

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

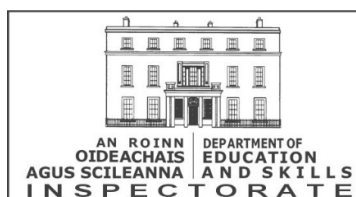
**Early-Years Education-focused Inspection**

**Report**

**Lollys and Robins  
09MO0031**

**Ramolin  
Shrule  
County Mayo**

**Date of Inspection: 15 February 2017**



## CONTEXT OF SETTING

Lollys and Robins is a privately-owned pre-school service located in Shrulue, Co. Mayo. The owner/manager provides a sessional pre-school programme participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. There were sixteen children, the owner/manager and one practitioner present on the day of inspection. The setting implements the Montessori Method of Education and an emergent and enquiry-based curriculum using *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. The owner/manager and practitioner attended the post-inspection feedback meeting. The setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised in this report, and the response submitted on behalf of the setting will be found in the appendix of this report.

## 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 very good.
- A very happy, busy and warm atmosphere was evident in this setting on the day of the inspection. The practitioners demonstrate sensitivity and a positive regard for the children and families. The parents are made feel welcome to stay with their children to help them settle into their activities.
- Snack time is a relaxed and homely social occasion. It is valued as an opportunity for shared conversations and for children to be self-reliant and independent. When children are ready, they bring their own lunches to the table, they choose where to sit and the practitioner and children sit, eat and laugh together. The children are given time to eat and socialise and when finished eating, they are able to play to choose an activity of interest.
- Times of transition are calm and gradual. Children are supported during these times through the use of song, rhythm and repetition. The practitioners implement various strategies to help children work together and be more involved, such as the 'helping hand' routine. The practitioners facilitate opportunities for children to choose from a selection of poems and rhymes for hand washing time. During the tidy-up time, the children were observed helping each other to carry and put away the blocks.
- Practitioners model and provide appropriate guidance and encouragement to children towards positive behaviour. They are very intentional in the way they respond and affirm the times when children are being kind and caring with each other.
- Secure and supportive relationships are fostered between the children and practitioners. The practitioners have recently introduced a key person approach into their practice. The practitioners work closely with individual children who need additional support with language and for children who are settling into the routine. Opportunities to use this approach for small-group learning activities have yet to be fully embedded into practice.
- Opportunities are provided which bring together children, families and practitioners throughout the year at various celebrations and organised events. The practitioners make a significant effort to involve parents in their child's learning experiences. For example, parents have been invited to take part in the children's creative activities.

#### *Action advised:*

- The practitioners are advised to further develop their key person approach and provide time in the routine to bring the children together in small groups to talk about the things that are important to them and find out more about what the children know and what interests them.

## 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.
- A broad-based curriculum is informed by the Montessori Method of education and underpinned by the principles of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. The planned approach is organised on a medium-term and short-term basis. The information documented is focused on thematic projects, Montessori exercises and seasonal celebrations, and other activities such as letter and number. The practitioners have also developed a folder that visually demonstrates

through the use of photographs and clear and simple information about how children learn through the various Montessori exercises.

- The practitioners use the learning story approach and anecdotal notes to help them gather information about the children's learning and development. The information gathered explains what children are doing in their play and their emerging interests, for example a child's observed disposition for pouring and filling. At the time of the inspection, the valuable information gathered about children's play and emerging interests was not being used to inform the weekly curriculum planning.
- The playful interactions between the practitioners and the children contribute to the richness of the secure and supportive learning that promotes positive learning dispositions and high levels of motivation. The practitioners listen carefully and show interest and respect when the children are asking questions. During the free play session, the practitioners follow the children's lead and adapt the environment and added open-ended materials to enhance the children's thinking and cooperative play. On the day of inspection, the large-group learning activity was focused on teaching number and letter. This activity was difficult for some children to understand and the level of challenge was not conducive to their sense of mastery and success.
- Play opportunities are freely available, accessible, appropriate and well-resourced. The practitioners have been creative with the use of space and when planning the organisation of the indoor and outdoor environment. In the indoor environment, opportunities are provided for a variety of types of play including sensory play, imaginative play, socio-dramatic play and construction play. The practitioners have recently added new learning activities to the outdoor environment, where the children are now able to problem solve and practice their hand eye co-ordination and mark-making skills, using the funnel and ball game and blackboard.
- Children regularly enjoy and share a variety of rhymes, poems and songs. The practitioners use picture cards to help the children choose their favourite songs. Through music and dance, the children are given the freedom to move freely in the environment and express themselves in a creative and dynamic way.
- Children have access to high-quality books and are provided with regular opportunities to listen to and explore stories.

*Actions advised:*

- The practitioners are advised to develop their short-term plans to include their valuable observations of children's emerging interests, which will help them to plan activities that respond to the new ideas and explorations initiated by the children. The short-term planning template available in the 'Planning and Assessing' pillar in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* will help in this regard.
- The practitioners are advised to review the activities for large-group learning activity and focus more on using the environment and the children's play, interests and questions help the children to learn and make real connections with early mathematical concepts and meaning and use of letter.

### **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 demonstrate enjoyment in their learning and a positive sense of well-being. They are given time to play, explore their interests and move freely between the different areas of play.
- The children are motivated and engaged in their activities and are displaying positive learning dispositions such as self-reliance and persistence. This was reflected in the very concentrated fine-motor activity, jigsaw and block work observed during the inspection.
- The children are making connections by applying their knowledge of shapes to real life situations and objects that are part of everyday living. In the morning session observed, a small group of children were examining the shapes of their beads and used rich and complex language to compare the shape of the bead to a donut, spool and roll.
- Children are developing an understanding of the meaning and use of mathematical language. The racing car display was an active and interactive way for all the children to explore positional and spatial language, such as in front of, behind, fast, slow, first and second.
- Children are showing increasing co-ordination over their gross and fine motor skills and self-confidence in their daily living skills.

- The children are learning about the people and the world around them during their pretend play. The home corner has recently been transformed into a shop area and this has stimulated busy conversations around number, how much things cost and making lists.
- The children are excited to talk about the things that matter to them. The folder that includes photographs of children engagement with the Montessori exercises was left out for parents to look at, on the day of inspection, and some children were observed showing an interest and looking at this folder. This type of activity is not fully realised as a way for children to reflect on and consolidate their learning.
- The children are demonstrating a capacity to express their views and ask questions as demonstrated during the storytelling activity. The use of language play by the practitioners which involved linking words to actions, supports children's communication and language.

*Action advised:*

- To further support children positive understanding of their own identity and see themselves as competent learners, the practitioners are advised to provide opportunities to help children reflect and talk about their learning experiences with each other and the practitioners.

## **AREA 4**

### **QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- Both practitioners demonstrate a strong sense of purpose and shared vision for the direction and work for the setting. The manager and practitioner have started to engage in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* and the practitioners have developed a checklist of ideas for practice. Their vision for play demonstrates the practitioners' positive regard and respect for children as active and unique learners.
- The manager and practitioners work very well as a team. On day of inspection, a cohesive partnership was reflected in the clarity around the roles and responsibilities with regards to educational activities. The practitioners attend in-service training events and are involved within the local Childcare Committee.
- The manager and the practitioner are very committed to the families and children attending the setting. This was evident in the responsive interactions observed between the practitioners and parents on the day of inspection.
- The practitioners have developed practical strategies to share and help parents feel involved in their children's early learning experiences. The manager regularly sends photographs and regular information to parents about children's learning experiences using email. Throughout the year, they invite parents into the setting to share their expertise and skills with the children. They are also updating the parents' information leaflet to provide information about the new development for parents in the early year's sector.
- The practitioners have made significant progress in developing their procedures to support children's transition from the pre-school to primary school. They have established a positive two-way communication system with the local primary school to ensure continuity of children's educational experiences.

*Action advised:*

- Moving forward, the practitioners are advised to use the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* as a support tool for self-evaluation and review. This process will help the practitioners when they are identifying and prioritising areas of practice for further development and improvement

### **CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE**

The manager and staff demonstrate a shared commitment to the ongoing improvement in the quality of provision for children in this setting. Their capacity to implement the actions advised is very good.

### **Summary of Overall Inspection Findings**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Quality Level</b>
Quality of context to support children's learning and development	<b>Very good</b>
Quality of processes to support children's learning and development	<b>Good</b>
Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements	<b>Very good</b>
Quality of management and leadership for learning	<b>Very good</b>

### **Language used in Early-Years Education-focused Inspection reports**

<b>Excellent</b>	Provision that is excellent is exemplary in meeting the needs of children.
<b>Very good</b>	Provision that is very good is highly effective in meeting the needs of children.
<b>Good</b>	Provision that is good is effective in meeting the needs of children but with some aspects to be developed.
<b>Fair</b>	Provision that is fair requires practice to be improved to meet the needs of children.
<b>Poor</b>	Provision that is poor is inadequate and requires significant improvement to meet the needs of children.

**APPENDIX**

**SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING**

**Area 1** Observations on the content of the inspection report.

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

I have noted all the recommendations made by the inspector and have already implemented most of them, those that we have yet to put in place will be done so before reopening in September.