

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

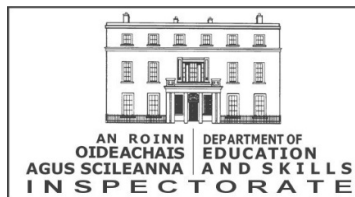
Early-Years Education-focused Inspection
Report

Rathkeale Community Childcare Ltd.
The Beehive

09LK0075

Well Lane
Rathkeale
County Limerick

Date of Inspection: 14 December 2016



CONTEXT OF SETTING

The Beehive: Rathkeale Community Childcare Ltd is a community managed full day care service in Rathkeale in County Limerick. It offers a morning and afternoon Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the morning of the evaluation, fourteen children and three practitioners were in attendance. 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 excellent.
- A very caring and respectful ethos is palpable in the setting.
- The practitioners position themselves at the children's level during interactions; they are calm, attentive to the children's needs and are very keen observers. This was very evident in a practitioner's reactions on the morning of the inspection when one child was bringing his chair to join the group for circle-time and the leg of the chair got stuck. The child's key worker was attentive to his struggle, she watched, waited, provided a little verbal guidance when needed, and when he succeeded she gave positive feedback that was directly related to the child's effort and success.
- The structure of the day and the routine procedures provide familiarity and clear expectations for the children. The children present as calm, confident and secure within a flexible yet predictable daily routine which is displayed very simply using photographs.
- Transitions are managed very effectively using visuals and verbal prompts. The children move easily between each activity; they are given ample time to complete what they are doing before moving to the next activity. They children are enabled to opt out of certain activities if they wish and are trusted to pursue their own self-chosen learning activity.
- The children are deliberately encouraged to be active agents in their learning. They have lots of choice and can continue or pursue their own learning as they wish. The children are free to move around, to move materials from one area to another, to invent their own games and to pursue an activity to their satisfaction without being interrupted. On the morning of the inspection, one child chose to make puzzles on her own for a significant amount of time while another child wrote shopping lists and sharpened the pencil after each list. Some children set up a doctor's waiting room and were observed comforting their sick 'babies' (dolls) while waiting to be called to see the doctor.
- The children are very successfully supported in managing their own personal care needs and in taking responsibility for the environment.
- Snack time in the setting is a lovely social occasion. The children are very kind to one another. During the inspection they were observed helping each other open lunch boxes and chatting together about elements of their own lives and experiences. It is commendable that fruit and water are freely available and accessible to the children during the morning.
- The children's sense of identity and belonging is very effectively nurtured through pictorial displays of them and of their families. There are also lovely samples of the children's free drawings and learning stories in various areas of the room.
- The key person approach is successfully implemented and it is evident that the practitioners know the children and families very well.

Action advised

- A review of the story time routine is advised; in this regard practitioners could consider having a story time with fewer interruptions and smaller groupings in order to help the children to stay interested and to participate more.

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 excellent.

- A very broad-based curriculum, informed and underpinned by *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*, is clearly documented and implemented. The curriculum effectively supports active learning, creativity, socialisation, problem solving and effective communication. It is very child-centred and play-based and the practitioners have very successfully incorporated elements of an emergent, enquiry-based curriculum using mind-mapping to gather information about the children's interests and needs. This mapping includes narratives on the responses, ideas and thoughts shared by the children about the routine and activities. This demonstrates the high value placed on giving children a voice in the development of the curriculum.
- Planning is very well structured through yearly, monthly and weekly plans and the practitioners reflect on the planning on a weekly basis, as evidenced through a reflective diary.
- Play opportunities are very well supported and available within a well-resourced indoor and outdoor environment. The very well-presented materials inspire lots of sensory, messy, exploratory and creative play. The children also have many opportunities to engage in imaginative play, construction play, writing, and reading and discussing books on their own or in small groupings.
- The outdoor space very effectively facilitates whole-body energetic play such as jumping, running, balancing, chasing, and climbing. It also supports children to take risks. On the morning of the inspection a small group of children repeatedly climbed on top of a large tyre to walk around it, very clearly challenging themselves to balance for longer periods of time before falling off. The practitioner positively affirmed their efforts and encouraged others to have a go.
- The practitioners use very deliberate and appropriate strategies to foster high-quality interactions with the children. There were many examples of this on the morning of the inspection such as skilful questioning, active listening, giving suggestions, and encouraging the children to think and come up with solutions themselves.
- The practitioners model and encourage an expanded use of vocabulary and language during their interactions, as demonstrated when the children initiated taking the blocks of coloured ice cubes outdoors to see if they would break on the concrete. The practitioners introduced descriptive words such as smooth, slippery, and crushed, and they asked appropriate questions to extend children's thinking.
- Children have access to a variety of high quality books that are very well presented down at their height level in a nice cosy area of the room. Children display confidence in handling books and show motivation and interest in sharing and discussing them with one another.

Action advised

- To further progress the development of an emergent, enquiry-based curriculum, the practitioners are advised to utilise the resources and templates in the 'Planning and assessing' pillar of the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide*.

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 great motivation, interest, and active engagement in all of the activities during the morning. They present as securely attached, confident in making decisions, and willing to initiate play themes and social interaction with their peers and with the practitioners.
- The children are developing independence in taking responsibility for their own personal hygiene and care needs and demonstrate a growing consideration for others. For example, during the inspection they were observed helping themselves to water which is freely available, putting their rubbish in the bin when prompted, tidying play equipment enthusiastically, and helping each other when needed.
- The children are lively and are very willing to try new things and organise their own play themes. One of the many examples of this noted during the inspection occurred outdoors when a small group of children became interested in climbing onto a large tyre and walking around it after observing one child's attempt and success. They demonstrated excellent communication skills as they negotiated turn taking, invented some rules, and expressed their concern when some younger children were attempting to join in.
- The children confidently and competently make requests. They listen and take turns in conversations with other children and it is very evident that strong friendships amongst the group are being developed.

- The children demonstrate a keen sense of curiosity and positive dispositions towards learning such as independence, trying something new, persevering when things were challenging, giving attention to detail and staying with a task until completion.
- The children have lots of opportunity to experience success during the programme of activities; this is made possible through the well-resourced environment and resources, the freedom to engage in lots of self-chosen play, and the playful learning experiences provided by the practitioners.
- The beautiful photographic displays of individual children, their families and individual art work successfully support the children in developing a positive understanding of their own identity and uniqueness along with being a member of a family unit. On the morning of the inspection, the children were very interested in looking at and discussing those displays with one another.

Actions advised

- Practitioners are advised to use more mathematical language with the children to further promote their awareness and understanding of early mathematical concepts such as one-to-one correspondence, measure, space, comparing and classifying.
- To further support children gaining an understanding and appreciation of their changing and developing abilities and achievements, the practitioners are advised to utilise the resources provided in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* in relation to sharing and including children in the development of their learning journals or portfolios.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is excellent.
- The management and practitioners are very proactive and committed to providing the best possible learning experiences for children attending the service. There are plans to engage further with Better Start, the on-site mentoring service. The staff are involved with Linc the Leadership Programme for Inclusion and the Healthy Ireland Smart Start Programme.
- The practitioners have monthly and weekly planning meetings and there is evidence of constructive self-review and on-going reflection on practice.
- The parents are provided with clear information on all the policies and procedures and the mission statement and goals are closely linked to *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and *Síolta: The National Quality Framework*.
- The manager is very proactive in maintaining very strong links with families and the local primary schools and acknowledges the need to create stronger links with the local community.
- A real sense of respect, collegiality and teamwork between the practitioners and the manager is obvious. The manager promotes very high standards and fosters a clear vision and direction for all the work in the service. The practitioners successfully share responsibility for planning and implementing aspects of the ECCE Programme.
- It is commendable the effort this service makes to ensure parents and families are involved in and informed about children's learning and development. They hold individual meetings with parents, they have educational notice boards that are updated weekly, they have monthly newsletters which include the words of songs and information on the value of play, healthy eating or transitions, and they have a complaints and comments procedure.

Action advised

- The practitioners are advised to utilise the resources in the 'Partnership with parents' pillar of the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide*. These will further support the good practice on keeping parents up to date with information on their children's learning and progression.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the practitioners to implement the actions advised above is excellent as demonstrated in the open, professional dialogue with the manager and the practitioners during the post-inspection feedback meeting.

Summary of Overall Inspection Findings

Area	Quality Level
Quality of context to support children's learning and development	Excellent
Quality of processes to support children's learning and development	Excellent
Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements	Excellent
Quality of management and leadership for learning	Excellent

Language used in Early-Years Education-focused 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.