

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Service Name	Clonea Rathgormack Community Playgroup
Service Address	Parish Hall Clonea Power Carrick-on-Suir County Waterford
DCYA number	09TS0003

Date of Inspection: 23-10-2019



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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(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

Date of inspection	23-10-2019
Inspection activities undertaken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of available records of children's learning and development • Review of relevant available documents • Review of educational provision and materials • Post inspection feedback meeting with the setting manager and deputy manager
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-inspection meeting with the setting manager • Introductory meeting with the deputy manager • Observation of the morning session and afternoon session • Interaction with the children 	

CONTEXT OF SERVICE

Clonea Rathgormack Community Playgroup is a community managed sessional setting. It operates from a parish hall with a specific room allocated to the playgroup. In addition, a kitchen area, storage room and a small grass area are used. This setting provides morning and afternoon sessions for children. On the day of the inspection, there were thirteen children at the morning session, and seven children at the afternoon session. The manager and deputy manager were in attendance. The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the 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 very good.
- The practitioners consistently display warmth and positive regard towards the children.
- A key-person approach is contributing greatly to the secure attachment and mutual respect between practitioners and children. Each practitioner is responsible for observing a specific number of children and acts as the point of contact with their parents.
- The children experience a very warm and affirming atmosphere.
- The lunch time observed was a social occasion for the children; one practitioner sat with the children for a short time before moving to attend the needs of a child. A helper system is in place through which designated children are responsible for specific tasks.
- The practitioners provide the children with meaningful comments that recognise and acknowledge their learning. They use clear language and refer to agreed boundaries when sensitively guiding the children in their use of play materials and in engaging with each other.
- A well-considered daily routine offers a significant block of over one hour of free play. This enables children to develop and extend their interests. The children experience some waiting periods as they move from one part of the routine to the next.
- The children's sense of identity and belonging is suitably nurtured. Photographs of the children and their families are prominently displayed; this encourages child-led reflection and discussion. A number of helpful resources promote children's positive understanding of difference. Parents are invited to share aspects of their culture with the children.
- The setting is integrated and connected to the local community. Walking trips to the village and visitors into the setting are planned throughout the year.

Actions advised

- Practitioners are advised to re-introduce the routine of sitting with children during lunch time. This is a valuable opportunity to interact with children and to model and promote social and language skills.
- It is advised that transition times be reviewed to reduce waiting times and to support children to move seamlessly from one part of the routine to the next.

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 effective play-based curriculum clearly reflects the principles of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*.
- Play is the central approach used to support learning and development. Practitioners trust that children are active agents in their learning.
- A suitable balance of the children's interests and the practitioners' ideas inform practice. The practitioners are guided by the curriculum statement which outlines the long-term aspirations for children. A planning board is used to visually display the interests of children and emergent plans. The documented short-term planning sheet is not effectively guiding the next steps in the children's learning and development.
- A limited amount of information is recorded about the children's learning. One observation per term in a learner record format is completed for each child. The individual children's learner scrapbooks contain photographs of their experiences and art work on which the child's voice is captured. At the time of the inspection, the scrapbooks were accessible to children with support from the practitioners.
- Highly-effective interactions between practitioners and the children actively extend their thinking. The practitioners encourage children to follow their play interests. They give one-on-one focused attention to the children and they actively listen to their experiences outside of the setting.
- The indoor learning environment provides suitable space and resources that build on children's interests and support playful exploration. The majority of resources are accessible to children.
- Provision for children's outdoor learning experiences is underdeveloped. During the inspection, children accessed the grass areas for running, exploring insects and finding mushrooms. The practitioners engaged children in role play; moving like an aeroplane and crossing a busy road. The equipment stored in a separate indoor room was not available to children on the day.
- Through a rich variety of books, regular use of song and by sharing stories, the children's emergent language and literacy skills are appropriately supported.
- The practitioners have completed training that enhances their knowledge in relation to supporting children with additional needs. They work closely with parents and outside agencies to optimise children's inclusion and meet diverse needs.

Actions advised

- In order to further organise short-term planning, practitioners are advised to ensure that the plans clearly outline the next steps in the children's learning and development, and the aims and learning goals for the learning experiences.
- Practitioners are advised to capture in greater detail the experiences and learning of children through more frequently recorded observations. The individual books need to be available for the children to view independently. This assessment information needs to guide planning for children's learning and development.
- The practitioners are strongly advised to develop the learning experiences provided for children while playing in the outdoors. The inclusion of a variety and sufficient amounts of natural and/or open-ended equipment and materials would support different types of play, including large-scale construction and challenging physical play. The resources featured in the 'Learning Environment' pillar of the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* will be useful 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 present as happy, interested and motivated. They demonstrate particular enjoyment in using the sand, exploring natural items and small world materials in the indoor environment.

- The children have many opportunities to make decisions and choices about their learning. They display deep engagement as they lead their play. On the day of the inspection, the practitioner-led whole-group activity did not optimise their engagement. Additional small-group activities would be beneficial.
- The children have contributed to the development of agreed behaviour boundaries. They demonstrate a positive capacity to play co-operatively.
- The children display a love of books and they use print-rich materials. They have a growing understanding of the meaning and use of mathematical language.
- During the inspection, the children had access to an adequate range of materials to support learning through visual arts.
- Children show a strong sense of who they are. They confidently express their interests and likes and they discuss personal experiences from their lives.

Actions advised

- Practitioners are advised to provide a more appropriate balance between whole-group and small-group practitioner-initiated activities to further support children's active engagement. Small-group activities build on children's strengths and enable them to explore and engage with interesting materials and experiences. They also enable practitioners to observe individual children more closely.
- Building on the children's opportunities to explore sensory-rich materials, the practitioners are advised to provide regular access to a wider range of mark-making and art materials. The provision of an area for children to initiate for example, painting, gluing and 3-d creations, will support an enhanced focus on the role of the arts in early education.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- The practitioners portray a strong commitment in their roles as early years practitioners providing quality learning experiences for children. An ethos of professionalism and a sense of team is clearly evident.
- The practitioners regularly engage in professional development opportunities. This contributes to the implementation of practice that is informed by evidence-based theory on children's learning and development.
- The practitioners demonstrate a systematic approach to review, reflection and improvement. Recently, they focused their efforts on developing a curriculum statement for the setting, and they developed practices to support the children's transition to primary school. Currently, they are focused on embedding an emergent curriculum.
- The curriculum plans and a regular newsletter inform parents about the broad experiences of the children. Informal opportunities effectively support the exchange of information between parents and practitioners. At the time of the inspection, documented information gathered throughout the year about children's learning was not sent home for parents to review, such as the recorded observations, learning stories and the children's learning books.
- Practitioners carefully consider the needs of children as they start in the pre-school. Each key worker links with the parents to build an understanding of their child's uniqueness.
- Commendable practices support the children as they move from pre-school to primary school. Using the *Mo Scéal* materials, a summary of children's learning strengths is shared with parents and parents are encouraged to share these with the school. The practitioners developed a useful resource for children, 'My book of big school', that reflects the environment of the two local primary schools.

Action advised

- It is advised that the practitioners strengthen the formal communication with parents by further supporting two-way communication regarding the children's learning. To this end, documented information about the children needs to be shared regularly with parents to encourage review and provision of feedback.

Summary of Overall Inspection

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

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.