An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>Martina’s Playschool</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>The Old Schoolhouse</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Riverstown Community Centre</td>
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<td>Riverstown</td>
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<td>Glanmire</td>
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<td>County Cork</td>
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<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>09CC0028</td>
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Date of Inspection: 21-11-2019
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 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 Inspection

Date of inspection | 21-11-2019
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| Inspection activities undertaken | Observation of interactions during a number of sessions |
| Meeting with service manager | Interaction with children |
| Meeting with practitioners | Review of relevant documents |
| | Feedback to service manager and practitioners |

**CONTEXT OF SERVICE**

Martina’s playschool is an urban, privately owned early years setting. Six practitioners provide early years education and care for thirty-three children during two morning sessions on a daily basis. Two practitioners are employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM). On the day of the inspection two students availing of work placement experience were also present. The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the report, and the response of the setting will 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 very good.
- A highly caring ethos is prevalent. The practitioners are very welcoming, they show sensitivity and create a warm atmosphere. Their positive regard for the children and their families is evident in all the interactions.
- The daily routine promotes the children’s physical, social and emotional security, together with their learning and development. Currently, there are too many transitions between activities throughout the session.
- Snack time is utilised very effectively as a social occasion and to promote well-being and a happy lifestyle. Most practitioners sit, eat and communicate with the children during the mealtime, modelling good habits for life and promoting language use and learning in a relaxed family-type atmosphere.
- Times of transition are fluid and are announced ahead of time, to allow the children time to make the transition from one activity to the next. The children are very actively involved in tidy-up time.
- The relationships between the practitioners and the children are very respectful, responsive and reciprocal. The practitioners model positive behaviour and provide meaningful guidance and encouragement towards it.
- The children’s sense of identity and belonging is nurtured very effectively. Practice is child-centred and the uniqueness of each child is respected and fostered. A range of opportunities is provided throughout the year, to bring the children, their families and the practitioners together in the setting. Parents and community members share their expertise and interests with the children.
- Diversity is recognised, valued and affirmed within an inclusive learning environment, as well as in the style, pace and focus of the children’s learning and development.

*Action advised*

- A slight change of the daily routine is advised. Adult-initiated/led arts and craft activities need to be optional, and offered parallel to free-play. This will ensure that the children have more choice and agency over their learning. This will also help to reduce the number of transitions experienced by the children.
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.
- A broad-based curriculum, informed by and linked to Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework is developed and implemented.
- A variety of assessment approaches, such as learning stories, a ‘development flower’ and art collections are used to gather and document the children’s learning and development. An informative group learning journal is also created. The children’s work is collected in individual folders which are available to the children and their families at all times.
- High-quality interactions with the children are facilitated. The practitioners actively extend children’s thinking and language learning during play. They use appropriate interaction strategies, such as active listening, prompting and asking open-ended questions to facilitate a broad range of learning experiences.
- The indoor environments are well structured and incredibly richly and meaningfully resourced to offer a myriad of play options. The setting currently has no access to an outdoor area, but plans are in place to secure a small area to the side of the building. This is commendable, as the outdoor area has the potential to offer a range of important learning and development opportunities, crucial for the overall healthy development of the children.
- The children’s emergent language, literacy and numeracy skills are fostered effectively. High-quality books are provided for interactive exploration. Song and rhymes and action games are enjoyed frequently. Some Irish words are used very naturally for everyday things and situations. The sensory table, a range of construction materials, rich mark-making resources and the mathematical materials provide opportunities to the children to engage in activities which build early positive dispositions towards, mathematics, engineering, science and the arts.
- The provision for the children’s learning and development is closely aligned to their interests. The children eagerly utilise the opportunities provided within the richly resourced environment, to actively explore and use thinking and reasoning to make sense of the world. They achieve fulfillment, success and mastery during their activities.

Actions advised
- The practitioners are advised to make succinct links to the children’s learning and development in the individual learning folders, as well as in the group learning journal.
- The practitioners are advised to refrain completely from the use of didactic teaching methods, such as tracing letters and numbers on paper and colouring-in, as this is not conducive to the children’s learning and development at pre-school stage. The practitioners are advised instead, to focus even more on utilising teach-able moments and on co-constructing knowledge with the children.

AREA 3
QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is excellent.
- The children demonstrate engagement and enjoyment in their learning and show a positive sense of well-being. They clearly have ownership over their learning environment, are confident and competent and display positive learning dispositions, such as resourcefulness, initiative, self-reliance and resilience.
- The children are well able to play co-operatively in pairs and small groups, using their developing personal and social skills, such as self-regulation, problem-solving, negotiating and turn-taking.
- Both verbal and non-verbal communication strategies are used by the children to share information, make requests and negotiate play situations.
- The children express their feelings, ideas and thoughts in very unique, creative ways, by means of mark-making, making art and craft, moving to music, exploring stories, constructing and engaging in role play. During the inspection, some children worked in a very concentrated manner and with immense persistence on a group work winter collage.
- In particular, the big hall indoors is utilised quite effectively to develop the children’s physical fitness, together with their gross and fine motor skills. In the absence of an outdoor area, this ensures that the children learn in a variety of contexts throughout the day.
AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
  - Management and staff regularly reflect on and review their practice. Daily informal meetings and termly, more formal whole-staff meetings are utilised for review and planning. The outcomes of these formal meetings are documented, so that they can be shared, acted upon and reviewed.
  - An ethos of teamwork, collaboration and partnership is evident.
  - Overall the staff in the setting are aware of relevant research and evidence-based theory. Current best-practice policy and procedure developments need to be shared more effectively across all staff members. Practitioners are not familiar with the online Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide.
  - The stated philosophy and vision of the setting is evident in the practice of all staff. Opportunities are provided for each staff member to take a leadership role in promoting quality learning.
  - Clear two-way channels of communication are established between the setting and the families. These include electronic media, charity events, parent-practitioner meetings, newsletters and an informative notice board.
  - Gradual, family-friendly settling-in procedures are in place. Good, meaningful working relationships are established with the local primary school.

Action advised
- Management is advised to encourage and support the continuous professional development of all practitioners. To this end, the systematic use of the online Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide is advised.
Summary of Overall Inspection

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Quality Level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of context to support children’s learning and development</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of processes to support children’s learning and development</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of children’s learning experiences and achievements</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of management and leadership for learning</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
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</tbody>
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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. |

Published March 2020
APPENDIX

SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection report

We are very pleased with the comprehensive report that was completed in our setting Martina’s Playschool. The advice and guidance given to us here will help us to improve our practice in all areas. The advice is both appreciated and important to us. We will implement what has been noted here and be a better service for it.

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

Area 1

We have adjusted our daily routine to include more options. The children will now be advised that there is an arts and craft activity set up at the table should they wish to participate. This will ensure that all children feel listened to and have a decision in their learning opportunities, it will also establish a link to an environment which is holistic and inclusive with the child’s needs reflected and apparent.

Area 2

The children’s individual learning journals will now have a more holistic overview of their learning and development. We can acknowledge where the child’s individual learning journals may look similar, to us our approach to the journals were always unique to each child. To improve on this we will take the advice of using teachable moments with less didactic learning to start with, and aim to abolish them fully in time. We had begun to eliminate didactic teaching methods in our classrooms before the inspection, only to find the children looked for them on occasion. While encouraging and expanding on free art using props and real objects from the environment to draw inspiration from. We follow a child led curriculum.

Area 3

The children at Martina’s Playschool are very intelligent, happy and confident individuals. The children are very honest and self-reliant but will come to you should the need arise. The children are becoming quite proficient at solving their own problems should a disagreement occur. We have a variety of ways to ensure that children can express themselves. We returned to our original singalong each day. We utilise the space we have in the hall to create an environment encouraging children to move and explore. We hope to one day have our outdoor area, for now we have immense space and get plenty of physical activities to develop our gross motor skills.
Area 4

All staff are made aware of a board in the office which will be updated with continuous professional development courses relevant to the area of childcare. The online Síolta Practice Guide was shown to all staff members who are now using it to educate themselves on current best practice. The examples shown are very clear, short and useful to both rooms. These will be utilised in future practice.