An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>Waddlers and Toddlers</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>Winetown South</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rathowen</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>County Westmeath</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>09WH0021</td>
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Date of Inspection: 12-09-2019
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 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of inspection</th>
<th>12-09-2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
<td>Review of relevant document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting with setting manager</td>
<td>Feedback to practitioners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation of interactions during two morning sessions</td>
<td>Feedback to setting manager and assistant manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction with children</td>
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CONTEXT OF SETTING

Waddlers and Toddlers is a privately-owned and operated setting. It was established in 2006 and is located outside the rural village of Rathowen. The setting offers a breakfast club, full-day, sessional and after-school services. Two morning sessions are provided for children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the morning of inspection, twenty-seven children, three practitioners, one of which was made available through the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM), and the setting manager were present in the two sessions. A fifth practitioner, the assistant manager, made herself available to support the younger children in the smaller of the two rooms. The inspection took place in the second week of the ECCE year; most children have attended the setting for many years and as a result were very settled. 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 good.
- There is a warm and friendly atmosphere evident in the setting. Children appear comfortable in their environment and, on arrival, immediately become engaged in their play.
- The children demonstrate the ability to make decisions and to organise their own learning during the brief periods of child-initiated play. On the day of the inspection, the time allocated for freely-chosen play was insufficient resulting in missed opportunities for children to play together and to support their learning and development.
- Children and practitioners sit together for snack time. The practitioners effectively promote the independence and self-care skills of the younger children as they become familiar with the new routines.
- Relationships between practitioners and children appear consistently respectful and responsive. The organisation of the smaller groups within the larger group of children for activities works well in fostering secure relationships between children and practitioners.
- Prior notice is given to the children to prepare them for a change in the daily routine. During the inspection, movements between areas and activities often resulted in children lining up and waiting for lengthy periods of time. This impacted on children’s engagement levels and, on occasion, resulted in a small number of children becoming restless.
- Recognition of the uniqueness of each child is reflected in the physical environment. For example, photographs of the children in an ‘All About Me’ display support them to feel a sense of belonging in the setting. Children have begun to bring in family photographs from home and are eager to share and discuss their family members with others.

Actions advised

- Practitioners are advised to revise the daily routine to provide ample time for children to involve themselves in child-initiated play. Extending the period of freely-chosen play for children will support them to fully engage in rich and in-depth playful experiences with other children and the supportive practitioners.
The practitioners are advised to review transitions between areas and activities in order to optimise these times as playful and engaging learning opportunities and to minimise waiting periods for all children.

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 mission statement outlines the setting’s key philosophical approach and places emphasis on the importance of providing a home from home experience for children. Planning for children's learning is mainly thematic with little inclusion of children’s emerging interests, strengths or needs.
- Effective assessment practices have been established. Individual observations capture each child’s learning experiences and achievements on a monthly basis. These are stored in each child’s scrapbook and shared regularly with parents. Parents are encouraged to add comments and share their experiences of their child’s learning achievements.
- Practitioners demonstrate many quality interaction strategies and approaches in their engagement with children. They actively listen to the children and follow their lead to support and extend their interests and curiosities.
- The indoor environments provide many defined learning spaces. The areas are clearly labelled using both visuals and text. The foundations for digital learning are effectively promoted through the attractive imagery and real resources that reflect everyday technologies, such as a self-service checkout, credit cards and cash registers.
- Children have daily access to the outdoor environment. Various play structures promote children’s physical fitness and gross motor skills. The lack of open-ended and sensory materials limits opportunities for children to be curious, creative and imaginative through their play.
- Practitioners understand their role in supporting, facilitating and extending children’s play. They skilfully take on their roles as play-partners and in doing so effectively support children’s learning and development.
- Specific attention is paid to the learning and development of children with additional needs. Practitioners work in partnership with parents and external agencies with a view to optimising support for children. For example, the setting manager and practitioners have engaged with the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) to support the inclusion of all children’s learning and development.

**Actions advised**

- Practitioners are advised to use the information gathered from their individual observations of children’s learning to inform the short-term curriculum plan. This would support the delivery of an emergent curriculum that informs the next steps in children’s learning and the promotion of continuity in their learning experiences.
- The setting manager and practitioners are advised to re-evaluate the resources available in the outdoor learning environment. The inclusion of a variety and sufficient amounts of natural and/or open-ended equipment, materials and toys would support different types of play, including pretend play, creative play and language play.

AREA 3
QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is good.
- Children present as happy in the setting. High levels of engagement are evident during times where children freely choose their play and when they are engaged in hands-on learning experiences.
- Many children are experiencing a developing awareness of their successes. For example, on the morning of the inspection, most of the older children independently put on their coats. Practitioners celebrated this achievement with the children by exchanging encouraging words and initiating ‘high-five’ gestures.
• Children are developing a sense of their identity; they discuss members of their families with their peers and the practitioners. An awareness of their local community is also evident with some children making reference to the local football club where they and many of their siblings play.
• A small minority of children demonstrate difficulty in responding appropriately to different situations. These children are uncertain as to how best to resolve minor conflicts and as a result rely heavily on the intervention of the practitioners.
• The children express their creativity through their engagement with sensory materials. For example, during the inspection, the children used foam, playdough and flour to represent their ideas and interests. Outside of these adult-initiated experiences, children lack opportunities to be creative and imaginative in their use of the available resources in the environment.
• Children effectively use both non-verbal and verbal communication to express their experiences, thoughts, ideas and feelings. Natural, free-flowing conversations were particularly evident during times where children were actively engaged in activities or experiences.

**Actions advised**
• Practitioners are advised to create a visual with the children that outlines the boundaries of appropriate behaviour and steps on how to resolve some minor social conflicts. Similarly, visual tools, including a sand-timer, could also be introduced to support children in the development of social skills, such as turn taking.
• The practitioners are advised to increase the opportunities available for the children to freely engage in creative learning experiences. A stronger emphasis on the process involved in creative encounters would further support and enhance the development of each child’s individuality, imagination and curiosity.

**AREA 4**
**QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**
• The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
• An ethos of teamwork is clearly evident between practitioners. They work well together to ensure the smooth organisation of the learning programme.
• Whole-team meetings are held every three months. During these meetings the setting manager, assistant manager and practitioners reflect on and review their practice, policies and procedures. Management offers individual support meetings to practitioners each month. Formal self-evaluation practices are in their infancy; reviews of areas of practice are usually discussed informally between practitioners and management.
• There is clarity around the roles and responsibilities of the majority of practitioners. On occasion, a lack of clarity around the expectations of practitioners resulted in large groups of children waiting for support and assistance from a practitioner.
• Parents are valued as partners in their child’s learning. In the first week of the ECCE year, parents complete a survey detailing information about what makes their child unique.
• Prior to children’s transition to primary school, practitioners introduce materials that represent the local primary schools to the socio-dramatic play area. Photographs of the local schools are also added to the environment. These are used to encourage conversations between children and practitioners in the months leading up to the children’s transition to primary school.

**Actions advised**
• Management and practitioners are advised to review the roles and responsibilities of all practitioners to ensure greater clarity regarding the expectations of all practitioners. This will support the smooth organisation of the experiences and activities in the setting.
• Management are advised to familiarise themselves with the online *Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide* with a view to formalising the self-evaluation practices in the setting. The self-evaluation tools in the Guide can support practitioners as they begin to formally review and reflect on their practice.

**CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE**
The setting manager and assistant manager attended the post-inspection feedback meeting. The capacity of the setting to implement the actions advised above is good.
## 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

<table>
<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>
</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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