An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION - FOCUSED INSPECTION

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Name</th>
<th>Tots &amp; Co. Nutgrove</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service Address</td>
<td>Unit 7, Block C</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nutgrove Office Park</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Churchtown Upper</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dublin 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>14DR0288</td>
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</tbody>
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Date of Inspection: 05-02-2018
WHAT IS AN EARLY YEARS EDUCATION-FOCUSED INSPECTION?

The Early Years Education-focused 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-focused Inspection

Date of inspection: 05-02-2018

Inspection activities undertaken:
- Meeting with service manager
- Observation of interactions
- Interaction with children
- Review of relevant documents
- Feedback to service manager and practitioners

CONTEXT OF SERVICE

Tots and Co. Nutgrove, is a privately-owned full day care service. It has been in operation since 2015. The pre-school curriculum in this service is underpinned by the Montessori approach. On the day of the inspection, nine children, the room leader, assistant practitioner and a relief staff member were in attendance. A significant number of children come from a variety of cultural backgrounds, and many speak English as an additional language. A number of recent staff changes have resulted in a new room leader and a new childcare manager. The childcare manager, the room leader and the assistant practitioner attended the post-inspection feedback 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 good.
- Parents bring children into the room and are warmly welcomed by the practitioners. Time is taken to chat to parents about their child’s learning and achievements at arrival and collection times.
- The daily routine is displayed at the entrance to the service, however, it is not visible to the children. Transitions are signalled by the use of verbal reminders. During the inspection, a small number of children experienced difficulties in transitioning between activities.
- Snack time is valued as a social occasion and practitioners sit and chat to the children about their lunches.
- The practitioners know the children well and they are attentive to their needs. They offer praise and encouragement and provide guidance towards positive behaviour.
- The uniqueness of each child is reflected in the birthday display, the children’s handprints and the photographs on their coat hooks. A number of children attending this service come from diverse cultural backgrounds and this is reflected to some extent within the service; for example in the welcome sign displayed in different languages at the entrance to the room.
- The parents visit the service for the Christmas party and the end-of-year graduation.

Actions advised
- It is advised that practitioners develop a supportive, visual daily routine with photographs of the children engaged in the daily activities. It would be beneficial to display this at child height. In addition, further strategies to support transitions between activities would be beneficial. This could include the use of ‘Now and Then’ cards.
- It is advised that a key person approach be developed. This approach is one in which the key person builds a secure supportive relationship with the child and has the primary responsibility for sharing information in relation to the child with his/her parents.
- Practitioners are advised to ensure that the service reflects, to a greater extent, the cultural diversity of the children and their families. The inclusion in the environment of props and books which reflect diversity; signs in the children’s home language; and celebrations of cultural events would be beneficial.

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 poor.
- The themes of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* are displayed in the room. The room leader uses a resource file containing possible topics and themes to be covered each month. At the time of the inspection, there was no evidence of long-term, medium-term or short-term planning underpinned by *Aistear* and reflective of children’s emergent interests.
- The practitioners log children’s progress in using Montessori materials and they compile scrapbooks of children’s art work and free process art. Other than this, however, no formal observations of the children’s learning and achievements are carried out. It is planned to introduce a learner template to monitor and record children’s learning and development.
- The practitioners use calm, positive tones when interacting with the children. There is scope to extend the children’s vocabulary as well as their thinking and problem-solving skills.
- The indoor environment includes some interest areas such as the home corner and construction area and the children have access to books in the book area throughout the session. A number of play resources are placed haphazardly on shelves. There are limited resources in the interest area, and as they are of a fair quality only, they do not adequately stimulate the children’s interest.
- Montessori materials are available to the children. However, the Montessori and play materials are not used to optimal effect to enhance positive learning. The service does not have a designated area reflecting the Montessori Approach. At the time of the inspection, the Montessori materials were not well organised; they were placed in different areas and they were not clearly labelled.
- The children access the outdoor area when the weather is fine. The area is in need of significant attention to ensure improvements to the play surface, and the play resources available.
- The practitioners use the Montessori materials, to support the children's emergent literacy and numeracy. However, some learning activities are less well-aligned to the children's interests and developmental levels. These include the formal learning activities involving, dot-to-dot, tracing and template-based activities. During the inspection, there was some limited evidence of practitioners modelling mathematical language; during the Duplo activity the practitioner talked about bigger, smaller, and taller.
- Children with additional needs are well integrated in the service. The practitioners have engaged in training in *Lámh*, a support system which enhances effective communication with children with additional needs. They have built professional relationships with external agencies in order to support these children and their families.

Actions advised

- Practitioners are advised to regularly gather and record information on the children’s learning, which will guide the next steps for the children’s progression.
- It is advised that the practitioners extend the children’s vocabulary and language skills, and further challenge and extend their thinking and problem-solving skills. Offering children time to process language, to experience a broader range of vocabulary, and the consistent use of open-ended questions and prompts would be helpful.
- The practitioners are advised to review how materials are displayed, and to use the ‘Indoor Audit Environment’ in the *Aistear Toolkit* to support them in developing play and interest areas that contain a range of suitable and developmentally appropriate resources.
- The practitioners are advised to generate more age-appropriate pre-literacy and pre-numeracy experiences for the children, in place of the formal approaches currently used. These may include enjoying stories, reciting songs and rhymes and the using a broader range of mathematical language.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is fair.
On the day of the inspection, the children generally enjoyed and engaged in their self-chosen activities. A number of them achieved success and demonstrated good concentration levels during activities. A few children experienced challenges in staying focused and on task. Accordingly, they lost interest in the activity and discontinued their participation after a short period of engagement.

Children are learning to play cooperatively together. While the majority engage well with each other, a few children who are new to the room are still learning to follow the social rules of the service. During the inspection, they struggled to turn-take, to share and to negotiate with their peers. This resulted in the practitioner stepping away from other groups of children, to help them to resolve their disagreements. The practitioners supported these children in an appropriate manner. Nonetheless, the play experiences of many of the children were interrupted.

During the inspection, there was a strong focus on adult-led activities with limited opportunities for child-led activities.

Children are learning how different languages are used and they confidently use every-day Irish words.

A child-helper routine is in place; children give out the lunch bags at snack time.

Children are developing a positive sense of self and some are eager to talk about their lives outside the pre-school. The children's sense of identity and belonging is developed to some extent. It is reflected in the examples of their art and crafts and template-based activities that are on display in the room. There is scope to promote children's imagination and creativity by offering regular opportunities for free process art and free mark-making.

The children bring a soft toy, ‘Billy teddy’, home every week. The parents record activities undertaken with the soft toy, and the child then returns the toy on Friday for ‘Show and Tell’. This approach develops a positive link between the child’s home life and the pre-school.

**Actions advised**

- In order to reflect the children’s sense of identity and belonging, practitioners are advised to introduce a family wall with photographs of the children and their families.
- To ensure all children achieve success and confidence, and to help them to sustain their motivation and interest in activities, the practitioners are advised to reduce the use of large-group and adult-led activities. Additional opportunities could be generated for child-led activities and for regular small-group work led by the key person. This will support more differentiated activities to suit the individual children’s interests and needs, as well as children’s autonomy.
- The practitioners are advised to support the children’s understanding of the service’s rules, and to support the development of their skills in turn-taking, sharing and negotiating. The key worker approach would be beneficial in this regard.

**AREA 4**

**QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is fair.
- At the time of the inspection, there had been a recent change in management and room leader.
- The recently-appointed manager, presents a positive role model to the practitioners. She has commenced the work of developing procedures, and to promote quality provision, she hopes to introduce formal staff meetings and periodic staff reviews.
- Practitioners informally discuss plans every two months and they chat on a daily basis about the planned activities.
- The practitioners have been working together for only a short period of time but there is evidence of teamwork, professional collaboration and shared leadership. For example, individual practitioners take the lead in specific activities such as the musical movement and the storytelling activity.
- The practitioners recently attended workshops on First Aid, Promoting Positive behaviour and Yoga for children.
- The manager accesses support and information from Early Childhood Ireland to assist her in her new role.
- Appropriate systems are in place to help the children to settle into the service. Information regarding children’s learning and achievements is shared with parents in an informal manner.
• To support the children’s move to primary school the practitioners plan to chat with them about their upcoming move. At this time, no formal links have been established with the local primary schools.

**Actions advised**

• It is advised that regular staff meetings be introduced and used to develop plans which support children’s interests and learning needs.
• The use of the templates and self-evaluation tools in the *Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide* is advised to support the staff’s professional self-reflection as they move through this transition time.
• The practitioners are advised to formally share with parents at intervals throughout the year, their observations about the children, their learning and achievements.
• The practitioners are advised to begin the process of developing links with the local primary schools in order to further support children’s transition to primary school.

**CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE**

The manager and the lead practitioner and practitioner expressed a desire to implement the actions advised. The capacity of the service to continue to implement the actions advised above is fair.
## 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>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of processes to support children’s learning and development</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of children’s learning experiences and achievements</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of management and leadership for learning</td>
<td>Fair</td>
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## Language used in Early-Years Education-focused Inspection reports

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