An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Name</th>
<th>Child’s Play Pre-school</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service Address</td>
<td>Ballyfooken</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pallasgreen</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>County Limerick</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>09LK0134</td>
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Date of Inspection: 03-05-2018
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 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>03-05-2018</th>
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</table>
| Inspection activities undertaken | Interaction with children
  | Review of relevant documents
  | Feedback to service co-managers/practitioners
  | Meeting with service co-managers/practitioners
  | Observation of interactions during session |

CONTEXT OF SERVICE

Child’s Play Pre-school is a privately-owned service. The service has been in operation for nine years and is rurally located in the hinterland of Ballyfooken. One morning session is provided for children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. It caters mostly for children and families from the local community, with numerous families attending the service for many years. The owners report their plans to close the service in June 2018. On the day of the inspection, six children and two practitioners/co-owners were present. The early years’ service was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the report; a response was not received from the service.

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.
- A warm and welcoming atmosphere has been created in the service. Parents and grandparents are relaxed and unhurried at collection time. They spend time in the service and engage in individual and natural conversations with the practitioners.
- Meal time is a relaxed occasion where a healthy lifestyle is promoted. This is achieved by the practitioners sitting and talking with the children about their food, their friends and their families.
- The children present as independent and capable. They manage their hygiene and personal care needs confidently with little need for support or guidance from the practitioners.
- While a few instances of playful learning for children were evident, the majority of the provision observed was adult-led. Overall, children did not have sufficient opportunities to actively choose and organise their learning and development activities.
- Secure relationships have been fostered between the children and the practitioners. Most children are in their second year in the pre-school service. They appear settled and comfortable in the environment.
- Practitioners show warmth and kindness to the children. They know the children and their families well and make regular references to the children’s parents, siblings, grandparents and home environment.
- The children’s identity is supported through the display of their names on their coat hooks and the children’s artwork in the environment. There is scope to develop the children’s sense of identity and belonging further through recognising and celebrating each child’s uniqueness.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the daily routine be reorganised to provide an appropriate balance between child-initiated and adult-initiated experiences. The children would benefit from having more choice over what and how they explore their environment during the session.
- The practitioners are advised to acknowledge, recognise and celebrate each child, his/ her family, and their cultures and community through the delivery of the learning programme. For example, the use of imagery of the children and their families in the environment would support how the children view themselves and help them to appreciate their uniqueness as individuals in the service.
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 fair.
- Assessment of children’s learning is in its early stages of development. A scrapbook is prepared for each child and is used to document the child’s learning and development. This is shared with parents at the end of the pre-school year. Greater emphasis on regularly documenting information about children’s learning experiences is required.
- Curriculum planning is organised on a medium-term and short-term basis. Curriculum plans focus on themes that are pre-determined and adult chosen. Children’s emerging interests are not incorporated into the curriculum planning process.
- Some appropriate interaction strategies are used by practitioners to facilitate a range of learning experiences.
- The indoor environment is safe and well maintained with a range of opportunities available to develop children’s fine motor skills. There is potential to develop the layout of the indoor environment further to ensure that all areas are used to their full potential. Freely accessible, multi-sensory learning experiences are also required.
- Some opportunities for the children to enjoy rhymes, poems and songs are provided during circle time. These foster the children’s emergent language skills in a fun and engaging way.

Actions advised
- The practitioners are advised to build a picture of the children’s learning by clearly and regularly documenting their emerging interests, their individual developmental progression and the richness of their learning experiences to date. Using this information to inform planning, short-term curriculum plans could reflect children’s needs and interests, thereby ensuring an emergent curriculum is consistently offered.
- The practitioners are advised to review, restructure and develop the indoor and outdoor learning environments to stimulate and support children’s learning more effectively. A greater variety of multi-sensory learning experiences including regular access to water, sand and paint would extend the children’s hands-on experiences in learning more about the environment around them.
- Practitioners are advised to increase play provision in the service. For example, more time is needed for child-initiated play experiences which could support children to live out their real-life experiences, to be creative and to socialise with their peers.

AREA 3
QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is good.
- Children experience success through the display of their drawings in the environment. Some discussions between the practitioners and the children support the children to share aspects of their learning achievements.
- Many children show confidence in their developing fine motor skills. However, increased choice over what the children select to engage in is needed for the learning experiences to be both meaningful and purposeful.
- The children work well together with clear friendships emerging. Opportunities for the children to socialise were most evident during child-initiated experiences.
- Few opportunities are available for the children to express themselves creatively through open-ended materials.
- Some children display an awareness and an emergent understanding of symbols, print and pictures. For example, during a discussion about the months of the year, one child made the connection between the beginning letter in the month’s name and the beginning letter in his own name.
On the morning of the inspection, the children were compliant during the many adult-initiated experiences. It was during times when the children themselves had choice, agency and freedom to choose what to do with the materials available, that their enjoyment, interest and co-operation was most evident.

**Actions advised**
- The practitioners are advised to provide children with the autonomy and freedom to actively choose and organise their own learning and development experiences.
- By increasing the amount of play in the learning programme that is informed by the children’s observed needs and interests, an emergent curriculum will be realised and the children’s capacity to socialise and communicate effectively will be enhanced and developed.
- It is advised that greater opportunities for the children to make sense of their world through various media, open-ended materials and play activities are provided. By minimising the use of templates and colouring pages and increasing opportunities for self-expression, creativity and imagination, the children will benefit from additional opportunities to value their uniqueness and individual capabilities.

**AREA 4**

**QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**
- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- An ethos of teamwork and partnership is evident. There is clarity around the roles and responsibilities with regard to the running of the service.
- Previously, practitioners attended some training in relation to *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and *Síolta, the National Quality Framework for early Childhood Education*. Practitioners have not engaged in any recent professional development opportunities around key elements of early years education.
- Information is shared informally with parents and grandparents at arrival and collection times. If needed and where there may be a concern for a child’s learning and development, practitioners arrange a meeting with parents to formally discuss and share these concerns.
- Children and parents are invited to visit the service during the session prior to enrolment. During the settling-in period, parents are encouraged to spend time in the service supporting their child’s transition from home to the pre-school.
- In support of the children’s transition to primary school, practitioners regularly discuss with the children what they can expect to see and experience in their new school environment.

**Actions advised**
- The practitioners are advised to create an effective strategy for continuous professional development in the service. This would ensure that practitioners remain informed and up-to-date about best practice in the early years sector.
- It is advised that the practitioners avail of external support from Better Start: the National Quality Mentoring Service in order to support the team to reflect on and discuss their practice with a view to improving learning outcomes for the children.
- The practitioners are advised to regularly share the children’s learning with parents and to proactively seek parental feedback from all parents on their child’s education and learning. The ‘Building Partnership with Parents’ pillar of the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* will support the further development of home-service communication.
### 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>
<tr>
<td>Quality of processes to support children’s learning and development</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of children’s learning experiences and achievements</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of management and leadership for learning</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Language used in Early-Years Education 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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