An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>Creative Kids</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>Liddiard House</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>County Carlow</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>14CW0068</td>
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Date of Inspection: 12-02-2020
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of inspection</th>
<th>12-02-2020</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inspection activities undertaken</strong></td>
<td><strong>Interaction with children</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Meeting with setting manager</td>
<td>- Review of relevant documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Meeting with practitioners</td>
<td>- Feedback to setting manager</td>
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<td>- Observation of interactions during a number of sessions</td>
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**CONTEXT OF SETTING**

Creative Kids is a privately owned, full-day and sessional service. The setting provides three morning sessions and one afternoon session delivering the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, thirty-two children and four practitioners were present; one of the practitioners is an Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) staff member. The manager attended the post-inspection feedback meeting. 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 fair.
- The children are welcomed by the practitioners into the rooms on arrival. On arrival the children commence in making choices about their play activities.
- A daily routine is identified and on display in each of the rooms. It affords the children opportunities to be active agents in their own learning.
- Transitions between activities are announced verbally at times. The practice is not consistent. The transition periods are not optimised to facilitate learning; some transition periods result in prolonged waiting periods where children become disengaged.
- Snack time is a social occasion where some of the practitioners and the children sit together and converse with each other. The children are very independent in their self-care and in caring for their learning environment.
- During the inspection, the practitioners used some positive strategies to support the children such as recognition and positive affirmation. On a number of occasions, the practitioners took a more directive approach and resolved the issues for the children. On a small number of occasions challenging behaviour was not addressed appropriately.
- The children’s sense of identity and belonging is nurtured to some degree. There is a family and community wall, birthday charts, art displays, and the coat hooks have the child’s name. There is scope to enhance this practice.

**Actions advised**

- The practitioners are advised to develop and consistently implement more effective transition strategies.
- The practitioners are advised to enhance the snack period as a social occasion by ensuring that they all partake in the meal time experience with the children on a consistent basis.
- The practitioners are advised to review their conflict-resolution strategies to ensure consistent practice across all rooms. There is a need to establish boundaries and to support the children to negotiate and resolve for themselves the small conflicts that arise naturally between them from time to time.
- Building on the current practices in supporting children’s identity and belonging, the practitioners are advised to embrace the children’s community background and cultural diversity. This could be achieved by providing additional resources and books, by facilitating further community engagement and increased parental engagement.
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.
- A play-based curriculum is being developed which is thematic, based predominantly on the adults’ ideas and organised around long-term, medium-term, and short-term plans. There are some links to Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. The curriculum plan focuses predominantly on academic type activities but there is some evidence that the children’s emergent interests are considered. This was evidenced through a small number of notes and on the day of the inspection when a child’s idea from the previous day was revisited and acted upon. There is much scope to strengthen the planning practices, to develop an emergent and responsive curriculum.
- Individual learning journals and check-list observations are documented for the children; in one room a small number of anecdotal observations were also maintained. The journals contain samples of the children’s artwork which are mostly template based. The majority of the journals do not currently contain any commentary on the child’s progression. These observations do not fully reflect a holistic view of the child, and the information is not yet used to optimal effect to inform the short-term planning for the children’s learning.
- The practitioners have engaged the Better Start Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) to provide additional guidance in supporting children. However additional guidance is required in developing individual educational plans and in developing strategies to support each child’s progression.
- At times, the practitioners engage in authentic discussions with the children. However, during the inspection there were many instances where the practitioners were not actively engaged with the children. Therefore, they missed the opportunity to scaffold and extend the children’s learning.
- The indoor environments have some defined interest areas. However, many of the areas in all of the rooms require additional manipulatives and resources to enhance the children’s learning experiences. Some of the materials are not freely accessible or located in specific areas; additional open-ended resources that promote creativity, exploration and sensorial play are needed to enhance the play provision.

**Actions advised**

- The practitioners need to take steps to ensure that their curriculum is fully informed by Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, and that they take additional account of the children’s interests, needs and cultural backgrounds.
- There is a need to develop assessment practices that capture a holistic view of the child. The children’s emerging interests, needs and dispositions need to be identified and used to set out the next steps in their learning and to inform the development of short-term plans. Additional guidance is available in the ‘Planning and Assessing’ pillar in the Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide.
- The practitioners are advised to avail of the external support provided by Better Start to assist them to clearly address and provide for the progression and engagement of all children.
- The practitioners are encouraged to review their interaction strategies and to plan how they could consistently scaffold and extend the children’s learning further. This could be achieved by increasing their engagement with the children as play partners.
- The practitioners are advised to carry out an audit of the indoor environments with a view to developing the interest areas; for example by classifying the materials into a specific area, and by extending the range of play materials and equipment. The ‘Learning Environment’ pillar of the Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide offers further guidance on this point.

AREA 3
QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is fair.
- In general, the children appear happy and seem to enjoy their learning experiences.
- For the majority of the time the children are engaged in free-play. However, as the adults engage with them in a limited manner, their play is not enriched or sustained.
- The children are motivated in their chosen activities, they engage in peer play and play in small groups.
The learning experiences provided are limited, with a strong focus on academic skills and product-based art. There is much scope to develop activities that provide the children with additional opportunities for enquiry and exploration.

The children demonstrate confidence in their interactions with the practitioners and with each other. They discuss family, recent events in their lives and the activity they are involved in.

On the day of the inspection, the children experienced success and they shared that success with the practitioners as they completed their activities of block building or making items from playdough. There are some opportunities for them to develop an awareness of their changing abilities and progression in their development through positive feedback provided by the practitioners.

The children make requests and these requests are respected and followed by the practitioners. There is scope to further develop the child’s voice within their learning environment; for example on their artwork, in the development of their learning journals, through enabling them to reflect on their play activities and by documenting their ideas for future learning activities.

**Actions advised**

- The practitioners are advised to provide the children with additional materials and opportunities to enable them to engage in creative expression. To this end, there is a need to ensure that the activities optimise the processes that the children engage in, over and above the current emphasis on the final product. This can be provided for through open-ended process art, junk art, sensorial play such as with water and sand, and role-play.
- The practitioners are advised to provide learning experiences that are reflective of the children’s interest and needs and which promote enquiry, investigation and opportunities for problem-solving. Greater use of open-ended materials and skilful questioning will enhance the opportunities for collaborative exploration.
- The practitioners are encouraged to develop additional strategies which enable the children to view themselves as capable, confident learners, and to strengthen the voice of the child in their learning environment. These strategies could include additional visual imagery of children’s achievements in the environment, further opportunities to reflect on and plan their learning activities, the inclusion of photographs, samples of free mark making, and annotations of their thoughts in their learning journals.

**AREA 4**

**QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is fair.
- Periodically, the pre-school team meet formally to discuss practice and curriculum plans. Notes of these meetings are documented.
- The setting has recently engaged Better Start National Early Years Quality Development Service and it plans to focus on the development of the learning environment, its planning and assessment practices. They have recently explored the use of the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide*.
- On the day of the inspection, there was some evidence of good team work, with some effective partnership. Currently, the practitioners assume limited leadership roles and their approach to curriculum development and implementation is not consistent across all rooms.
- Support and supervision meetings are provided to the practitioners by the manager. This is undertaken on an informal basis and records are not documented.
- The team have yet to embed a culture of reflection through engagement with the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide*.
- Good supports are in place to help children settle into the setting. Parents and children are encouraged to visit in advance of their child starting, and a parent’s handbook is provided. A staggered settling-in period is provided for new children and for those transitioning between rooms.
- Informal sharing of information with parents takes place throughout the year and discussions take place at arrival and collection times. The observations, and the individual learning journals are available for parents to review. Practice in this regard could be further enhanced.
**Actions advised**

- The management is advised to provide guidance and feedback to the practitioners in relation to ensuring the curriculum is fully informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. In addition, there is a need to guide the practitioners so that they share leadership roles, and develop a cohesive, agreed approach to developing and implementing the curriculum. The management and practitioners are advised to develop formal structures to enhance support and supervision, and to introduce self-evaluative and reflective practices. This will enhance the current team meetings and enable the practitioners to identify plans for improvement.

- The practitioners are advised to provide additional information for parents regarding their child’s learning and development, on a more formal and regular basis. This could be achieved, for example, by frequently sharing the individual learning journals with parents and by inviting them to provide comments and feedback on the child’s learning.
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>Fair</td>
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</tbody>
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Language used in Early-Years Education Inspection reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Provision that is excellent is exemplary in meeting the needs of children.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<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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Published March 2021
APPENDIX

SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT
SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection report

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

We have undertaken many actions to promote all the areas that the inspector has focused on. We implemented real life raw materials in each room, we have revised our conflict resolution strategies. Our curriculum is fully informed by Aistear. We carried out an indoor audit and implemented new areas for activities and better equipment.

Practitioners are providing children with more materials and opportunities to engage children in creative expression, and we are no longer using templates. Our curriculum is fully child led, activities are being planned based on children's interests and ideas.

The manager is helping practitioners to guide them in their roles and in implementation of the curriculum.

We have developed support and supervision one on one meetings, every 6 weeks.

We are still engaged with Better Start Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) which we find very helpful and it has definitely helped both manager and practitioners with achieving many goals, and learning new techniques.