# EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

## REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Name</th>
<th>Tír na nÓg</th>
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| Service Address | Old Boys School  
   Clonaslee  
   County Laois |
| DCYA number     | 09LS0022   |

Date of Inspection: 28-05-2018
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 Inspection

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Date of inspection</th>
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| **Inspection activities undertaken** | **Observation of interactions**  
  • Meeting with service manager  
  • Meeting with practitioners  
  • Observation of interactions  
  • Interaction with children  
  • Review of relevant documents  
  • Feedback to service manager, board member and practitioner |

**CONTEXT OF SERVICE**

Tír na nÓg is a community run sessional service. It is located in an old school building. It provides two morning and afternoon sessions in delivering the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. The pedagogical approach is play-based and is underpinned by the principles of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. On the day of inspection, fifteen children were present together with the manager, who is the lead practitioner, and two other practitioners. The manager, one practitioner and a board member attended the post-inspection feedback meeting. The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the report; a response was not received from the setting.

**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.
- The atmosphere is characterised by sustained warm, calm and caring interactions. The practitioners greet the parents and children at the start of the session.
- The children arrive confidently into the service. They are very familiar with the environment and the routines.
- Relationships between the practitioners and the children are responsive to the children’s needs. Practitioners provide encouragement towards positive behaviours and children demonstrate respect and empathy towards each other. These positive relationships are fostered and developed through the effective implementation of the key worker system.
- The routine and structure of the day provide the children with opportunity to be active agents in choosing and organising their own learning activities. The children display autonomy and agency as they choose between the play materials in the environment.
- The practitioners are very effective in providing guidance, affirmation and encouragement towards positive behaviour. Various strategies effectively reinforce classroom expectations for children. These include the use of positive language, referring children to each other to solve problems, and encouraging them to work together or help each other. Consistency of practice was noted throughout the inspection.
- Snack time is a social occasion. During the inspection, the practitioners and the children enjoyed a picnic in the garden together and engaged in many natural and authentic conversations.
- Transitions between activities are smooth with excellent and consistent use of verbal reminders and reference to a visual cue.
- The service has established very good connections with the community. The practitioners have organised visits from community helpers, such as the farmer, and there are visits to the local theatre.
- Children’s identify and belonging are actively promoted through strategies such as displaying children’s photos and a name tag over their coat hooks, images of children engaged in individual and group activities, and art-work displays. The photographic display of the child’s extended families and of their key-worker group further supports the child’s sense of belonging.
- Parents, children and extended families regularly come together during the year for celebrations and events. These include the annual Christmas, Halloween and end-of-year celebration occasions, and other family day events such as a family barbeque, and a Mother’s day celebration.
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.
- A play-based curriculum which is aligned to *Aistear; the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* is in place. A thematic approach to long-term and medium-term planning is undertaken which incorporates seasonal events and celebrations and there are some links to children’s developing interests and needs noted on the short-term plans.
- Approaches to gathering information about the children’s prior learning and ongoing learning experiences are comprehensive. *Aistear* learner record observations are made regularly. The children’s individual learning journals include samples of the children’s art, samples of their free mark making and photographs of their activities.
- Many positive high-quality interactions were observed on the day of the inspection, which were both affirming and encouraging. Practitioners engaged with the children as play partners, they supported, guided and extended children’s thinking and reasoning. On some occasions they asked open-ended questions while interacting with the children, prompting the children to make predictions, comparisons and connections about their learning.
- The indoor area is very well resourced and arranged in aesthetically pleasing and inviting ways. It supports the children in exploring and learning in a variety of contexts. It includes areas such as a home corner, a sand area, a painting easel and a well-resourced and comfortable book corner.
- The outdoor area is used on a daily basis and is developed into interest areas that are well resourced with real and pretend items which facilitate exploratory open-ended play experiences. These include a mud kitchen with mud, lentils, and kitchen equipment; opportunities to explore plants; painting and mark-making; and imaginative and gross-motor play. There are plans in place to further develop this area.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to enhance their planning processes by ensuring they are consistently and directly informed by the developmental needs and interests of the individual child as identified and recorded in their observations. Practitioners are advised to clearly articulate ongoing connections between the information derived from observations and assessments and the emergent curriculum.
- The practitioners are advised to be consistent in their approach to engaging as play partners with the children and in the use of open-ended questions. The ‘Play’ pillar of the *Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide* offers useful tips in this regard.

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 display eagerness and enjoyment in their play on arrival and throughout the day. They have free choice in relation to their play, making many decisions about their activities, the materials, their play partners and where they will play.
- The children are experiencing success and achievement and they regularly share that learning with the practitioners.
- The children have opportunities to express themselves creatively through the many open-ended and sensorial activities provided, such as free mark-making, painting, cutting, gluing, playdough, lentils, planting and mud play.
- The children naturally form and re-form into pairs and small groups during cooperative play. They are able to negotiate play in order to establish purposeful socio-dramatic activities.
- The children reflect on their learning and they have some opportunities to make connections with their experiences and progress. For example, during the inspection, a child linked his drawing to his recent experiences on the school trip, and during circle time the practitioner facilitated the children to recall their favourite part of the school trip. The children enjoy sharing similar
experiences, interests, ideas and opinions with the practitioners and their peers. They engage in many discussions about their creations and their learning experiences.

- The children are beginning to develop an awareness of mathematical concepts and they sometimes count, make comparisons and estimations, and use some appropriate mathematical vocabulary in their discussions.

**Actions advised**

- The practitioners are advised to enhance the current opportunities for the children to recall, share, and discuss their learning; and to provide additional opportunities for them to receive feedback on their progression; and to enable them to view themselves as capable and confident learners. This could be facilitated through the regular review and development of their learning journals.

**AREA 4**

**QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- Informal team meetings are held each morning, and discussion items are noted. They include child development, curriculum planning and reflections, documenting the children’s learning, communication with parents, and staff training.
- The practitioners are committed to continuous professional development. They previously engaged with the Better Start Quality Development service to review their curriculum and the learning environment. They have undertaken Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) and *Aistear* training.
- There is a professional ethos in the service. There is clarity around the different roles and responsibilities. Effective teamwork and shared leadership are very evident, with the manager providing effective leadership in developing a quality provision.
- The team has identified a clear vision of their service where play is valued and is used as the method of teaching young children.
- Home-service links are very good. An information day is held in the second week of the new school year and a parental handbook is provided for parents. A settling-in period is provided; the duration of this is based on individual child’s needs. Parents are invited to participate in many activities and occasions in the service throughout the year. A monthly newsletter and a parent’s notice-board provide regular updates on events in the service.
- Information about each child’s progression is given to parents through informal daily discussion. The individual learning journals are sent home by the practitioners at the end of the year and are available for parents to review in the room.
- The service is continually reviewing practice and has plans to further develop the outdoor play provision. There are also plans to increase parental engagement through their involvement in fundraising efforts for this development.
- The service’s transition policies support the children on their transfer to primary school. The principal and the teacher of junior infants visit the children in the service and the children visit the junior infant classroom.

**Action advised**

- The practitioners are advised to use the *Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide* to enhance their current review process in order to inform future action planning and support the overall development of quality in the pre-school.
- The practitioners are advised to formally share with parents at intervals throughout the year the children’s learning journals. It is advised that steps be taken to elicit parental comments and opinions on the materials shared.
### 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>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of children’s learning experiences and achievements</td>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
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<td>Quality of management and leadership for learning</td>
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### Language used in Early-Years Education Inspection reports

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>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>
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<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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