**EARLY YEARS EDUCATION - FOCUSED INSPECTION**

**REPORT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Name</th>
<th>Little Jesters</th>
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| Service Address | 9A Foxhill Avenue  
Baldoyle  
Dublin 13 |
| DCYA number   | 14DY0583       |

**Date of Inspection:** 22-03-2018
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: 23-02-2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inspection activities undertaken</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Meeting with manager/practitioner and practitioner</td>
<td>• Interaction with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Observation of interactions during a session</td>
<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
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<td>• Feedback to service manager and practitioner</td>
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CONTEXT OF SERVICE

Little Jesters, established over six years ago, is a privately owned early years' service which operates in a purpose built premises in Baldoyle, Dublin 13. It provides a morning only pre-school session as part of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, sixteen children and two practitioners were present, of whom one was the manager. 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.
- There is a pleasant, warm and affirming atmosphere within the pre-school. Positive and friendly interactions take place between the practitioners and parents at arrival and home times.
- The established daily routine, consists predominantly of adult-initiated activities with too much time allocated to snack and lunch times. The children have brief opportunities to participate in child-initiated free-play and they are given a choice between adult-initiated or small-group activities.
- The practitioners use verbal prompts to forewarn the children that activities will be coming to an end and that they will be moving onto a new activity. During the inspection, the transitions between activities were lengthy and as a result, the children had to wait unduly for the new activity to begin.
- The practitioners are responsive to the children. They know the children well and show positive regard for them as individuals and their families. The key worker approach is not implemented in the service. Through this approach, each practitioner would have responsibility for a designated group of children, with a view to creating a close relationship with the child and their family, and ascertaining the child’s interests and learning dispositions.
- The respectful and reciprocal relationships which exist between the practitioners and the children help to contribute to the positive and friendly relationships between the children.
- The practitioners provide timely praise and encouragement to the children for their efforts.
- Respect for the children’s uniqueness as individuals is reflected in the effective use of imagery within the pre-school room, including the family wall, photographs of the children engaged in activities, their individual handprints and the respectful display of their artwork.
- The practitioners have made a few links with the wider community. Visitors to the setting include the lollipop lady and the public health nurse. These visitors raise the children’s awareness of those who help in the community.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to review the daily routine to ensure that it is purposefully structured and provides sufficient time for the children to participate in child-initiated free-play. It is also advised that the time spent at snack and lunch time be reduced. This will ensure that the daily routine incorporates opportunities for the children to participate in timely and sustained self-directed learning experiences.
• It is advised that a key person approach be introduced to further strengthen the positive relationships between the practitioners, and the children, and between the practitioners and the children’s family. This would also support the practitioners in ascertaining the children’s interests and learning dispositions. The tip-sheet ‘Using a Key Person Approach’ from the Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide will assist in this regard.

• It is advised that the practitioners further develop strategies to improve transition times. The use of more auditory prompts such as a bell, rhymes and songs will support smooth and fluid transitions.

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.
• A play-based curriculum is in place, informed by Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. Planning for the curriculum incorporates long-term, medium-term and short-term plans. Planning is thematic and it is carried out by the manager/practitioner, based on her ideas.
• The manager/practitioner conducts a small number of developmental observations during the preschool year which she shares with parents. The Aistear learner record has yet to be used by both practitioners to record the children’s learning, and has yet to be incorporated into planning for the next steps in the children’s learning.
• Many effective interactions take place between the practitioners and the children which support and enhance their emergent understanding and thought processes. The practitioners demonstrate a good understanding of their role as educators as they mirror and copy what the children are doing, and through their occasional use of thought provoking questions. During the inspection, a number of opportunities to deepen the children’s learning were overlooked.
• The indoor environment is spacious and bright with a small number of defined areas including a water area, book area, and the recently purchased large transport table. The majority of materials are easily accessible to the children. There are limited opportunities for socio-dramatic play as a result of the small amount of materials and resources available to the children.
• The practitioners provide experiences for the children to play on their own, in pairs and in small groups during the brief period of free-play.
• During the inspection, the children participated in adult-initiated process art play where they had the freedom to be imaginative and to self-express through their paintings and playdough creations.
• The practitioners make a good effort to extend and deepen the children’s emergent language including mathematical language during their interactions and their everyday conversations with the children. Additional open-ended materials and resources could be provided to promote the children’s mathematical thinking.
• The practitioners promote an inclusive learning environment, and they encourage the children to play and work together by providing them with positive encouragement.

Actions advised
• Both practitioners are advised to regularly record their observations of the children’s learning and to use their findings as they collectively plan for the next steps in learning. The use of a greater variety of assessment approaches, including Aistear learner records, photographs of the children engaged in learning activities, the children’s artwork, and discussions with the children, will enable the practitioners to be responsive to the children’s emerging interests and to build rich portraits of the children as learners.
• It is advised that a review of the indoor and outdoor learning environment take place using the audit tool in the pillar ‘Learning Environment’ in the Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide. This will help the practitioners to ensure that there are distinct learning environments equipped with sufficient materials which enable the children to participate in a play-based learning programme.
• It is advised that the practitioners provide adequate materials which can be used to stimulate and encourage the children’s mathematical thinking and understanding. This could include rulers, calculators, measuring tapes and weighing scales.

AREA 3
QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is good.
- The majority of the children are enthusiastic and interested in many of the learning activities. They demonstrate positive learning dispositions as noted through their initiative and resourcefulness during the story-telling activity.
- The children experience success and achievement. This is further enhanced through the respectful way the practitioners document their comments about their pictures. Many of the children demonstrate the ability to share their achievements and their experiences. The children would benefit from more occasions to purposefully share their learning and their achievements with each other and the practitioners.
- The children display confidence and co-ordination over their gross and fine motor skills. They have ample opportunities to engage in dancing and movement activities along with manipulative activities which promote the development of their fine motor skills.
- Many of the children understand the rules of acceptable behaviour and a few can name and express their feelings. This was observed when a child used the emotion pictures to explain how she felt when another child removed her toy from her. A small number of the children required the support of the practitioners to help them to resolve minor issues of conflict.
- During circle time, the majority of the children were active participants and good communicators as they listened to each other and took turns in the discussion.
- The children experience rhythm and repetition in language. They are also exposed to the Irish language through the appropriate use of rhyme, action songs and by the practitioner giving appropriate prompts in both English and Irish.
- Many of the children are curious and inquisitive about their learning experiences as noted through their spontaneous singing about the retina and the exploration of a plastic eye prompt. This positive attitude to learning helps them to make sense of the natural environment. The children would benefit from more explorative and experimental opportunities to ensure that their curiosity is adequately promoted.
- A number of the children display effective skills which enable them to respond to social situations. Throughout the inspection, they were capable of looking after their personal needs, they took turns and collaborated with each other. They are appropriately encouraged to develop positive social responsibility skills through their active participation in tidy up time and giving out the lunches.

Actions advised
- The practitioners are advised to provide opportunities for the children to share their learning and achievement with their peers and the practitioners. This could be facilitated through small group discussions led by the key worker, and by enabling the children to regularly use their learning journals to review prior learning experiences with each other and the practitioners.
- It is advised that the children be provided with learning activities where they are purposefully challenged, and where they can explore and develop their curiosity through the use of real, recyclable and open-ended materials which consolidate and deepen their thought processes.
- It is advised that the practitioners develop further strategies to help all children independently resolve issues of conflict.

AREA 4
QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- There is a strong sense of teamwork and partnership among the staff in the service. The manager/practitioner and the practitioner confer on a daily basis about the session. Once a week, they meet to informally plan for the coming week. There are no collaborative professional reflection practices in place to enable the practitioners to develop the curriculum or to help them to identify and prioritise areas of practice in need of improvement. Currently, the manager conducts the formal review and planning of the curriculum.
- There is clarity between the practitioners regarding their roles, the routine, and their understanding of what needs to be done throughout the session.
• The practitioners are committed to continuous professional development. They engage in mandatory training relevant to an early years’ service. During the upcoming Easter holidays, they are due to participate in Equality and Diversity training facilitated by their local county childcare committee. A few years have elapsed since they availed of training on Aistear, or on play in the context of enhancing children’s learning and development.
• Effective strategies are in place which foster open channels of communication between the service and the parents. These include a newsletter, the sharing of the service’s policies and procedures and the use of social media to share information and photographs of the children engaged in different activities.
• Each year meetings between the practitioners and the parents are facilitated to discuss the children’s progress and their development. At the end of the pre-school year, a book which includes samples of the children’s work is presented to parents.
• In order to support the children’s transition into the service prior to their commencement, children and their parents are invited to visit and to meet other children and the practitioners. A policy on transitions has yet to be developed.
• Informal links have been established between the manager and the principal of one of the local primary schools. To support continuity in the children’s learning, with permission from parents she shares information on the children’s learning with the principal.

Actions advised
• It is advised that both practitioners work together to further develop the service’s curriculum. This will help the provision of a broad-based programme which is responsive to the children’s individual needs, their learning dispositions and styles. The use of the pillar ‘Curriculum Foundations’ from the Aistear Síolta Practice Guide will assist in this instance.
• It is advised that the manager/practitioner and the practitioner develop strategies which will enable them to collaboratively self-reflect on areas identified for improvement. This could be achieved through regular staff meetings and the use of the Aistear Síolta Practice Guide.
• Building on their participation in the upcoming training on diversity and equality, it is advised that the practitioners avail of training on Aistear and other topics relevant to a play-based early years’ service, to ensure the alignment of practice to the service curriculum statement.
• Building on the positive interactions with parents, it is advised that the practitioners develop further strategies to support the sharing of information on the service including the play-based curriculum. A parent’s information leaflet could assist in this instance.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the service to continue to implement the actions advised above is very good. The manager and the practitioner demonstrate a strong commitment to providing quality learning experiences for the children.
### 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>
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<td>Good</td>
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### Language used in Early-Years Education-focused Inspection reports

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