An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna  
Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Name</th>
<th>Fairytales Preschool</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service Address</td>
<td>Rathmullan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>County Donegal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>13DL0173</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Date of Inspection: 08-03-2018
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 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of inspection</th>
<th>08-03-2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
<td>Interaction with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meeting with service manager</td>
<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meeting with practitioners</td>
<td>• Post-inspection feedback meeting with the service manager and practitioners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Observation of interactions during one pre-school session</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONTEXT OF SERVICE

Fairytales Pre-school is a privately managed, full day-care facility that is located in the coastal village of Rathmullan, County Donegal. Established in 2013, there is one pre-school room in the service which offers the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. There were nine children present, one leader and one assistant practitioner in the room inspected. The lead practitioner was appointed in the weeks prior to the inspection. The owner / manager, pre-school manager, room leader and assistant practitioner attended the post-inspection meeting. 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 very good.
- Practitioners demonstrate warm and caring interactions with the children and their families upon their arrival in the setting. The children are affirmed for their efforts. They experience a sense of security from the consistent care and acknowledgements that they receive throughout the session.
- There is a daily routine in place which is displayed near the door for the parents to observe. The children are provided with a visual routine within the learning environment. This supports their awareness of and familiarity with the structure of the day.
- Gross physical activities occur towards the end of the session. The children play games on the grass and manipulate a parachute as a large group. Although this is beneficial to the children’s learning, the length of time allocated to physical activity within the session is not conducive to the progression of gross physical skills.
- Snack time reinforces the development of social relationships through relaxed and naturally flowing conversations between the practitioners, the children and their peers. The children are supported to manage their own hygiene needs effectively and are developing self-help skills when putting on their coats and managing their lunch bags at snack.
- The practitioners use verbal cues when notifying children of the upcoming transitions. The transition from snack to free-play was fluid and engaged children in learning activities. Some children did not respond to the verbal cues used during the inspection, creating incoherence during elements of the routine.
- Practitioners are warm and responsive to the needs of the children. They respect the children's voices and exhibit their verbal contributions on various wall displays within the room. Practitioners promote peer interactions and encourage positive behaviour through gentle reminders within the session.
- A commendable effort is made to ensure that the children feel a sense of identity and belonging within the setting. A wide variety of effective photographic displays within the pre-school room helps children to see themselves reflected in the environment and prompts the children to reflect on their prior experiences.
- Parents have the opportunity to share occasions such as the Christmas event, graduation event and Pyjama Day with the children. The setting is integrated within the local community. Walks in the locality and to the nearby beach familiarise the children with local residents and business people.
**Actions advised**

- Practitioners are advised to increase the time allocated to physical learning providing frequent active experiences within the daily routine to support the further development of gross motor skills.
- It is advised that practitioners identify and implement additional strategies to enhance the children’s awareness of changes within the routine and promote their purposeful involvement at the many transition points during the session.

**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.
- There is provision for long, medium and short-term planning. Practitioners demonstrate awareness of *Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework,* through their regular use of the learning goals. Evaluation of the planned experiences is recorded on a weekly basis. Practitioners have the opportunity to orally evaluate practice at the monthly staff meetings.
- Practitioners are developing elements of an emergent approach through the recording and display of the children’s interests labelled ‘Children’s Involvement in the Planning Process.’ There is scope to develop this approach further by reviewing the use of pre-planned monthly themes and utilising the children’s observations to inform the planned learning experiences.
- Practitioners regularly record observations which outline the children’s next steps in learning. Each child has an individual folder with a foreword note to parents inviting them to view the portfolios as they wish during the year. A formal meeting is held between the practitioners and parents in the final term to discuss the children’s learning before they make the transition to school.
- The practitioners view the children as competent learners. Displayed ‘helper’ roles indicate that the children are active agents in the session who capably make decisions during play.
- Practitioners know the children well and utilise knowledge from their family backgrounds to engage the children in conversation.
- The indoor environment is well-defined, offering play in a variety of contexts. Multi-sensory play is highly valued with children freely accessing playdough, water and sand during the inspection. The outdoor area is accessed daily with plans in place to extend the resources further in this area.
- The practitioners use the daily story, songs and playful interactions to develop language and numeracy concepts. Although there were some occasions whereby the practitioners promoted mathematical thinking during play, there is scope to develop the use of open-ended questions to develop this further.
- Practitioners are aware of the importance of connecting learning experiences and occasionally plan activities to link prior and new learning. There is scope to develop reflection further at the level of the child so that the children are allocated time to plan for, think and talk about their individual play experiences.
- Practitioners are developing an inclusive approach to provision in the pre-school room. The use of visual prompts and the accessibility of resources for the children supports this. A co-ordinated approach has been developed between the parents, pre-school and external professionals to support the effective inclusion of children with additional needs.

**Actions advised**

- It is advised that the practitioners plan to further develop an emergent, enquiry-based curriculum that is led by the children’s current interests and their observed learning needs.
- It is advised that further opportunities are provided to promote mathematical thinking using open-ended questioning and the provision of open-ended resources in a variety of play areas.
- Practitioners are advised to develop opportunities that will promote daily reflection to support the children to plan for, think and talk about their individual play experiences.
AREA 3
QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is good.
- The children demonstrate enjoyment and engagement in the free-play activities accessible at the beginning of the session. The children display motivation and interest when exploring the textures and resources at the sand, water and playdough areas. The planned activities subsequent to free-play did not sustain the engagement of some children during the inspection.
- Children display self-confidence and initiative when empowered to make decisions using the variety of experiences on offer.
- Children are developing the ability to play co-operatively and demonstrate the ability to resolve minor conflicts collaboratively with their peers.
- Children are developing a growing capacity to make healthy choices. They have recently explored the concept of dental hygiene, supported by visual displays in the room.
- A small group of children used dice and number mats confidently during the inspection to playfully demonstrate their interest in and knowledge of number concepts.
- Each child has an individual learning journal which is accessible within the pre-school room. Photographs of the children engaging in activities, observation records and sample mark-making are contained in the journals to document the children’s learning. There is scope to develop the information recorded so that it is unique to the child’s individual needs, interests and dispositions.
- Children are developing a strong sense of identity and belonging within the service. They confidently communicate family and personal experiences to their peers and to the practitioners.
- They are developing an awareness of community roles through visits to the library, music shop and Garda station.
- Children are enabled to explore nature whilst in the outdoor environment, when walking to the nearby beach and on outings to a local park. Whilst curiosity and investigation is promoted through activities such as the nature box with leaves and occasional planned experiments, there is scope to provide further exploratory and open-ended experiences for the children.

Actions advised

- It is advised that children experience deeper levels of engagement throughout the range of activities provided during the session which utilise their interests and ensure appropriate levels of motivation to sustain play.
- It is advised that the information contained within the individual learning portfolios become more reflective of the child’s unique learning progression, connecting learning experiences and highlighting their achievements.
- It is advised that children are provided with further opportunities for investigation, problem-solving and opportunities to respond to “I wonder why” questions to promote effective thinking and learning.

AREA 4
QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- There is an ethos of collaboration and partnership within the service. The manager promotes a supportive approach by organising frequent opportunities for the staff to meet within the service and also with practitioners of the sister service. There is little opportunity during these occasions for the practitioners to engage in collaborative review for improvement. The practitioners demonstrate an awareness of Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education, making links to the relevant standards through the planning process.
- The manager and staff value opportunities for continuing professional development to promote quality experiences for the children. They have availed of training in areas such as Aistear, First Aid and Child Protection.
- Appropriate systems, such as a daily routine and frequent planning promote an organised approach to the experiences on offer. The appointment of new staff members within the service requires clearer definition of roles and responsibilities.
The service exploits lots of opportunities to communicate informally with parents. Termly newsletters, social media, letters and daily discussions are used to inform them about the children’s learning experiences. Parents attend various events in the setting throughout the year.

- The children’s transition into the setting is supported by the service offering a family fun day prior to the start of the term. Parents are provided with registration forms, information leaflets and children can view the pre-school room in advance to promote familiarity for the settling-in period.
- Transition to primary school is supported by the close relationship that the setting has formed with the local primary school. This includes regular discussions with and visits from the school principal during the year.

**Actions advised**

- It is advised that the manager and practitioners use the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* to develop systematic collaborative reflection and measures to support action planning. This will provide a platform for colleagues to evaluate and improve practice thereby enhancing the children’s learning experiences within the setting.
- It is advised that practitioners’ roles and responsibilities within the pre-school room become more clearly established to facilitate quality learning experiences.

**CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE**

The manager and the practitioner, through their engagement in professional dialogue around the key findings of this inspection report, demonstrate very good capacity to implement the actions advised above.
### 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>Very Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of processes to support children’s learning and development</td>
<td>Good</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>Very good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Language used in Early-Years Education Inspection reports

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