**EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION**

**REPORT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>Happy Days Pre-school</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>Borris Little</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Portlaoise</td>
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<td>County Laois</td>
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<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>09LS0044</td>
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*Date of Inspection: 25-01-2019*
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(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 setting’s provision in each area.
Early-Years Education Inspection

Date of inspection: 25-01-2019

Inspection activities undertaken:
- Meeting with setting manager and ECCE practitioners
- Observation of interactions during the two morning ECCE sessions
- Interaction with children
- Review of relevant documents
- Post-inspection feedback meeting with setting owner and ECCE practitioners

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Happy Days Pre-school has been in operation in Portlaoise, Co. Laois since 1991. There are two preschool rooms in the building where the owner/manager provides care and education for local children availing of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. The children are allocated to different key-worker groups according to their age and stage of development. On the day of the inspection, there were three practitioners, one of whom was the owner, and nineteen children in the ECCE room. 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 good.
- A welcoming atmosphere is evident. Practitioners greet the parents and children in a warm and kind manner at arrival and departure times. Relationships between the practitioners and the children are caring.
- There is a planned routine which children enjoy participating in. Part of this routine involves an effective period for free-choice play.
- Transitions between activities are instant and accordingly, play periods are concluded suddenly rather than gradually. The practitioners use a buzzer to signal some transitions during the day.
- Snack time is a social occasion and the practitioners sit with children promoting healthy eating. Children are given independence at snack time and are encouraged to develop their self-help skills. On the day of the inspection the children cleaned up after themselves and put their bags away after snack.
- The children have various jobs which they complete throughout the day and these are represented on a jobs chart in the pre-school environment.
- There are good displays which support individual identity and belonging. Children complete a check-in activity on a daily basis. This supports name recognition and group identity. Resources to support the development of children’s awareness of cultural diversity and of their local community are not yet included in the environment.

Actions advised
- It is advised that the practitioners consistently use props to support the children’s awareness of transitions within the daily routine. This will enable the children to prepare for transitions and to conclude activities in a more gradual and phased manner.
- Building on the existing individual displays, the addition of strategies and resources to support children’s community and cultural awareness is advised. These could include parental involvement, community visitors to the setting and an increase in cultural resources in the setting.
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 setting implements a play-based curriculum which is informed by Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework.
- Curriculum plans are organised with medium-term and short-term planning in place. Planning currently focuses on themes with a few examples of planning experiences based on children’s emergent interests. Currently, there are no records of reflection and evaluation on these activities.
- The practitioners have their own observation record which documents the activities which focus on the development of physical and cognitive skills, and observations are linked to Aistear. Some future plans are relevant and specific to individual children. Observations are currently completed on a termly basis; this could be increased.
- Play is the main medium for learning with time allowed for children to pursue their interests. Children enjoy engaging in various forms of play and have a strong interest in imaginative play. On the day of the inspection, the children enjoyed playing in the home corner with real food exploring tastes, smells and textures.
- The interactions between practitioners and children are playful. The practitioners guide and assist the children to various learning experiences. The practitioners play a supportive role in the children’s daily experiences.
- The indoor environment is laid out with various interest areas and it offers a good range of resources. The boxes and shelves are labelled to support children in finding equipment and resources. There is a large range of resources to support the development of the children’s fine motor skills.
- The practitioners have an awareness of the children’s needs; they seek advice to ensure that they can support these needs, and they work with parents to support the children’s dietary needs. The owner has yet to create an inclusion policy and appoint an inclusion coordinator.

Actions advised
- It is advised that the owner/manager and practitioners introduce a group learning journal to record and evaluate the emergent interests of all children in the group. A clear emphasis on skills, dispositions and attitudes of children could be embedded into these activities and experiences.
- It is advised that the practitioners complete more regular observations of the children, to create a fuller picture of the children’s growing interests and abilities.
- The owner/manager is advised to engage in training which will support the introduction of an inclusion coordinator and policy in the setting. This will also guide the practitioners as they develop short-term plans to support children while waiting for external agencies.

AREA 3
QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is good.
- The practitioners have created a space where the children are safe and happy to explore and discover on a daily basis.
- The children have access to an outdoor environment and on the day of the inspection one group of children accessed this area. There are play houses, a slide and climbing frame for children to discover. Some children engaged in parachute play on the day of the inspection.
- All children enjoy singing songs and dancing. There is limited floor space for children and equipment is moved to accommodate children to play on mats. There are various opportunities for action songs and circle time is an interactive experience for the children.
- There is a large range of books in both environments and they are relevant to the topics of the month. The books are displayed on high shelves or blocked by the home corner. There is potential to create new book areas for the children to access.
- The children have access to sensory exploration and messy play. On the day of the inspection children engaged with playdough, sand, and water. The children enjoyed these experiences, and practitioners enjoy planning various sensory experiences for the children.
Throughout the inspection process children were observed to play individually, in pairs and in small groups. There were some occasions where large group learning also took place.

The children hear praise and encouragement throughout the day as they complete tasks and activities.

There is a strong focus on using templates and worksheets to promote formal learning. On the day of the inspection children spontaneously explored numbers and counted items in the course of their play; these opportunities should be emphasised and optimised in place of the use of templates and worksheets.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to ensure that all children have access to gross motor play on a daily basis, as a means of extending their gross motor development and spatial awareness. This can include access to outdoor play and increased opportunities to explore materials and resources on the floor.
- The practitioners are advised to audit the book areas and review the placement of these areas within the environment. The children would benefit from attractive and cosy book areas in which they can freely access and explore reading materials.
- The practitioners need to reduce the use of templates and worksheets which are focused on promoting the children’s early numeracy and literacy skills. In place of this approach the practitioners are advised to focus on more age-appropriate activities which promote hands-on, practical learning, during which the children can explore literacy and numeracy concepts in a fun-filled, engaging manner.

AREA 4
QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- There is a good sense of teamwork in the setting and practitioners are professional in their daily work. The owner delegates some tasks and responsibilities to the practitioners for the smooth running of the setting.
- The practitioners have an awareness of Siolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education.
- The owner and practitioners participate in continued professional development including Equality and Diversity workshops and relevant compulsory training.
- The practitioners link with some external agencies for support and information regarding updates to the sector and training. The owner facilitates the placement of students from the local schools and colleges. The practitioners have yet to engage with the Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide.
- The practitioners regularly meet to discuss the curriculum, to discuss issues or concerns, and to plan activities and themes for the coming months. These meetings are not documented at present.
- There is a suitable range of communication channels established with parents including a text group, parent handbook, daily informal meetings and a monthly newsletter.
- The practitioners support the transitions into the setting through an open day and gradual settle-in times. Parents are involved in the decision to extend or reduce the settle-in times at the beginning of the ECCE year.
- The transition to primary school is planned for in June and practitioners know the various schools which the children will attend. They share information with parents and provide parents with a leaflet about the transition to primary school. There is potential to extend the strategies used to support this transition.
Actions advised

- It is advised that the practitioners engage with the *Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide* as a resource for supporting self-reflection, and to guide the practitioners as they engage in developmental work in the setting.
- The practitioners and owner are advised to record the minutes of their meetings documenting key decisions and changes which take place. This will support improvements and create a record of the quality work practitioners engage in throughout the year.
- Practitioners are advised to develop further strategies and procedures to support children’s smooth transition to primary school. The *Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide* pillar of practice ‘Supporting Transitions’ will be useful in this regard.
### 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>
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### Language used in Early-Years Education 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. |

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