An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION - FOCUSED INSPECTION

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Name</th>
<th>Balrothery Crèche and Afterschool</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service Address</td>
<td>154 Balrothery Estate</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Balrothery</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tallaght</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dublin 24</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>09DS0227</td>
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Date of Inspection: 23-01-2018
WHAT IS AN EARLY YEARS EDUCATION-FOCUSED INSPECTION?

The Early Years Education-focused 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-focused Inspection

Date of inspection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inspect Date</th>
<th>23-01-2018</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inspection activities undertaken</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Meeting with service manager</td>
<td>• Interaction with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meeting with practitioners</td>
<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Observation of interactions during a number of session</td>
<td>• Feedback to service manager and practitioners</td>
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CONTEXT OF SERVICE

Balrothery Crèche and Afterschool is a privately owned, full day care and afterschool service located in a private dwelling. The service has been in place for twenty years. The current owner has been running the service for seven years. She promotes a play-based learning programme. On the day of the inspection, ten children, the lead practitioner and a support practitioner were in attendance. The owner, the manager, the lead practitioner and the support practitioner 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.
- Parents are warmly greeted as they bring their children into the service and they spend time chatting to the practitioners.
- The daily sequence of activities is displayed at child height. Children know the routine well and move seamlessly from one activity to the next.
- Transitions are signalled by the practitioner giving children verbal reminders. The practitioners invite the children to tidy up and encourage them to be involved in the next activity.
- The children are offered very good opportunities to be active agents, choosing and organising their own activities such as selecting their materials and deciding where and with whom they will sit.
- Snack time is valued as a social occasion during which the practitioners sit and chat with the children.
- The practitioners have developed close secure relationships with the children and praise and encouragement are offered to all children throughout the session. On the day of the inspection, the practitioners were attentive to children who were new to the setting and they encouraged their participation in the group activities by sitting close to them.
- The uniqueness of the children is reflected in the birthday display and the array of photographs of the children inside and outside the room.
- Parents are invited to the service for the end-of-year graduation.
- Diversity is reflected in the display of ‘hello’ in different languages and the flags reflecting different countries.
- As part of the planning for ‘Beep Beep’ day, the practitioners brought the children on a walk to visit the lollipop lady. In previous years, the service has had visits from people in the local community such as the lollipop lady and the fire brigade. There is scope to further develop the children’s awareness of the local community and the people within it.

Action advised

- Practitioners are advised to extend the children’s awareness of the local community. This could be achieved by developing a map of the local area showing areas of interest to the children such as local shops and the park and by displaying this map in the room.

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.
- The lead practitioner undertakes long-term and short-term planning, based on seasonal themes and topics that are linked to Aistear; the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. These are divided into weekly topics and include the children’s emergent interests.
- The lead practitioner uses a large floor book to highlight the children’s engagement in activities by using photographs and by including the children’s comments.
- The lead practitioner uses a reflective diary to document the children’s interests and achievements.
- The observations of the children are undertaken by the lead practitioner once a term, using a learner template to capture the children’s learning and achievements. These observations are linked to Aistear. Anecdotal notes and post-it notes are used to capture children learning in the moment.
- The lead practitioner has consulted with parents and sought their feedback regarding the children’s learning and experience of topics covered to date.
- The children’s learning journals reflect the voice of the child: photographs representing their interests and their engagement in activities are maintained alongside their learner stories. Their comments are also recorded. These are sent home once a term and parents are invited to share their opinions and comments.
- Calm, positive tones are used by the practitioners in their interactions with the children. The observed use of open-ended questions and prompts supports and encourages children’s thinking and problem-solving skills: for example, ‘Tell me about ‘and ‘what else do you need?’
- On the day of the inspection, there was a very good balance between adult-led and child-led activities. Children were observed organising and leading their play for example, organising their play in the home corner and inviting the practitioner to take part.
- The indoor environment is well laid out in discrete interest areas with a range of suitable accessible resources. The children access the outdoor area when the weather is fine. On the day of the inspection, it was noted that there was scope to develop and include additional resources within the outdoor area in order to support the children’s learning.
- Play is valued and supported by the practitioners. They facilitate children’s play by effectively supporting the children to collaborate and work together to complete a jigsaw. They take part in the children’s play when invited, such as when playing school.
- A wide range of mark-making materials is available and children’s creativity is reflected in the examples of their free process art displayed creatively in the room.
- Throughout the session observed, practitioners promoted the children’s emergent literacy and numeracy skills. They used songs and rhymes and discussed and compared shapes, letters and numbers.
- Children with additional needs are well supported and integrated into the setting. The practitioners make connections with the relevant professional agencies and there is mutual sharing of information with parents and practitioners.

Actions advised
- Practitioners are advised to record children’s learning on a more frequent basis.
- It is advised that practitioners begin the process of redeveloping the outdoor area. The self-evaluation tool in the Outdoor Audit contained within the Aistear toolkit will assist them in the provision of equipment and interest areas outdoors.

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 demonstrate enjoyment and engagement in their self-selected activities and the adult-planned activities. For example during the adult-planned cutting and gluing activity, children display perseverance and achieve success and mastery; during the inspection, one child stated ‘look at me, I’m cutting’.
- The children are developing a good sense of their own ability and are confident in making decisions about their learning experiences. Children select the songs they want to sing and are given the
choice of playing a group game or listening to a group story. They support children who are new to the setting by telling them they must guess the colour during the feely bag activity. They also discuss with their friends, their photographs which are displayed on the wall. They acknowledge their achievements, saying, for example ‘I’m a clever girl, I can do it on my own.’

- The children’s sense of identity and belonging is reflected in the ‘All About me’ section of their learner journals, their placemats, their handprints on the door and in many individual and group photographs in the room.
- Children were observed accessing their comfort toys when needed and they are offered additional time to finish their snack before moving on to the next activity.
- Children talk to practitioners and friends about their family life and during circle time they describe their parents’ jobs. They have access to their family books that contain photographs of family members.
- Children take part in the tidy-up routines, they share with each other and they play together very well. Children’s self-help skills and independence are reflected in their ability to take off and put on their coats and shoes, and their ability to take responsibility for managing their personal and hygiene needs. There is scope within the daily routine to offer children additional opportunities to practise their social skills and independence by the creation of child-helper list. This also helps children to feel connected to their group.
- The children enjoy storytelling in a large group, in pairs with their friends, and one-on-one with the practitioner.
- Children demonstrate their knowledge of letters, shapes and numbers. They count the number of cakes they make with the playdough, compare sounds of the letters in their names and a few practise writing their name.

Action advised
- In order to extend the children’s sense of independence and social skills it is advised that the practitioners develop a visual, formal child-helper list and display it at child height. This could include a range of practical tasks to be undertaken by the children throughout the session.

AREA 4
QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- The practitioners in the two pre-school rooms chat together every day and discuss shared plans and upcoming events. At the end of each week they chat about any issues which have arisen. The whole staff come together for formal staff meetings once a term. Social media is used for sharing ideas for practice.
- There is evidence of good teamwork and partnership in this service. This is evident in the manner in which the staff talk to each other throughout the session about what is happening and what to do next.
- The room leader is a good role model for the staff. There is clarity around her roles and responsibilities.
- The owner accesses support, mentoring and advice from Early Childhood Ireland, and the local Childcare Committee. She also receives support for her role from a network of local providers.
- The owner visits the service on a daily basis, to offer informal support and supervision to the staff, and to offer positive feedback.
- The service uses computer technology for sharing an information booklet on the service’s policies and procedures at the start of the year, and to share with parents, photographs of the children engaged in activities. A parent’s information notice board is at the entrance to the service. The practitioners chat informally to parents about their children’s learning and achievements at arrival and collection times and they inform them of the upcoming themes and how they can be supported at home.
- An open-day is held in August to share information with parents for children starting in September. To support the children settling into the pre-school a staggered settling-in system of reduced hours is offered to parents and children. Parents are encouraged to stay until their child feels comfortable in the new environment.
- The practitioners chat to the children about their move to primary school. The service has developed some informal links with the local primary school and children who attend the service
for the afterschool programme talk to children about primary school. Additional approaches could be developed to support the children’s move to primary school.

**Actions advised**

- It is advised that practitioners introduce more frequent staff meetings that support planning and the sharing of information. The use of the *Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide* would be useful to enable them to review their procedures and practice and to discuss and record the planning for the month ahead.

- The development of additional approaches to support the children’s move to primary school is advised. This could be achieved by building on the links already established with the local school and by using a transition box that includes photographs of the local schools, samples of school uniforms, and by inviting teachers to visit the pre-school.

**CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE**

The owner, assistant manager and lead practitioner and support practitioner attended and engaged professionally in the feedback discussion following the inspection. The capacity of the service to continue to implement the actions advised above is very good.
### Summary of Overall Inspection

<table>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of processes to support children’s learning and development</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of management and leadership for learning</td>
<td>Good</td>
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### Language used in Early-Years Education-focused Inspection reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Provision that is excellent is exemplary in meeting the needs of children.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>Provision that is very good is highly effective in meeting the needs of children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Provision that is good is effective in meeting the needs of children but with some aspects to be developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Provision that is fair requires practice to be improved to meet the needs of children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Provision that is poor is inadequate and requires significant improvement to meet the needs of children.</td>
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