**EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION**

**REPORT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Setting Name</strong></th>
<th>Little Learners Pre-school</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Setting Address</strong></td>
<td>Golf Course Road</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stranorlar</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>County Donegal</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DCYA number</strong></td>
<td>15DL0191</td>
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</tbody>
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**Date of Inspection:** 17-09-2018
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of inspection</th>
<th>17-09-2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
<td>Interaction with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Review of relevant documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feedback to setting manager and practitioner</td>
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**CONTEXT OF SETTING**

Little Learners Pre-school is a privately owned pre-school setting, located on the outskirts of Stranorlar, County Donegal. It offers one pre-school session to children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education Programme. On the day of the inspection, the owner/lead practitioner, one assistant practitioner and eleven children were present. The owner and 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 very good.
- Practitioners welcome parents and children upon arrival in a friendly and timely manner. This promotes respectful relationships and a sense of belonging within the pre-school.
- Children have the opportunity to choose where they wish to engage during free play and practitioners respond respectfully to their requests.
- There is a daily routine on display which offers the children opportunities for free-play, circle-time and large group activities. The structure of the routine creates frequent transitions and the timing of some activities is not conducive to the sustained engagement of all of the children.
- Snack-time is a social occasion whereby opportunities are offered to the children to develop responsible dispositions through a daily helper system.
- A verbal cue and a clean-up song is used to notify the children of the transition from free-play to circle-time. Some children are becoming accustomed to this aspect of the routine. The transition from snack to free-play was managed smoothly as children are encouraged to put away their lunch boxes and choose a preferred area of play until all children are finished.
- There is a key person approach in operation within the setting. Practitioners have responsibility to observe designated groups of children. There are missed opportunities within the routine for the key practitioners to interact with their groups to promote secure relationships. Parents and children are not aware of the key person groupings.
- The practitioners foster a caring approach using soft tones when interacting with the children. The children are provided with guidance towards positive behaviour and are affirmed for their efforts during the session.
- The child’s identity is fostered in the setting through the display of personal photographs. Some of the children’s creations are also featured on the walls. The children have the opportunity to experience outings to the library during the year. Visits from various community representatives are arranged to increase the children’s familiarity with people in the locality and to inform them of their various roles.

**Actions advised**

- It is advised that practitioners develop a visual daily routine that minimises the number of transitions in the session, creating opportunities for sustained play in a wide range of areas. Frequent use of visual and auditory cues will enhance children’s participation and awareness of the routine.
Practitioners are advised to designate discrete times during the session for the key practitioners to interact with their specific groups of children and to inform the parents and children of the purpose of the key person approach. This will enhance the established key person system.

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.
- Plans are structured on a long, medium and short-term basis and are informed by Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. Monthly planning is pre-dominantly pre-determined and focuses on seasonal and cultural themes. It is unclear how the planned experiences meet the observed needs and interests of the children.
- Practitioners regularly complete snapshot observations for each child which are contained within individual folders. A progress report form, a settling-in report, photographs of the children’s play experiences and samples of crafts are collated in folders and presented to the parents at the end of the year. There are missed opportunities to use the observation records to tailor planned activities.
- Practitioners nurture the children’s independence skills and promote supportive relationships through peer interactions.
- Practitioners engage as play partners with the child and are responsive to their requests. They are warm in their interactions and use some effective strategies during play exchanges. The indoor environment is organised in two playrooms, offering children opportunities for multi-sensory play in one room and socio-dramatic experiences and construction in the other. The children have the opportunity to mark-make using markers, chalk, glue and paper. Opportunities for extended creativity are limited as there is minimal accessibility to open-ended, authentic and painting materials within the pre-school environment.
- The outdoor provision offers children a wealth of opportunities for gross motor play on balance beams, a bridge and a raised outdoor play-house. Socio-dramatic play is available in the mud-kitchen and fairy houses. Due to safety restrictions around the installation of a new piece of play equipment, the outdoor play environment could not be accessed during the inspection.
- Emergent language is fostered through songs, story and during the daily circle-time experience.

**Actions advised**

- It is advised that practitioners develop planning structures that are reflective of the children’s enquiries, emerging interests and observed learning needs. This will create a balance between adult and child-initiated experiences.
- Practitioners are advised to extend the children’s thinking and language by utilising a greater range of interaction strategies such as modelling, scaffolding, positioning and open-ended questions when engaging with the children in playful situations.
- It is advised that play opportunities are developed to include further opportunities for accessible creative, open-ended and authentic learning experiences to promote exploration and investigation.

AREA 3
QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is good.
- Children demonstrate an interest in fine-motor activities such as constructing with waffle blocks, playdough and sand during free-play.
- Some children demonstrate self-confidence and are developing language skills when sharing personal experiences and singing songs independently at circle-time. During the inspection, some children demonstrated the capacity to concentrate at circle time, whilst others disengaged.
- Children have the opportunity to exercise choice in preferred learning areas during free-play. Some children highlight an awareness of their growing abilities through proud ‘I can’ declarations.
Children have individual folders which typically contain photographs summarising their learning experiences. Completed crafts were also observed in the sample portfolios provided. There are minimal observations included and where there are recorded observations, a unique approach to recording the child’s individual learning journey is not evident.

Some children are developing strong relationships and engage in shared play interests. At times, other children highlight the need to develop empathy and social skills during play.

The children are developing a sense of belonging by creating ‘All about me’ portraits and observing their work on display. Children have opportunities provided to them during the year to explore a range of community roles.

Children are learning about the natural environment through nature walks in the locality and during outdoor play.

**Actions advised**

- It is advised that children experience a wider variety of media to extend their communication skills particularly during group activities. The use of puppets, drama, musical instruments and exposure to a diverse genre of music will promote the levels of engagement.
- It is advised that the children’s individual learning folders contain frequent observations that reflect a personal summary of their progression and holistic learning experiences throughout the year.
- It is advised that children develop confidence and an ability to understand and vocalise their feelings. This will support co-operative play and their understanding of the rights of others.

**AREA 4**

**QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- Practitioners work in a collaborative manner during the session. They are aware of their daily roles and responsibilities which are visibly recorded and displayed on the wall.
- Practitioners informally review aspects of the session on a regular basis and meet weekly to discuss planning and curriculum experiences. There are missed opportunities to utilise these formal meetings to establish processes for professional review, action planning and support and supervision.
- The leader is aware of the Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide from her participation on Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) training. Practitioners frequently attend regulatory continuing professional development.
- Practitioners engage in open conversations with parents upon arrival and after the session. They share a settling-in report with them to establish their child’s initial learning needs and experiences. Practitioners complete observations and termly reports, which are not shared consistently with the parents. Parents are informed that practitioners are available to meet upon request.
- A monthly newsletter is distributed to parents to inform them of the evolving pre-school topics and songs. They receive a folder of photographs and crafts at the end of the year, highlighting a summary of their child’s pre-school experiences. ‘Billy Bear’ provides a link between the pre-school and home and is used to encourage communication between the practitioners, the children and their families.
- Transitions into the setting are supported by offering an open day for the parents and the children to visit the pre-school. Parents are provided with a handbook outlining the general policy and pre-school procedures. The settling-in policy does not reflect the procedures implemented practically within the pre-school and there is no transition to school policy in place.
- Transitions to primary school are supported by providing parents with a transition statement, outlining their child’s learning. They are encouraged to exchange this report with the school to support the child’s transition experience. Previously, the pre-school organised visits from the junior infant teacher to the pre-school.

**Actions advised**

- The leader is advised to create consistent opportunities for the organisation of reflection on practice using the Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide to support action planning and improvement. The provision of frequent support and supervision will enhance the process of reflection and evaluation.
- It is advised that the practitioners develop frequent and formal opportunities to liaise and consult with parents throughout the year with regard to their child’s learning and development.
It is advised that the leader develops a transition policy to outline the procedures in place to support the children’s transition to primary school; the settling-in policy requires amendment to align policy with current practice.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the setting to continue to implement the actions advised above is good. This was exemplified in the constructive engagement in professional dialogue around the key findings of this inspection.
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>Good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Language used in Early-Years Education-focused Inspection reports

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