EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>Toddlers Hill</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>54 Moorehall Rise</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ardee</td>
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<td></td>
<td>County Louth</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>09LH0004</td>
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Date of Inspection: 10-06-2019
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 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 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**: 10-06-2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inspection activities undertaken</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meeting with the setting manager</td>
<td>Interaction and discussion with the children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conversation with the early years practitioners</td>
<td>Review of relevant setting documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation of interactions and activities during two pre-school sessions</td>
<td>Review of records of the children’s learning and development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review of educational resources and facilities</td>
<td>Feedback discussion with the setting manager and the early years practitioners</td>
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**CONTEXT OF SETTING**

Toddlers Hill is a private setting located in a residential area in the town of Ardee. The setting was established eleven years ago. It provides two morning pre-school sessions for thirty-one children enrolled in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. The setting also offers full day care, part-time care and after-school care. Four early years practitioners were present in the two pre-school rooms and the manager was on-site and fully available on the day on the inspection. The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the 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 excellent.
- There is an extremely warm atmosphere in Toddlers Hill. The staff makes great efforts to welcome families and visitors. The setting has a notably strong focus on parental engagement and support.
- The practitioners operate a highly effective open-door policy and have established positive and respectful relationships with families and the local community.
- Relationships between the practitioners and the children are commendably positive, secure and supportive. There is a lovely sense of fun and enjoyment in the setting.
- There is a consistent daily routine established in both pre-school rooms. It allows substantial time for the children to be active agents in their play and learning, both indoors and outdoors. There are also brief, practitioner-facilitated, learning activities and a snack time which is a very relaxed occasion where the children’s social and communication skills are very effectively promoted by the practitioners.
- The practitioners are very aware of the importance of nurturing the children’s independence and self-care skills. They actively promote the children’s confidence and decision-making skills at every opportunity.
- The children’s developing sense of identity and belonging is commendably well-nurtured in the setting. The children hear frequent positive comments about themselves and their achievements from the practitioners. There are very attractive photographic displays of the children, their families and the local community. Parents are very actively involved in the setting, they attend celebrations and events regularly. The setting has numerous visitors through the pre-school year and engages in community events.

**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.
- The practitioners are actively engaged in the development of the curriculum. The curriculum is play-based and aligned to the principles of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. 
The practitioners are beginning to transition from theme-based planning to a system of planning based on the children’s current and emerging interests.

- The practitioners record the children’s learning in a variety of separate ways: photographs, learner stories, learner journals, work samples and an online application. A review of what information is recorded and how it is assessed would greatly support the practitioners’ development of an emergent curriculum and planning for the next steps in the children’s learning.
- Short-term planning is completed regularly in both pre-school rooms. At present, it is predominantly theme-based and focused on specific learning outcomes. The practitioners do observe and respond spontaneously to the children’s interests as they arise in play. These observed interests are not routinely recorded and used in short-term planning to intentionally support and extend learning.
- The indoor learning spaces are divided into distinct interest areas to support a variety of play and learning experiences. There is good provision of real and natural materials in both pre-school rooms.
- The practitioners in both rooms use a good variety of interactions strategies to support the children’s learning through play. They play as partners with the children, engage in very frequent conversations and follow the children’s interests.
- The children’s early literacy and numeracy is effectively supported by the practitioners in playful ways. They model using writing, such as making a list and they count with the children in real situations. There is scope to further enhance resources and materials to support the children’s early numeracy and literacy.
- The children are learning in an inclusive environment. The setting is linked with the Better Start Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) to access assessment and support for children with possible additional needs.

**Actions advised**

- It is advised that the practitioners create a single integrated record of each child’s personal and individual learning, development, interests and achievements.
- To further the development of an emergent curriculum, the practitioners are advised to use observations of the children’s current interests to plan, in the short term, for the next steps in learning. Planning could focus on areas such as additional resources/materials, specific interactions or a learning activity.
- It is advised that the practitioners introduce a wider range and variety of open-ended, real and natural materials with a particular focus on materials to support early literacy and numeracy development.

**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 are very well-settled in the setting and display very secure relationships with all of the practitioners. They arrive eager to begin play and learning.
- The children demonstrate very well-developed social skills. Many are capable turn-takers and can successful engage collaboratively in small-group, play activities. There are many loyal friendships within the group.
- A substantial amount of time is allocated each day to indoor and outdoor, child-initiated play. This supports the children to follow their own personal learning motivations and play ideas. It also supports them to learn and play in different social situations; alone, in pairs and in self-selected small groups.
- The children are highly motivated and engaged in their play activities and are making many choices and decisions throughout the day.
- During the practitioner-facilitated, group learning activities, the children are attentive, interested and eager to learn. There is potential to further support the children to reflect, making connections and consolidate their learning at these times.
- The children are very eager to communicate their ideas and experiences in many ways.
- The practitioners actively promote the children’s independence throughout the session. As a result, the children are developing good self-care skills and present as competent and capable.
The children are developing and learning well and experiencing success in line with their individual capabilities.

**Action advised**

- During group learning activities, it is advised that the children are given opportunities to think about and discuss the activity and learning. Posing questions, such as 'What do you think/know already? 'What would you like to think more about or find out more about?' and 'What do you think/know now?' could support deeper thinking and learning.

**AREA 4**

**QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- There is a very professional ethos in Toddler Hill. The staff display a commitment to providing a quality service to the children and families.
- Management and staff have a shared understanding of the broad-based learning goals for the children attending the ECCE programme. These curriculum goals are not documented.
- The staff engages in quality improvement activities at monthly meetings. A recent area for development is the implementation of an emergent curriculum. This action is progressing in a measured and steady manner.
- There is a very clear management structure in the setting. The management actively strives to support staff and to foster their professional development. Roles and responsibilities are clear and equitable.
- The setting is very well-organised and has appropriate systems in place for the smooth running of the ECCE programme. The sessions observed were ordered, planned and ran very smoothly.
- There is a very strong sense of positive team working in the setting. A system of staff induction and appraisals is well-established. A strong sense of team-work and belonging has been nurtured. These are strong characteristic of the setting and impact positively on practice.
- The setting utilises a very wide range of strategies to communicate and share information with parents. These include; text massages, displays in the hallways, a new handbook, an online application and individual parent/practitioner meetings.
- The setting has established very positive relationships with the local primary schools. Information about children’s learning is often shared to support smooth transitions for children between settings.

**Actions advised**

- It is advised that the management and staff take time to clearly articulate and document the broad-based learning goals of the curriculum. This can be shared with parents and used to guide curriculum planning.
- The management and staff are advised to begin to explore using the ‘Mo Scéal’ profile to share information about children’s learning to support their transition to primary school available at [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie)
### 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>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of processes to support children’s learning and development</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of children’s learning experiences and achievements</td>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of management and leadership for learning</td>
<td>Very good</td>
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### Language used in Early Years Education Inspection reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<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.

We found the Inspection to be positive and inclusive process. The report is an accurate and fair reflection of our service and our learning process at the time of the inspection. The focus of the inspection is clear and enables us to build on this feedback to improve the children’s learning journey.

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

In relation to area 2 of actions advised:

- We have developed and completed training on using learning journals, recording the learning process and documenting emergent play.
- We have included more natural materials and have designated learning stations for literacy and numeracy.

In relation to area 3 of actions advised:

- We have completed Hanan training and are working with the team on using open questions which will encourage more discussion.

In relation to area 4 of actions advise:

- We have revised and updated our curriculum to reflect our learning goals and provide greater clarity in our curriculum planning. We have engaged with “Mo Scéal” process and will include it in our preparation of our graduates for 2020.