An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	Tír na nÓg
Setting Address	Avila Old Connell Newbridge County Kildare
DCYA number	18KE0425-09KE0105

Date of Inspection: 12-11-2018

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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	12-11-2018
Inspection activities undertaken • Pre-inspection meeting with a supervisor • Meeting with the setting manager on first day of inspection • Conversations with practitioners • Two days observing interactions during a number of sessions across the five pre-school rooms • Review of educational resources and facilities	• Interaction with the children • Review of relevant setting documents • Review of relevant records of children's learning and development • Post-inspection feedback meeting with the owner, the setting manager, the setting supervisor and the early years coordinator

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Established in 1997, Tír na nÓg is a private full-day, sessional and after-school setting located in Newbridge, Co Kildare. The premises comprise a number of buildings which have been consolidated within the one site. It provides care and education for children from diverse cultural backgrounds, a number of whom speak English as an additional language. Considerable emphasis is placed on the promotion of daily outdoor experiences. An onsite manager is responsible for the day to day management of the setting and reports to the joint owners. The early year's coordinator leads curriculum development. During the early years education inspection, inspectors evaluated five pre-school rooms over two days; with the majority of children attending on a sessional basis. 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.
- A warm and friendly atmosphere is evident.
- The practitioners effectively implement a key person approach that supports the development of authentic relationships with children. They respond attentively in a very respectful manner.
- A good range of positive behaviour management strategies is used. Practitioners approach children calmly to re-affirm the boundaries of behaviour and acknowledge their feelings. In some instances, children were encouraged to find their own solution to interpersonal problems that arose.
- The predictable daily routine is well structured to afford children a balance of play opportunities within the indoor and outdoor learning environments. It responds flexibly to the needs and interests of children.
- A suitable range of strategies supports children during transitions; as they move from one part of the routine to the next, verbal and visual cues prepare and involve children. The use of a visual format to represent the daily routine was observed in a number of rooms.
- The snack time routines suitably promote social interaction; practitioners sit and contribute to relaxed conversations with children. The whole service approach to healthy nutrition ensures that children and parents become actively involved.
- Children's sense of belonging and self is nurtured through the use of individual photographs, projects and displays. In a few rooms children interact with family photographs. There is scope to celebrate the diversity of children's cultural backgrounds to a greater extent.
- The way the setting links with the community is commendable. Regular walking trips to story-sessions in the local library, participating in church carol services, community *Garda* visits and nature walks are all features of good practice. The annual graduation day is a special celebration when practitioners, children and their families come together.

Actions advised

- Practitioners are advised to further develop behaviour management strategies to enable children to develop the skills to self-regulate. A problem solving approach to interpersonal conflicts is advised.
- It is advised that the language and cultural backgrounds of the children be celebrated to a greater extent. Materials and activities need to be provided which represent a greater range of backgrounds. This could include music, food types, festivals, reading materials and role play props. This will promote positive understanding and appreciation of difference.

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 implementation of a play-based curriculum is informed broadly by the themes from *Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework.* Aspects of the Montessori method of education are also incorporated by fostering independence and movement in learning.
- A consistent approach to planning for children's learning and development is in place. At the time of the inspection, the long, medium and short-term plans were focused on themes and topics chosen by the senior management team. Incorporating children's emergent interests is at an early stage of development.
- Each practitioner regularly gathers information capturing key groups of children's learning experiences. Individual and group learning stories provide rich information about children's dispositions, skills, understanding and attitudes. These are shared with parents for comment.
- The indoor learning environments effectively support and stimulate children's learning through play. The majority of materials and resources are labelled and accessible to children. During the inspection, insufficient provision for the exploration of real, natural, sensory-rich resources and materials was noted.
- The children have daily access to the outdoor areas that enable physical play and development of social skills. There is a wooden shed available for role play and this could be adapted to extend the interests of children.
- The large pre-school unit caters for three distinct groups of children. During the inspection, plans to adapt this space into two separate sections were discussed. The adjoining covered outdoor space and interest areas within the unit need to be developed.
- The practitioners encourage playfulness; acting as play partners engaging and motivating children. They consistently use soft tones and positive body language in their interactions.
- Good opportunities are provided to support language, literacy and mathematical skills. An extensive range of quality books are available in each room; and story time is a regular feature of the daily routine.
- Practitioners effectively use action songs and rhymes to build vocabulary and mathematical language.
- Worksheets introduce specific letters each month and children are questioned on colours and shapes at circle time. This practice is not appropriate for pre-school children.
- The setting manager and practitioners proactively engage with a specialist from the Better Start Access and Inclusion Model [AIM]. Other outside agencies are also consulted to optimise support for children with additional needs. Specific advice is implemented through the curriculum. This includes the use of props to enhance communication and language development.

Actions advised

- Practitioners are advised to review the content of plans to reflect a more emergent enquiry-based curriculum. Long-term planning needs to build on the setting's ethos and agreed vision for children's learning and development. Children's interests and ideas should be incorporated to a greater extent in medium and short-term plans.

- It is advised that the range of sensory-rich and real materials be greatly enhanced and freely available in the indoor and outdoor environments. Regular access to sand, water and paint is advised.
- The potential of the pre-school unit needs to be better exploited to allow for distinct areas for a wide range of play and learning experiences. This will ensure greater calm and flow. The covered outdoor space could be developed into a specific interest area. For instance, sensory play might be considered.
- Practitioners are advised to develop meaningful age appropriate materials and activities to support the hands-on exploration of literacy and mathematical concepts. Circle-time closed questioning and the use of worksheets needs to be discontinued.

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 show good engagement and positive efforts in their learning. They demonstrate enjoyment and confidence in their abilities.
- In most rooms, children reflect on their learning through the group journal and daily reflection discussions. This is contributing to their view of themselves as competent learners.
- The children display very secure relationships with the practitioners and their peers. They appear to be friendly and respectful towards one another.
- Very good opportunities are provided to build children's capacity for independence. They are encouraged to take responsibility for managing their personal belongings, their self-care needs and the environment. They actively tidy-up and ensure materials are put away in the shared outdoors for the next group.
- At the time of the inspection, children had short periods of time for child-led play.
- They display positive social interaction with their peers and the practitioners. The children are developing friendships and an awareness of their feelings. They demonstrate a developing capacity to use social skills such as sharing, turn-taking, co-operation and the ability to negotiate.
- Many appropriate opportunities are provided to strengthen, refine and enhance children's gross and fine motor skills.
- In a few instances, children responded to questions that challenged their thinking and enquired into their thought processes.
- Songs, rhymes and story-telling facilitate the active exploration of sound, pattern, rhythm and repetition in language.

Actions advised

- It is advised that children be allowed to lead their own learning. Practitioners can offer extended periods of child-led play and support them to be able to make choices and decisions about their play.
- It is advised that children be given greater opportunities to respond to a variety of open-ended questions.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- The manager works closely with a senior management team in providing positive, confident and focused leadership. The early year's coordinator facilitates training opportunities and offers support and advice to enhance quality practices.
- The management and practitioners continually strive to improve provision for the benefit of children and families. The setting has applied to Better Start for mentoring support.
- An ethos of reflective practice is fostered in the setting. Practitioners contribute to the annual update of policies and procedures. They use their knowledge of *Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education* to align their practice with agreed standards. Using *Síolta* to facilitate self - review is a logical next step in this process.

- Highly effective systems are in place for the management of staff and team communication. The manager provides staff with individual support and supervision on a monthly basis. Professional goals are identified and achievements acknowledged through this process.
- Management puts well-developed systems and practices in place for professional learning and development. This results in improvement to the learning processes for children. A weekly allocation of time is allowed to enable practitioners maintain relevant records.
- Parental partnerships are based on positive attitudes, respect and willingness to listen and change. Formal and informal communication keeps parents up-to-date with their children's progress. Parents of 'full-day' children are encouraged to share their expectations about care and learning. This opportunity could be extended to all parents.
- Organised visits for parents new to the setting are facilitated so they can meet with the practitioners. A welcome pack is provided which contains a summary of the most relevant policies and procedures.
- Transitions between rooms are organised in partnership with parents to ensure the needs of children are met. A staggered introduction builds children's familiarity with the new room and practitioners.
- Significant efforts are made to support children's transition from pre-school to primary school. The practitioners complete a report that summarises children's experiences. Parents are encouraged to share this with the school.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to use the self-evaluation tools from the Aistear/Síolta practice guide to formalise self-review, self-reflection and subsequent improvement plans.
- It is advised that the parents of all children attending the setting be given the opportunity to provide feedback on their expectations about care and learning.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the setting to implement the actions advised above is very good as demonstrated in the commitment to on-going development and 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	**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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