- Children are developing listening skills and an appreciation of rhyme, song and story during the daily circle-time. An awareness of mathematical language is emerging from natural opportunities to count and classify during play and tidy-up.
- Children have the opportunity to investigate in the digging area outdoors. They are provided with digging tools and magnifying glasses to explore features of nature such as insects and growing carrots. There are minimal opportunities provided both indoors and outdoors that extend the children's enquiry and ability to respond to open-ended questions.

Actions advised

- It is advised that children are provided with opportunities to discuss, recognise and build their understanding of feelings through discussion and the use of visual materials such as picture prompts and books.
- It is advised that the information collated about the children's learning and achievements represents a child-led journey, displaying personal interests and observations from a more play-based, emergent approach.
- It is advised that children are provided with consistent opportunities to investigate and explore new concepts and through shared interests, develop rich learning dispositions such as curiosity and enquiry.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- An ethos of teamwork and partnership is evident in the service. Practitioners collaborate to organise a range of activities and experiences for the children in the setting.
- The leader and practitioners regularly evaluate the planned activities and use frequent staff meetings to record clear roles and responsibilities and to establish training needs. Practitioners indicate a desire to undertake professional training to develop a clear understanding of *Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education.*
- Parents are made aware of the pre-school policies and procedures electronically upon registration of their child. They are informally consulted with regard to their child's experiences at arrival and collection and receive frequent newsletters outlining the current activities. One formal meeting is offered to discuss the child's learning with the key practitioner, with minimal turnout of parents reported.
- The settling-in period is supported by an open day and an information evening at which parents receive an informative welcome pack and *'All about me'* forms to support the sharing of personal information about their child.
- The pre-school's location within the school building creates opportunities for children to experience a smooth transition to primary education. There are planned occasions for the children to visit the junior infant classroom prior to transitioning. Both the principal and the junior infant teacher have visited and observed the children within the pre-school environment.
- Transition statements are prepared by each practitioner and forwarded to the relevant primary school, with parental permission.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the leader creates consistent opportunities for practitioners to engage in research and self-evaluation through the frequently held staff meetings. Additionally, providing practitioners with formal support and supervision will enhance professional reflection and evaluation.
- It is advised that the leader establishes more consistent and formal practices for consulting with parents, involving them as partners in their child's learning on an ongoing basis during the year.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The leader and the practitioners, through their engagement in professional dialogue around the key findings of this inspection report, demonstrate 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	**Good**
Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements	**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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