An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>Little Green Giants Crèche and Montessori</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>2 Lott Lane</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ballydonarea</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kilcoole</td>
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<td></td>
<td>County Wicklow</td>
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<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>09WW0037</td>
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</table>

Date of Inspection: 17-01-19
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

Date of inspection: 17-01-19

Inspection activities undertaken:
- Meeting with setting owner
- Observation of interactions during the session
- Interaction with children
- Review of relevant documents
- Feedback to setting owner, assistant manager and practitioners

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Little Green Giants was established in 2006. It is a privately owned setting located in the village of Kilcoole, County Wicklow. On the day of inspection, the owner, four practitioners and thirty-one children, some of whom are participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme, were present. At the time of inspection, the setting was undergoing a period of change due to a high turnover of staff in the preceding five months. The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the report, and the response 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 good.
- There is a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere in the setting. On arrival, children are greeted in a friendly manner. The setting operates an open-door policy and welcomes parents into the rooms.
- Relationships between the practitioners and children and their families are respectful and kind. The owner knows the children and their families well. The practitioners actively engage in friendly and relaxed conversations with the parents and are in the early stages of getting to know the families.
- A key worker approach is in place. Each key worker has responsibility for observing and documenting children’s learning. Small-group activities are organised with groups of children and practitioners using a rota system; this does not optimise the use of the key person approach and the building of deeper relationships between the key practitioner and her assigned group of children.
- The daily routine followed on the day of inspection was displayed in picture format for the children.
- Transitions between activities are flagged through the use of verbal notices and a bell. There were many transitions and some prolonged waiting times between activities on the day of the inspection. The duration of time allocated to free play did not provide the children with enough time to sustain or develop their play interests or ideas.
- Snack time provides opportunities for the children to sit in their key groups. On the day of the inspection, the practitioners served food and distributed cutlery and glasses during this time.
- In order to nurture the children’s sense of identity, the uniqueness of each child is represented in the group and individual learning journals. It is also evident in the environment in the birthday charts, hand prints, the family wall and displays of children’s art and mark-making work.
- The practitioners are successful in providing opportunities to promote family and community involvement; parents are encouraged to share information related to their professions and are invited to yearly events. Connections with the local community include local walks and trips and visits from lollipop person and the vegetable delivery man.

Actions advised:
- The practitioners are advised to review the current daily routine, so as to extend the time for free play and to reduce the number of transitions and any lengthy waiting periods for the children.
- It is advised that meal times be used as an opportunity to further develop the children’s social, language and self-help skills. In so doing, practitioners are encouraged to sit with the children and to provide opportunities for the children to help in preparing and serving lunch.
The practitioners are to extend the role of the key worker to include the key workers’ participation with their assigned children during small-group activities. This will assist practitioners in gaining an in-depth knowledge of 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 fair.
- The curriculum is informed by the Montessori Method of education and includes some links to *Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*.
- Curriculum implementation is guided by long-term, medium-term and short-term plans. Plans are developed around monthly themes, Montessori activities and the formal teaching of literacy and numeracy skills. Links between the children’s emergent interests and planned activities were not event during the inspection.
- Assessment approaches used to track the children’s learning and development include, observations linked to children’s abilities to complete tasks and notes of the children’s interests, individual scrapbooks and group learning journals. There is evidence of a strengths-based approach to assessment in some of the documentation. Currently, learning journals are not created in collaboration with the children and are not regularly shared with parents.
- Interactions between practitioners and children are positive. Most of the practitioners sit at the children’s level and praise the children’s involvement in activities. During the inspection, the balance between adult-initiated and child-led play was not conducive to children’s playful learning, with many missed opportunities to develop the children’s play interests.
- The indoor and outdoor spaces are divided into interest areas. These include provision for gross motor, table-top, mark-making, construction, socio-dramatic and Montessori activities. The Montessori areas provide the children with many opportunities to engage in a range of fine motor, sensorial and practical life activities. During the inspection, the room layout and use of the floor space and the many tables did not support the children to actively engage in pretend play activities and the socio-dramatic area was underutilised. At the time of the inspection the provision for creative and sensory activities was limited due to insufficient materials.
- An inclusive approach is adopted to supporting children with additional needs. Support from the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) and links with other professionals and services have been established.

**Actions advised**

- To support the tracking of individual children’s learning in a more child friendly, strengths-based and accessible format, it is advised that individual learning journals be created in collaboration with the children. It is further advised that this information be regularly shared with parents.
- The practitioners are advised to establish a greater balance between child-led and adult-led activities to enhance the children’s learning experiences. In so doing, the practitioners are advised to encourage the children to self-initiate and direct their own play ideas and that they engage with the children as play partners in pretend play activities to a greater degree.
- The practitioners are advised to review the environment and to place an emphasis on sensory and creative areas and on ensuring that sufficient materials are freely available to the children during free play time. The use of the ‘Environment Audit’ in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* will be helpful in this regard.

**AREA 3**

**QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is good.
- The children present as happy in their environment. They effectively self-choose Montessori and table-top work and the songs they wish to sing during circle-time activities.
- A small number of children demonstrated persistence as they completed activities to their satisfaction. This was evident as children chose to finish their table-top activities during circle time and some children completed the art activity while others went outside.
• Throughout the session, the children displayed an interest in creative and construction activities. During the inspection, their creative expression was restricted by the overly-directed focus of the adult-led activities and the use of art activity templates.
• The majority of children demonstrate good communication and social skills and they have established a good sense of self and others. For example, some children could recognise their written name and confidently introduce themselves and their friends.
• The majority of children displayed good levels of concentration. A few children required assistance to manage their emotions and to resolve minor conflicts. In general, the practitioners supported children by resolving any potential problems.
• On the day of inspection, it was evident that the organisation of circle-time as large-group activities did not encourage all children to participate; a significant number of the younger children presented as very passive, while the older and more vocal children dominated the conversation.
• Most children displayed effective early language, literacy and numeracy skills as they enthusiastically engaged in rhyme, song and story and as they freely chose mark-making materials and used mathematical language in general conversations. For example, a child made reference to twenty-one children in the room. On occasions, the use of closed questions and the more formal means of teaching letters and numbers limited the development of the children’s higher order thinking and age-appropriate development of their understanding of letter and number use in everyday contexts.
• The children were observed to manage their self-help and personal hygiene needs successfully. They independently used the toilet, washed their hands and put on their jackets. Some children also successfully zipped their coats and took pleasure in sharing this information with their peers.

**Actions advised**

- To support the promotion of the children’s imagination, self-expression and their creative skills, the practitioners are advised to encourage the children to actively explore and experiment with the art and creative materials during adult-led creative activities. They are also advised to reduce the use of template art activities.
- The practitioners are advised to support and encourage the children to independently resolve minor conflicts through the development of the children’s conflict resolution skills.
- It is advised that children be given opportunities to interact in smaller groups during circle-time activities. This will support the development of the children’s communication and social skills and will encourage the children to reflect on and make links in their play and learning.
- The practitioners are advised to replace the questioning and testing of children’s knowledge with the use of more open-ended questions to scaffold the children’s learning. The formal teaching of letters and numbers is not advised.

**AREA 4**

**QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- Weekly staff meetings, daily chats and regular supervision meetings are used as opportunities to reflect on, plan and discuss issues and concerns.
- A professional atmosphere is evident in the setting. The newly-established team is dedicated to ensuring that it provides a good quality early years programme for the children.
- The setting has established links with the local county childcare committee, Early Childhood Ireland and private early years consultants for support, advice and training. Within the setting there is ongoing commitment to continuing professional development. The practitioners participate in accredited training and in-house workshops.
- From time-to-time the reflections on practice are carried out. At the time of the inspection the owner and practitioners were unaware of the Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide as a means of supporting their self-evaluation processes.
- A clear vision for the setting that supports the development of an emergent based curriculum has yet to be developed and the key worker approach is not currently being implemented to its full potential.
- During the inspection all practitioners had opportunities to lead learning.
- The owner regards communication with parents as a two-way process. Parents’ comments and suggestions are welcomed. The parents are provided with information through the setting’s policy handbook, newsletters and letters displayed in the hallway. Information on children’s learning and development is shared with parents informally at drop-off and pick-up times and through the group
learning journal displayed in the hallway. Parents can request to meet with practitioners at any time.
• ‘All about me’ information is gathered from parents prior to children starting in the setting. There is a settling-in policy which encourages parents to visit with their children and to meet the practitioners; a phased-in approach is used where parents are welcome to stay to help to settle their children.
• In relation to transitions to primary school, the practitioners will accompany children to the school’s open day if parents are unable to attend on the day.

Actions advised
• The practitioners advised to use the Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide as part of their self-reflection practices.
• It is advised that the owner, in consultation with the practitioners, review the setting’s vision. In so doing they should consider the delivery of a curriculum incorporating play and agree the roles and responsibilities of the practitioners in implementing the key worker system to support the link between the key worker and parents.
• To support the children’s transfer from pre-school to primary school, it is advised that the setting develop a transition plan and initiate more formal links with the local national school. Using the ‘Transition’ pillar in the Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide will support this action.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE
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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of context to support children’s learning and development</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of processes to support children’s learning and development</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of children’s learning experiences and achievements</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of management and leadership for learning</td>
<td>Good</td>
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### Language used in Early-Years Education Inspection reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality 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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APPENDIX

SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT
SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection report

- The Inspection Report covered a snapshot of the work here in Little Green Giants. Many Aspects referred to in the report are usually done on a daily basis. However, there were some very good pieces of advice that we have taken on board and incorporated into our practice, which I will outline in Part B.
- An example of work not evident on the day but generally utilised was Area 2 (point three) whereby usually links are made between the children’s emergent interests and planned activities. Overall, the report was fair and very useful for us professionally in developing the children’s learning experiences.

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

Feedback from this report was passed on to staff.

Area 1

- The daily routine has been revised to extend free play and reduce transition times.
- During snack time the children now serve their own food and set the tables. The practitioners are always encouraged to sit with the children during mealtimes.
- Key workers now engage in small group activities with their assigned children.

Area 2

- Children and parents are now involved in the individual learning journals.
- The environment audit in Aistear has been consulted and the rooms have been segregated into different sections: home corner, construction area etc.

Area 3

- The children have been divided into ECCE year one and year two groups. During circle time this allows for more interaction between the staff and the children and encourages the younger and less vocal children to engage. It has enabled more child-led activities and less reliance on template art activities and the development of children’s conflict resolution skills.

Area 4

- The practitioners will use the Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide to enhance their self-reflection. I am reviewing the settings vision to place greater emphasis on the incorporation of play.
- The transition plan has been altered in line with Aistear.