An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna  
Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION - FOCUSED INSPECTION

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Name</th>
<th>Head Start Pre-School</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service Address</td>
<td>Carraroe</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rathcline Road</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lanesboro</td>
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<td></td>
<td>County Longford</td>
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<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>09LD0006</td>
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Date of Inspection: 30-05-2018
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of inspection</th>
<th>30-05-2018</th>
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| Inspection activities undertaken | • Meeting with service manager  
• Observation of interactions during the morning preschool session  
• Interaction with children  
• Review of relevant documents  
• Post-inspection feedback meeting with the service manager |

**CONTEXT OF SERVICE**

Head Start Pre-School is a private early-years’ service, established in 1997 and attached to a private house in Lanesboro, County Longford. It offers a morning time session for children availing of the Early Childhood Care and Education Programme (ECCE). The service is run by a solo owner/practitioner and on the day of inspection there were eight children present. 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 very good.
- A warm and homely atmosphere is evident in the service. Relationships between the owner/practitioner and the children are open and positive. Children regularly hear positive affirmations about themselves and their activities from the owner/practitioner.
- Children are viewed as active agents in their learning and are independent during the morning routine. The daily routine provides ample opportunities for the children to experience deep engagement in play through extended play periods.
- Transitions between activities are effectively managed by the owner/practitioner who uses verbal prompts to support children to tidy-up and to move through the morning routine. Routines are used as learning opportunities with the consistent use of song throughout the day.
- Snack time is seen as a social occasion and children are given ample time to converse with each other and reflect on the events of the morning. The owner/practitioner sits with the children during snack time and supports social interaction. The effective use of a jobs’ board during snack time supports the children’s well-being and turn-taking.
- Children have good hygiene practices and independently use the toilet, wash their hands and clean up after snack. There is a strong emphasis on well-being in the service and this was reflected in the guidance provided to children who were learning about sun safety.
- The children’s individual and group identity and belonging is nurtured and celebrated in a variety of ways. Photographs of the children are displayed throughout the environment including individual pictures and names on their coat hooks, child profiles on the wall and a variety of learning stories with photographic evidence are displayed throughout the service. The children and practitioner also participate in the annual Road Safety ‘Beep Beep’ Day. The owner/practitioner continues to strive to extend community and parental involvement in the service.

**Action advised**

- It is advised that the owner/practitioner develop the children’s awareness of the local community by introducing and using photographs of various landmarks, buildings and people in the community. The availability of these items and the support of parental involvement will enhance children’s learning and their sense of identity and belonging.

**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 curriculum is informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and a play-based emergent curriculum is evident in the daily activities and experiences.
- The service has a curriculum policy and this is supported by interesting, broad-based long, medium and short-term plans that support the implementation of the curriculum.
- There is a range of assessment approaches used in the service and some of these support the emergent curriculum in action. The group learning stories displayed around the environment are particularly effective in prompting the children’s recall.
- Interactions between the practitioners and children were observed to be positive and supportive. The owner/practitioner spends time engaging with the children, asking open-ended questions, commenting on their experiences and supporting children to recall learning experiences.
- There is balance of child and adult-initiated interactions. The owner/practitioner supports children’s peer interactions.
- Play is central to the children’s learning and development. A suitable extended play period for free choice play supports children to engage in deep and meaningful play experiences. This supports children to experience mastery and success in their learning. On the day of inspection the owner/practitioner engaged in a game of hospital where she supported the children to discuss and explore concepts including administering medicines and taking blood pressure. This also supported the children’s language development.
- Both the indoor and outdoor environment are well laid out with suitable resources which are accessible for all children. There are specifically defined areas in both environments which support construction play, mark making, sensory exploration, quiet time, role play and physical activity.
- A highly inclusive approach is evident in the service that supports the participation and progression of children in the curriculum. The diversity of children’s learning styles, pace and focus is recognised. The owner/practitioner discussed a range of changes she has made in recent months to ensure the environment supports children with physical needs.

**Action advised**

- The owner/practitioner is advised to further extend the use of the planning and assessment tools by explicitly documenting the emergent interests of the children in the service and the activities which will extend this learning further.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is very good.
- All children arrive to the service eager and happy to take part in the daily routine.
- All children demonstrate enjoyment in their learning and are confident in choosing how to play, who to play with and when to change their play as desired.
- The children have a strong group identity and support each other throughout the day in their learning. Children were observed to support their friends to draw a picture and discuss what it was and why they had drawn it, supporting their creativity and self-reflection.
- Many children are confident in communicating and initiating conversation. Children are eager to discuss themselves, their families, interest and experiences both in and out of pre-school.
- There are ample opportunities for fine and gross motor development both indoors and outdoors including the availability of play-dough, climbing apparatus and freely accessible manipulative materials.
- Time and space is available for children to problem-solve in their play. On occasion, children were also observed to use problem solving techniques in social situations; there is scope to extend this.
- There is a suitable variety of songs and rhymes used throughout the day to support children’s language development. Children are confident in changing words in songs to explore colour and support identity and belonging through the medium of song.
- Open-ended questions are used frequently during the morning session and most children are competent and skilful in reflecting and answering these questions. On the day of the inspection, a group of children played in the dress-up area outdoors imagining they were fire-fighters. The
The owner/practitioner used open-ended questioning to support imaginative thinking about how the fire started, how to put it out and who was caught in the event. This stimulated the children’s creativity, their imagination and supported their language development in a playful way.

- Children are given the opportunity to reflect on their learning throughout the morning; during snack time and circle time, when they are being collected at the end of the day and using the array of pictures and learning stories on display in the setting.

**Action advised**

- To help develop the children’s awareness of their changing emotions and social needs, the owner/practitioner is advised to support more problem-solving strategies during large-group play and extend the awareness of emotional development in the planned curriculum for children.

**AREA 4**

**QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- The owner/practitioner is very professional in her work and strives to provide a high quality learning environment for the children.
- The owner/practitioner promotes and values continued professional development. The owner/practitioner has completed a range of professional development courses with her local County Childcare Committee and other organisations with whom she has links.
- The owner/practitioner has recently completed her degree in Early Childhood Education and Care and during her studies she began to use the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* to reflect on the service and implement a range of quality improvements. These included extending the use of learning stories and planning strategies in the service, as well as reviewing circle time.
- The owner/practitioner is aware of *Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education* and has attended workshops on the implementation of the framework.
- The service has an open-door policy in practice and this was evident on the day of inspection. This supports open channels of communication with parents and information regarding children and their learning and home situation is regularly shared between the owner/practitioner and parents.
- Parents receive an information handbook when their child starts in pre-school and recorded observations and group learning stories are shared with parents at the end of each year. Parents attend the annual graduation and Christmas party also.
- A range of suitable strategies are used effectively to manage transitions from the service to primary school. The owner shares information with parents and with local primary school teachers. A classroom pretend play area is set up for the children to role play in and uniforms are added to the dress up area for children to explore. The owner/practitioner also shares registration information from the schools with parents.

**Action advised**

- The owner/practitioner is advised to continue using the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* as a support tool to continue developing practice and to document the self-review process.

**CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE**

The capacity of the service to continue to implement the actions advised above is very good and this was evident in the post inspection meeting. The owner is committed to improving the quality of provision in the service and has a range of supports in place to do so.
### 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>
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<td>Very 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>
</tr>
<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.
I would like to take the opportunity to say what a positive experience the inspection was. The inspector was very professional, supportive and engaged with the children at all times in a positive way. I really appreciate all the advice I was given and value the input given. It will help support the children’s learning and improve my service.

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
A community book/folder will be made up with the new children showing local landmarks, using photographs and pictures for children to recognise eg: the fire station. The owner will involve the parents in this topic.

Area 2
The owner has revised and updated the planning sheets, making emerging interests of children bigger to add their interests.