

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills**

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

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| Setting Name | The Children's Place |
| Setting Address | 40 Parnell Square East Dublin 1 |
| DCYA number | 10DY0418 |

Date of Inspection: 25-09-2019



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

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

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| Date of inspection | 27-09-2019 |
| Inspection activities undertaken | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interaction with children • Review of relevant documents • Feedback to setting owner, manager and practitioners |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with setting owner • Meeting with practitioners • Observation of interactions during a number of sessions | |

CONTEXT OF SETTING

The Children's Place is a private setting which is based in Parnell Square East, Dublin 1. It provides full-time and part-time care and two pre-school sessions for children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, thirty children and four practitioners were present. 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 PROCESSES TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- The quality of the processes to support the children's learning and development is fair.
- There is a pleasant and friendly atmosphere in the setting. Practitioners greet parents and children warmly on arrival.
- Practitioners use gentle and quiet tones when speaking to the children. This supports positive interactions between the practitioners and the children and between the children themselves.
- There is a similar daily routine in both rooms. It consists of predominantly whole-group learning experiences. Activities are adult initiated. There is potential for practitioners to develop more opportunities to support children making independent decisions' regarding their learning. The provision and use of a visual daily schedule will support children's independence by allowing them to predict changes in the routine.
- The practitioners reported that, from time to time, they use props to inform children of upcoming changes in activities. During the inspection, children did not receive advance notice of changes in the daily routine and a few of the transitions from one activity to the next were disorganised. This resulted in a number of children becoming disengaged during times of transition.
- In one of the sessions, snack time is used as an opportunity to promote children's positive social skills; the practitioners sit with the children and engage in conversations.
- A number of displays have been created to foster the children's sense of identity and belonging. These include the family wall and the displays of the children's mark-making achievements to celebrate their uniqueness. These displays are positioned above the children's eye level. A small number of learning experiences are facilitated during 'Community week' to help raise children's awareness of people that help in the community. There is no imagery of people or places in the locality on display in the setting.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to review the daily routine to ensure the provision of a greater balance between adult-initiated and child-initiated activities and between whole-group and small-group activities. To this end, the use of regular, planned, small group learning experiences that are facilitated by a key practitioner and focus on the children's individual interests and their stages of development is advised.
- The practitioners are advised to develop strategies to help children's awareness and management of times of transition and to ensure that they experience smooth changes between activities. As part of this process, the use of a visual daily schedule and consistent verbal reminders, props and playful games are advised. The use of the tip sheet, 'Transitions' from the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* will assist in this regard.

- The practitioners are advised to source and display authentic pictures of members of the local community and places of interest in the locality. These can be used, in conjunction with learning activities, to further strengthen the children's understanding of people and places in the community. Practitioners are advised to ensure that these displays and the family wall are positioned at children's eye level.

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.
- Provision for children's learning is informed by *Aistear; the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*.
- Planning is informed by long-term, medium-term and a small amount of short-term plans. It incorporates the practitioners' ideas and seasonal events. One of the pre-school rooms has recently commenced the use of short-term plans. The inclusion of children's emergent interests in short-term plans would greatly enhance planning for the next steps in children's learning.
- The practitioners use a commercial on-line application to record children's use of Montessori materials and their participation in activities. The practitioners demonstrate an awareness of the importance of following and documenting the children's learning and their emergent interests; the findings are not formally incorporated into the short-term plans. Practitioners share observations with parents, as requested.
- The practitioners use some positive interaction strategies to encourage children's play and to deepen their understanding of new experiences. This could be further improved by the practitioners' use of more open ended questions to extend children's learning.
- During the inspection, children had opportunities to engage in a number of types of play, including sensorial play, physical play and puzzles.
- The indoor learning environments are bright and promote some opportunities for play including small-group play. The block area and small construction area are appropriately resourced. There is potential for a review of the learning environment to encourage children's active participation in a wide range of learning experiences, with particular reference to engaging with natural materials.
- The children have access to an outdoor learning environment where they can engage in physical activities, such as climbing and running around. The height of the large sand box restricts some children's independent use of this valuable sensorial learning area.
- The practitioners provide opportunities for children to engage in mark-making activities. Some language activities were observed. These included a story-telling activity and children singing a song in a child's home language. There is potential to build on these activities to support children's emergent language development.
- The practitioners' promotion of all children's participation in activities was noted positively; the programme of activities does not explicitly differentiate between children participating in year one and year two of the ECCE programme.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to develop their planning and assessment practices. As part of this process, they are advised to ensure that approaches to assessment include the recording of the children's interests and learning dispositions and that short-term plans are informed by the children's emerging interests and needs. In so doing, the findings from assessment should be used to progress children's learning and to guide the differentiation of activities to cater for the variety of learning needs. The use of the templates and advice in 'Planning and Assessing' in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* will support the implementation of this action.
- The practitioners are advised to use the audit tool in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* to guide the development of the learning environments. The provision of appropriately laid out and resourced areas that are fully accessible to children and contain a greater variety of real, natural and open-ended materials is advised.
- The practitioners are advised to review their roles as play partners with the children and, in their interactions, to consistently extend and deepen children's learning through the use of thought-provoking and open-ended questions.

- The practitioners are advised to facilitate a greater variety of learning experiences to support children's emerging language and literacy development, including children for whom English is an additional language. The tip sheets 'Supporting children to be bilingual or multilingual' and 'Enhancing language' in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* will assist in this regard.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is fair.
- During the inspection many children were engaged and interested in their learning. There was evidence of their developing positive learning dispositions, such as persistence as they emptied and filled containers with sand.
- Children are beginning to develop confidence in their learning and are capable of sharing their achievements with others. Practitioners could support this emerging confidence by regularly reinforcing and highlighting the children's achievement.
- Many of the children are developing positive social skills appropriate to their ages and stages of development. They took turns, helped tidy up and put materials back on the shelf. On a small number of occasions, the practitioners provided direction to the children on the desired behaviour, such as the need to share materials with other children.
- Some children were observed making decisions about their learning. Practitioners could reinforce this developing capacity by regularly celebrating and highlighting the child's active decision making.
- Children have some opportunities to express themselves creatively. This could be further developed through the provision of more experiences and materials that encourage children's creativity and self-expression. The use of template art activities could be reduced.
- The evidence of practitioners scribing children's comments on their artwork is positive and could be developed further.
- A few children demonstrated an understanding of mathematical concepts. For example, they enjoyed counting during the Mr Wolf game and discussed whether they were a 'little' or 'big' sibling. There is scope for children to experience a greater range of activities where they can explore mathematical and scientific concepts.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to provide regular opportunities for children to collaborate, reflect on, and share their ideas and learning achievements with their peers and the practitioners. The facilitation of small group activities with the key workers will assist in this regard.
- The practitioners are advised to provide greater opportunities for children to express themselves creatively through the inclusion of more process art activities, songs, role play and moving to music in the learning programme. They are also advised to discontinue the use of templates for colouring in and work sheets activities.
- The practitioners are advised to ensure a greater range of opportunities are offered to enhance children's emergent mathematical skills. The provision of more playful games, real everyday materials, such as rulers, measuring utensils and calculators, will help nurture children's interests in numeracy.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is fair.
- There is a sense of teamwork and collaboration among the practitioners in the setting.
- In both pre-school rooms, the lead-practitioner is responsible for the preparation of planning documentation. While they plan individually, practitioners do not currently gather as a team to review and plan the curriculum.
- It was reported that the owner reviews the setting's policies and informally updates practitioners of relevant changes.

- Individual staff appraisal meetings are held between the owner and the practitioners every six weeks to three months. One of the practitioners in the setting has commenced Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) training. Practitioners have not yet availed of training or external advisory supports on *Aistear; the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and *Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education*.
- The practitioners share information with parents on their child's day on a daily basis. Photographs of children participating in activities are forwarded to parents. The setting uses a handbook to share practical information on the setting with parents. Parents are informed that they can see the children's folders, if they wish.
- Before children commence in the setting, they are invited to visit the ECCE room and to meet the practitioners and other children.
- Links have been established between the setting and two local schools. The owner meets the teachers of junior infants and informally shares information on the children's learning.

Actions advised

- The management team and practitioners are advised to implement formal self-review and professional reflection practices. This could be achieved through the introduction of regular staff/team meetings of the owner and practitioners, and the utilisation of the resources in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* to prioritise areas in need of improvement and to agree a plan of action.
- The owner is advised to ensure appropriate systems are in place to support the continuing professional development of all practitioners. In so doing, the setting's participation in the Better Start Quality Development (mentoring) Service would be of benefit.
- The practitioners are advised to invite parents regularly to review and comment on their child's learning. As part of this process, the provision of opportunities for parents to review and write comments in the children's learning journals is advised.
- The practitioners are advised to use the *Mo Scéal* templates to support them in telling the story of the children as learners. This information can be used as a resource to promote positive transitions and continuity of learning experiences between the setting and primary schools.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The current capacity of the setting to implement the actions advised above is fair. The setting would benefit from engagement with the Better Start Quality Development Service to support improvements in provision for children.

Summary of Overall Inspection

| Area | Quality Level |
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| Quality of context to support children's learning and development | Fair |
| Quality of processes to support children's learning and development | Fair |
| Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements | Fair |
| Quality of management and leadership for learning | Fair |

Language used in Early-Years Education Inspection reports

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| 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. |