## EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

### REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Name</th>
<th>Connolly Children's Day Care Centre</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service Address</td>
<td>Ashgrove</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Coombe</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dublin 8</td>
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<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>09DY0011</td>
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**Date of Inspection:** 08-02-2018
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of inspection</th>
<th>08-02-2018</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inspection activities undertaken</strong></td>
<td><strong>Review of relevant documents</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meeting with service manager and practitioners</td>
<td>• Post-inspection feedback meeting with the service manager and practitioners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Observation of interactions and activities during the pre-school session</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Interaction with children</td>
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**CONTEXT OF SERVICE**

The Connolly Childcare Centre, established in 1996, is a community-run setting located in Dublin Inner City. The service provides full-time and part-time day care and pre-school education to children from the local area, some of whom participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the morning of the inspection, four practitioners and eighteen children were present in the pre-school room inspected. 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 good.
- On arrival, parents and children are greeted in a friendly manner by one of the practitioners. Due to the longevity of the service operating in the community, the practitioners know the children and families well. A key worker system is in place where each practitioner is responsible for building secure relationships with children and their families for a designated group of children. The key worker also has responsibility for gathering and recording information relevant to the children's learning in their group.
- Most of the children appeared settled and engaged in the daily activities during the pre-school session observed. On occasions, some naturally occurring minor issues and conflicts arose among the children. During this time, the practitioners took a directive role in solving the minor problems, as distinct from prompting and supporting the children to resolve the small differences for themselves.
- On the day of the inspection, the daily routine was found to have many transitions and some long periods of adult-directed activities. During one particular adult-directed activity, it was noted that over half of the children lost interest before the end of this activity. This resulted in many challenging behaviour issues arising and undue noise level for a period of time.
- Snack time is seen as a social occasion where the children and the practitioners sit together in their key-worker groups. During this time, the practitioners and children sing songs and rhymes, discuss healthy eating and children's interests.
- The children’s independents skills are fostered through the practitioners’ use of a helper rota to encourage the children to help out at mealtimes. Following meal times, the children are encouraged to tidy away their own delph and cutlery.
- The children’s sense of identity is nurtured and represented in the inclusive learning environment through photographic displays, birthday charts, and art work.
- Parents and families are invited into the service for festive events and multi-cultural days. Connections with the community include the children’s trips to the farm and the use of the local playground. On occasions, professionals within the community, such as the dental nurse, are invited in to the pre-school to share their experiences with the children.
**Action advised**

- In order to encourage and support the children’s self-regulation and problem-solving skills, the practitioners are advised to use behaviour management techniques, such as, positive reinforcement, conflict resolution strategies, and the display of positive rules for children to follow.
- It is advised the practitioners review and restructure the routine to ensure that there is a greater balance between adult-directed and child-led activities, with opportunities for the children to engage in longer periods of child-initiated activities.
- The practitioners are advised to reduce the number of transitions within the daily routine. Additionally, it is advised that a photographic display of the daily routine and suitable cues be introduced. These could include a bell or timer to indicate the ending of an activity and which would also support children’s to anticipate the next stage of the daily schedule. The use of the ‘Transitions’ pillar in the Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide to support this action is advised.

**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.
- An emergent play-based curriculum informed by the High/Scope philosophy and linked to Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework is in operation in the setting.
- Monthly planning takes account of children’s emergent interests and thematic seasonal events and activities. On the day of inspection, it was noted that while the thematic plan of ‘red fruit’ was evident in practice, the children’s emergent interest of ‘fire engines’ was not. It was also noted that short-term planning for children’s learning and development has not yet been established.
- Assessment approaches used to document and track the children’s learning and development include records of learning observations; some of these observations are strength-based while others focus on what the children are yet unable to do. The practitioners report that they prepare individual scrapbooks containing samples of the children’s art and activities. During the inspection, scrapbooks were not available to view as they are compiled at the end of the year.
- A bright, safe and secure indoor learning environment is divided into discrete interest areas. These include areas for construction play, table-top activities, creative, sensory and mark-making activities, and a house area that is located in the mezzanine above the book area. The book area that provides the children with a large soft, self-contained space to relax and unwind away from the busy room is highly commended. Resources and equipment are plentifully and age appropriate. On the day of inspection, it was noted that some of the equipment was disorganised and not all areas were accessible to the children, due to obstructions such as large equipment, chairs and tables placed in front of the shelving. A water tray is available; although, no water was added. The children did not have access to the outdoor area during the inspection.
- Play is the central medium through which children learn and develop during the adequate period of time dedicated to free play. The children have choice to actively engage in a verity of types of play such as sand, playdough, table-top activities, construction, books, and socio-dramatic. The practitioners sit with the children, offer support and encouragement and engage in activities as play partners. For example, when children were pretend playing in the house area, the practitioner engaged in the birthday celebrations, singing birthday songs, making a cake and blowing out the candles.
- Effective practice is evident in relation to the promotion of the children’s language and early literacy skills. Practitioners support this through a print-rich environment; they provide the children with access to high-quality books and regular opportunities to listen to and explore stories. They also make consistent use of rhymes and songs during the session. There were some effective examples of the practitioners extending the children’s thinking and interests during story time when they discussed the whale’s ‘blow hole’.
- The staff in the service promote an inclusive learning environment for the children. Links with parents, external support agencies and the local Public Health Nurse are established to support the children’s individual learning and social needs.

**Actions advised**

- It is advised that the practitioners develop a consistent strengths-based approach to the learning observations, focusing on what children can do, their emergent interests, likes and dispositions.
It is advised that the children’s individual scrapbooks be used to track the children’s learning during the year and that the children have regular access to it.

To enhance planning practice currently in operation, it is advised that the practitioners develop a method for short-term planning.

It is advised that the practitioners review the room layout and remove all obstructions blocking access to equipment to ensure that the children can independently access all equipment and resources available within the learning environment. It is also advised the practitioners ensure the children have daily access to the outdoor area.

**AREA 3**

**QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is good.
- During the inspection, the children demonstrated joyfulness as they engaged activities of choice and when they were actively engaged in some of the adult-led activities.
- It was noted on the day of the inspection, that some children found it hard to engage and concentrate during the adult-led activities. It was noted that during the short periods of free-play, the children’s concentration levels, engagement and their ability to self-regulate were at their highest. During this time, the children effectively demonstrated the ability to make decisions about their own learning as they self-selected construction, table-top, small-world activities and led pretend-play activities in the house area.
- Most of the children communicate confidentially with the practitioners and the children in the room. Many discuss items of interests and demonstrated the ability to question and answer appropriately. It was noted that a few children shared their success in activities with others. The use of open-ended questions by the practitioners to scaffold and extend the children’s thinking was limited.
- The children’s co-ordination and fine motor skills are developing as observed when they competently built toys from ‘Lego’ and completed small-piece jigsaws.
- The children’s sense of identity is developing. This was demonstrated as the children acted out a birthday celebration during pretend play as they referred to family members and friendships from time-to-time. They frequently made reference to likes and dislikes and most were happy to introduce the child next to them during a circle time activity.
- The children’s social skills are developing as they play together in pairs and small groups. Some examples of sharing, turn taking and co-operation were evident as a pair of children used a large truck to take a trip to Australia; one child drove the other pushed and navigated around the room to the destination. A small number of children displayed high levels of concentration skills as they successfully completed twelve to eighty-piece jigsaws, while another child explored the feeling of soft sand running through his fingers.
- A significant number of children displayed natural curiosity and intrinsic imaginative skills as they engaged in activities alone and in pairs. It was noted on the day of the inspection, that there were some missed opportunities for the practitioners to explore and extend these interests with the children.
- The children demonstrated an awareness in stories, songs and rhymes; they frequently the source books, sing and recite rhymes.

**Actions advised**

- It is advised that the practitioners develop techniques to encourage the children’s participation in sharing, planning and recalling learning experiences. For example, open access to individual learning journals will enable them to make links between past and present learning.
- The practitioners are advised to extend free play time and to explore emergent interests as they arise in group activities to enhance the children’s learning. They are also advised to use open-ended questions such as ‘why’ and ‘how’ in order to help foster the children’s thinking and participation in activities.
AREA 4
QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- The management and staff present as a professional team in the service. The manager demonstrated good leadership skills and works in partnership with the practitioners. The longevity of the working relationships between the manager and practitioners has contributed to the positive teamwork which is evident. Staff and management have worked in the setting between four and nineteen years, some of whom started on Community Employment Schemes or as students.
- Whole-staff meetings are held bi-monthly and reflection meetings for staff assigned to each room are held monthly. The manager has recently begun to conduct individual staff supervision to support the practitioners in their roles. All practitioners were observed to be active in leading learning for children during the session.
- The service avails of external support and training through the Local Child Care Committee. Some support is sought from other agencies as required and links with other local early-years providers are established.
- Continuous professional development is supported within the service. A staff member trained in High/Scope shares her knowledge of the curriculum with the rest of the practitioners.
- The parents are made aware of policies and procedures when signing contracts before the children start in the service. An emailed copy of the policy and procedures are given to parents on request; there are no paper copies available for parents who may not be able to access them electronically.
- There is an open-door policy in operation for parents to come in for a chat and a cup of coffee. This has provided opportunities for the practitioners to build close relationships with the parents.
- Information is shared with the parents through a range of technological applications and social media along with the displays of relevant information on the noticeboard in the service. Formal information on children learning and development is shared with parents when needs arise; these meetings can be initiated by practitioners or requested by parents.
- A settling-in policy supports the parents to gradually settle their children into the service on a phased in basis. Children are also supported in the move between rooms with the assistance of practitioners who help them to settle into new room and build secure relationships with the staff of the new room.
- Links with the local primary school to support the children’s transitions to school are limited. The practitioners currently only share information with the primary school regarding children with additional needs, if requested to do so by the parent.

Action Advised
- It is advised that the manager make contact with the Local Child Care Committee to gain more information on supports available for children with additional needs, such as information on the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM).
- It is advised that a room diary be considered to allow staff to document relevant information to support the sharing of information between them and to ensure all decisions from room meetings are recorded.
- It is advised that strategies that allow systematic and reciprocal sharing information between the pre-school and the parents be explored. It is also advised that policies and procedures be shared with all parents when children start pre-school during the critical settling-in stages and when any changes occur in the curriculum.
- The practitioners are advised to develop their transition policy further to include the strategies that support children to transition from pre-school to primary school in addition to those from home into pre-school.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE
The capacity of the service to continue to implement the actions advised above 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>Good</td>
</tr>
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<td>Quality of processes to support children’s learning and development</td>
<td>Good</td>
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<td>Good</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of management and leadership for learning</td>
<td>Good</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Language used in Early-Years Education-focused Inspection reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Provision that is excellent is exemplary in meeting the needs of children.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<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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APPENDIX

SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT
SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection report

- Our report is now sixteen months old and we have put to right any of the actions recommended in your report that is possible for us.

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 been using bells and egg timers for some time now to indicate end of activities.
- Photographic evidence of Aistear and Siolta is now visible in room as we have had on site training for all staff to support knowledge and implementation.

Area 2
- Again Aistear and Siolta implementation in greater dept. We have improved practice in planning and child led activities, each child has a learning journal that their individual work is added to regularly. Room lay out is a bit problematic as we are not purpose built and we use the space as best as possible. We do have our own private licensed playground that children have access to daily. On the morning of inspection it rained heavily and unfortunately not all children are brought to crèche in suitable outdoor clothing by their parents, but on a normal day all children get to use playground for at least 2 hours.

Area 3
- Aistear and Siolta implementation has solved actions in area 3.

Area 4
- We have been involved with Aim since Sept. 2018 level 5 and level 7 supports. All information is shared daily with parents through photo and written communication on the little vista app. This is sent directly to their iPhone/smart phone.
- Also developmental one to one meetings are held with key workers and parents three monthly or as required, staff meeting are recorded now in room diary. All our policies and procedures are available to parents on email. No one has asked yet for a hard copy, as all parents seem to have smart phones, but we can certainly print them a copy if requested.
- There are a total of five Primary schools in this area. We have most contact with St Bridget’s primary school. Out of our seventeen preschool children leaving us this year, only three are going local. The rest are going to educate together and different schools in D10, D22 D6 D15. It would not be possible to have close links with all schools, but if the need arises, we are always available to help or consult in any way we can.

Thank you for your report.