An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	TLC Unlimited
Setting Address	Woodfield Blarney County Cork
DCYA number	17CC0610

Date of Inspection: 06 & 07-11-2018

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agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

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	06 & 07-11-2018
Inspection activities undertaken • Meeting with setting manager • Meeting with practitioners	• Observation of interactions during a number of sessions • Interaction with children • Review of relevant documents • Feedback to setting manager and practitioners

CONTEXT OF SETTING

TLC Unlimited is an urban, privately owned early years setting providing baby and toddler care, as well as pre-school education and full day care. Currently fifty-two children attend the morning Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) sessions in three separate rooms. Seven practitioners, provide early years education on a daily basis. One of the practitioners provides support under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM). The inspection was carried out over two days. The owner, the manager and one room leader 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, and the response submitted on behalf of the setting can be found in the appendix of this report.

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 fair.
- A caring ethos is evident with a warm, welcoming atmosphere. Overall practitioners show sensitivity, warmth and a positive regard for the children and their families.
- The daily routine consists of a short indoor free play period, and an outdoor free play period, weather permitting. There are long, physically inactive, practitioner-directed times during which the children are required to concentrate on specific activities.
- The children engage very well in tidying up the play room after the morning free play time. This provides for informal mathematical learning through sorting, pairing, matching, sequencing and organising. There are too many transitions between activities and the majority of them result in long, inactive waiting times.
- The snack time is utilised as a social occasion, where the children sit, eat and communicate together. Practitioners do not sit with the children during this time and so miss the opportunity to provide a broad range of learning and development experiences, such as language acquisition and development, news sharing and mathematical learning
- Some opportunities are provided for the children to develop an appreciation of themselves as individuals and as members of groups. There are some family walls, a friendship handprint display, children's names above their coat hooks and birthday calendars.
- Practitioners provide some guidance and encouragement towards positive behaviour. Some inconsistences were noted during the inspection.
- Some opportunities are provided for the children to get to know people and places within the community. The 'guide-dogs' came to visit the setting on the second day of the inspection and there is evidence of outings and exploration of the local area.

Actions advised

- Practitioners are advised to change the daily routine to provide more time for child-initiated/led free play both indoors and outdoors. The children need to be physically active most of the time, in order to develop and refine their physical skills.
- Transitions between activities need to be kept to a minimum and should be fluid, with children having agency and autonomy. For example the children could go and wash their hands after they finish tidying up, get their lunch bag and sit at the lunch table in a place of their choice. Times of transition need to be utilised as positive learning and development opportunities.

- Practitioners are advised to create a relaxed, family type mealtime, where everybody sits, eats and chats together. The adults need to function as role models of healthy eating, good habits and positive behaviour.
- Steps need to be taken to ensure that practice is more child-centred, reciprocal and respectful of children's autonomy, individuality and uniqueness. Practitioners are advised to utilise the 'Interaction' pillar of the online *Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide* to familiarise themselves with strategies and methodologies to facilitate a broad range of learning experiences.

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 fair.
- A broad-based curriculum is developed and utilised. Medium and short term curriculum plans are on display. There is no evidence of an emergent curriculum. Planning is not adequately informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*.
- A variety of assessment approaches is used to gather information about children's learning and development. These include developmental checklists, 'a unique child' learning and development summary page and some learning stories. There are no evident links between assessment outcomes and curriculum planning.
- The environments are well maintained and safe. Indoor and outdoor environments offer a limited scope of play options and accessibility is further restricted by the adult-directed approach. The outdoor environment is used in dry weather at present.
- Play is recognised as a medium through which the children learn and develop. There are some opportunities in all the rooms during the morning for the children to engage in play activities alone, with peers and with practitioners.
- Children's emergent language, literacy and numeracy skills are fostered in a variety of ways, such as at news-time, and through songs, rhymes and stories. In the Naíonra, the Irish language is introduced very well through good immersion throughout the day. All rooms use the Irish language for everyday words and situations. Didactic teaching methods are used to impart academic knowledge.
- There is some recognition of the diversity within the setting evident in the displays, the materials and the interactions.

Actions advised

- Practitioners are advised to engage with the 'Assessment and Planning' pillar of the *Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide* to gain knowledge and understanding about the development and implementation of an emergent, enquiry-based curriculum.
- In-depth engagement with the 'Play' and the 'Environment' pillar of the *Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide*, in particular the completion of the self-evaluation audits is advised. Child-initiated/led play needs to become the main medium through which the children learn and develop. All the environments, indoors and outdoors need to be well structured and effectively resourced to stimulate, support, consolidate and extend children's learning and development. It is advised that full rain gear be organised for the children and the practitioners, so that the benefits of daily outdoor play can be enjoyed all through the year.
- Practitioners are advised to refrain from the use of didactic teaching methods and activities, such as rote learning, formal work based on numbers, letters, colours, and shapes; colouring-in, tracing and matching on paper. These methods and activities are not age and developmentally appropriate.
- More attention needs to be paid to the learning of children who speak English as an additional language. Their home languages need to be made visible in the environment and practitioners need to develop some props, such as a list of essential words, to support their work with all children.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is fair.
- Overall the children are motivated and interested. During some lengthy adult-initiated/led activities, such as news and circle time or whole group arts and craft activities, the children show signs of boredom and disengagement.
- Particularly during the short free-play periods the children demonstrate positive learning dispositions, such as initiative, self-reliance, self-confidence, resilience, resourcefulness and persistence.
- Equally, the short interactive, exploratory free-play periods offer some opportunities for the children's to develop and refine their personal and social skills, such as self-regulation, conflict resolution, negotiating, turn-taking and problem solving.
- During circle time there was some evidence of children reflecting, predicting and remembering as well as communicating their interests, feelings and personal experiences.
- There is lots of evidence of whole group, product art, such as the 'origami' dog and template art.
- The use of the Irish language provides good scope for the children to appreciate how different languages can be used with different people and situations.
- Some lovely engagement and making sense of the surrounding natural environment was evident on the second day of the inspection, when the children were raking leaves and running after them. The children derived great enjoyment from petting the guide dogs that came to visit the setting. They also discussed their purpose; this was very enjoyable and this type of activity is an effective way of broadening the children's awareness of their local community.

Actions advised

- Practitioners are advised to tailor the length of activities to the age appropriate attention span of the children. Activities need to be based on the children's interests and need to provide interesting and inspiring content. More physically active, sense-rich and fun-filled activities would provide deeper learning experiences for the children.
- The practitioners need to establish a better balance between adult-initiated/led and child-initiated/led activities.
- Art and craft activities, need to be based on children's interests and offered as free-choice activities. Activities need to be process oriented and offer opportunities for individual, unique, creative expression of thoughts, ideas and feelings. A broad variety of art work, such as free-colouring, free-painting, playdough modelling, and junk-art, needs to be available to the children throughout the day.
- The practitioners need to ensure that the outdoor environment, in particular provides plenty of opportunities for the children to develop their physical body, It needs to provide a challenging, sense-rich environment where the children can manipulate objects and diverse materials, and develop and refine their gross motor skills, core-strength, sense of balance and spatial awareness.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is fair.
- Brief daily, informal meetings are utilised in every room to reflect on the day. The daily diary is used to support this reflection. There are no formal, documented team meetings at present.
- There is no set time for professional reflection, review and planning of practice.
- The vision and direction of the work of the setting is mainly focussed on academic learning, through the use of didactic teaching methods and activities. There is little evidence of practice being informed by contemporary evidence-based theory about children's learning and development or by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework.*
- It is evident that management and staff avail of continuous professional development opportunities. Recently, practitioners completed courses on mindfulness, child protection and sign-language, and practitioners have attended workshops around 'messy play' and speech therapy.

- The setting has established some communication channels with the families. These include informal daily chats, notes on events, and sharing of children's work collected in their folder on a termly basis. The setting is currently up-dating policies and procedures and developing a parental handbook.
- Settling-in is family friendly and gradual, ensuring continuity of experiences for the children.

Actions advised

- The setting is advised to seek external advisory support, such as the quality development support provided by *Better Start*.
- The setting is advised to engage in an in-depth manner with all areas of the *Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide*.
- Effective strategies need to be put in place for professional reflection, mentoring, supervision support and continuous professional development of all staff in the setting. Management and practitioners are advised to seek continuous professional development options, related to *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*, with a priority around 'emergent curriculum' development and 'learning through play'.
- Management needs to ensure that the various skill sets of all staff members are utilised effectively and that knowledge and skills are disseminated across the setting.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

Based on the commitment and engagement demonstrated by management and staff, during the post-inspection feedback meeting and in their interest in continuous professional development, the capacity of the setting to continue 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	**Fair**
Quality of processes to support children's learning and development	**Fair**
Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements	**Fair**
Quality of management and leadership for learning	**Fair**

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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APPENDIX

SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

TLC Unlimited acknowledges the result of 'Fair' from the recent DES Inspection in November 2018. Since the inspection TLC have been working in collaboration with 'Better Start' to improve the quality of childcare. We believe we have adapted our environment to enhance the quality in all areas to support the children's learning and achievements. TLC is working as part of a team creating a child-led emergent enquiry curriculum throughout with the aid of 'Aistear Siolta Practice Guide'.

This is an ongoing process which we will continue to evaluate and assess each area individually with use of the following headings:

1. **Quality of context to support children's learning and developing.**
2. **Quality of processes to support children's learning and developments.**
3. **Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements.**
4. **Quality of management and leadership for learning**

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection **activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.**

Actions taken by TLC Unlimited:

- Practitioners are following the advice from the DES and are providing more time for child-led activities indoors and outdoors – rain gear provided whatever the weather! Children are physically active for most of the day. (We have removed many tables to create more space for play.)
- Practitioners are joining the children at meal-time and providing a relaxed atmosphere, engaging in daily conservations at the child's level.
- Practitioners are refraining from using didactic teaching methods instead creating more suitable environment age appropriate activities for the children in each room.
- All practitioners have been given an allocated time each week to study the 'Aistear Siolta Practice Guide' in depth and implement an emergent, enquiry based curriculum.
- We are incorporating diversity within the setting between children and staff and displaying visible evidence.
- Each room has created a space for art and crafts, with supplies to use at their own discretion, the children can be creative and expressive of thought, ideas and feelings.
- Regular staff meetings are carried out and planning and assessment are discussed. All practitioners will take part in a course **'Introduction to Aistear'** in for May 2019 facilitated by an Early Years specialist from Better Start.