An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>Happy Days Montessori School</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>Kildangan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kinnegad</td>
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<td></td>
<td>County Meath</td>
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<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>11MH0239</td>
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Date of Inspection: 05-03-2018
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(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 setting’s provision in each area.
Early-Years Education Inspection

Date of inspection | 05-03-2019
---|---
Inspection activities undertaken | Interaction with children
| Review of relevant documents
| Post-inspection feedback meeting with setting owner and ECCE practitioner
- Meeting with setting owner and ECCE practitioner
- Observation of interactions during the morning ECCE session

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Happy Days Montessori School has been in operation in Kildangan, Co. Meath for over twenty-seven years. There is one main pre-school room where the owner/manager provides care and education for local children availing of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, the owner/manager and the ECCE practitioner were present with eleven children. The setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised in this 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 excellent.
- A welcoming and homely atmosphere is evident as parents and children are welcomed into the setting with warmth and respect at arrival and departure times.
- Practitioners have strong and positive relationships with parents and children; the practitioners treat the children with respect and are responsive to their needs.
- There is a well organised routine in the setting which children enjoy participating in. Children have many opportunities during the daily routine to make independent decisions and choices. There are extensive periods of free-play during the day. The children are prepared for all transitions during the day using timers and buzzers for notifications.
- The children organise and lead snack time; the practitioners sit and support them as necessary. The setting has completed the Healthy Ireland Project which promotes healthy lifestyle behaviours in early childhood. The children have a strong awareness of their health and well-being following completion of the project.
- The children are independent throughout the day and have good self-help skills which are effectively supported by the practitioners. The children are learning to self-regulate as the practitioners support them to explore their emotions and feelings.
- The children’s individual identity and belonging is nurtured and celebrated in a variety of ways. Photographs of the children and their families are displayed throughout the environment. The owner organises community members to visit the setting and documents these occasions for the children. There is a strong sense of rural Ireland and agricultural awareness in the setting; this reflects the families attending the setting.

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 excellent.
- An emergent curriculum is in place in the setting which is informed by Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework and supported through the medium of play and hands-on learning.
- The practitioners have a well-written curriculum statement which links into their long-term plans and medium-term plans. The short-term plans follow the children’s interests and are captured in well documented learning stories. These learning stories record the group learning activities which take place. There are individual observation records which link to the planning process and support
the children’s development. Observations and learning stories are continuously shared with parents for feedback and comments.

- Play is the main medium for learning with children given extensive and well organised time to pursue their interests and to develop new skills and concepts.
- The practitioners naturally introduce numeracy and literacy into the children’s learning experiences. The children are familiar with mathematical language and concepts. On the day of the inspection they confidently measured out the ingredients to make pancakes.
- The indoor environment is laid out in a highly commendable manner with defined interest areas and a range of resources. The practitioners create spaces which support the emergent curriculum and interest of the children. The ‘invitations to play’ created by the practitioners provide resources and materials to extend the children’s emergent interests. They are highly effective in promoting interests such as blowing bubbles and caring for animals.
- Practitioners very skilfully ask open-ended questions which encourage and support the children to discover, investigate and engage with the learning taking place. These interactions are balanced between child and adult-led moments as children confidently ask questions and explore new concepts.
- The setting provides a very inclusive environment with a strong focus on supporting children with additional needs. Following training and workshops the owner introduced the concept of an inclusive environment to the children and developed a project with the children called ‘An irresistible invitation to learn’.

AREA 3
QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is excellent.
- The setting has a strong focus on nature and agriculture. This is reflected in the outdoor area with a large variety of digging areas, gardening and various animals to care for. The outdoor environment also provides opportunities for climbing, risk-taking and imaginative play.
- The book area is used throughout the day and children freely choose to read books independently. On the day of the inspection the practitioner read a story with a child about dinosaurs. They shared knowledge and new information with each other. Following this the child shared his new found knowledge with his peers.
- Songs and rhymes are used very effectively throughout the daily routine to support recall and memory. On the day of the inspection the children used a song to remember the recipe for making pancakes. All children were given the opportunity to flip the pancakes and the children praised and encouraged each other for their attempts and achievements.
- The children are very good decision makers. They are given time and space to solve problems and to work through conflict situations. The children also take ownership of tidy-up time and have various roles and responsibilities during the daily routine. This supports their independence and confidence.
- The children have access to a wide range of mark-making materials and they enjoy process art activities. They use their imagination and creativity to explore various projects, sensory play and science experiments.

AREA 4
QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is excellent.
- There is a professional working ethos evident in the setting.
- The owner and practitioner work well together and have created a respectful space where they share knowledge and experience. The owner is an excellent role model as she plans for changes and enjoys taking on new challenges and projects in the setting. She has an induction process which she supports all new staff member to engage in. The practitioners have formal and informal meetings; they record key decisions made at these meetings.
- The owner has continuously changed the practice in the setting and the curriculum and procedures are reviewed regularly. Following the completion of the Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) in the Early Years the owner began using the Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide to record and support the
developmental changes in the setting. The owner also involves the children and parents in this work. A range of learning stories captures the growth of the setting.

- There is an excellent range of communication channels established with parents including a parent handbook, daily informal meetings and various events throughout the year. The parents are involved and updated on curriculum and procedural changes throughout the year.
- The children’s transition to primary school is effectively supported through a range of events; the children go to the local primary school Christmas concert, they visit the school during the year for a tour and they share activities and events taking place in their setting.

CAPACITY TO MAINTAIN HIGH QUALITY PRACTICE

The capacity of the setting to continue to maintain a high level of quality for children and parents is excellent. The owner and practitioner are progressive in their thoughts and ideas in developing exemplary practice.
## 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>Excellent</td>
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## Language used in Early-Years Education Inspection reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality</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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