EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>Little Sparrows Pre-School</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>Hartstown Community Centre</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hartstown</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dublin 15</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>15FL0528</td>
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Date of Inspection: 09-04-2019
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 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

Date of inspection | 09-04-2019
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| Inspection activities undertaken | Interaction with children  
Observation of interactions during a number of sessions  
Review of relevant documents  
Feedback to setting owner and practitioners |

**CONTEXT OF SETTING**

Little Sparrows Pre-School is a private setting which is based in Hartstown, Dublin 15. It provides two morning sessions and one afternoon session for children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, thirty-one children and five practitioners, one of whom is the owner, were present. 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 good.
- There is a warm, pleasant and friendly atmosphere in Little Sparrows Pre-School.
- Relationships between the practitioners and the children are responsive and reciprocal. The use of the key-person approach would strengthen these positive relationships. This approach is one in which the practitioners are assigned particular responsibility for a small group of children. The practitioners develop a close, secure relationship with this group and act as a link between the pre-school and the parents of these children.
- The daily routine in all three sessions is similar. Children have sufficient opportunities to make independent decisions in their learning activities. These choices are respected by practitioners. For example, a practitioner encouraged a child in her decision to make an animal with playdough.
- Transitions from one activity to the next activity are effectively managed. The practitioners give children sufficient time to finish what they are doing before the next activity commences. During the inspection, there was good use of songs at tidy-up time to promote children’s active participation in this activity.
- The practitioners’ use of affirmative language and encouragement towards appropriate behaviour was noted positively. During the inspection, they offered children sensitive support to help them to resolve minor issues of conflict.
- The practitioners use a number of strategies to help children to appreciate their uniqueness. Examples include the ‘all about me’ activities recorded in the children’s journals, the developing family walls, and the photographic displays of the children engaged in activities. There are also some photographic displays of visitors from the community to the setting.
- During the pre-school year, special occasions are facilitated that bring the children, their families and the practitioners together. These include the Christmas celebrations when parents are invited to attend and make a decoration, and to participate in a baking activity with their child.

**Actions advised**

- To build on the positive relationships between the practitioners and the children, it is advised that the practitioners implement a key person approach. The use of the tip sheet ‘Using a Key Person Approach’ from the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* will assist in this regard.
- The practitioners are advised to source and display more imagery of places and members of the wider community. These can be used during learning activities to foster the children’s sense of identity and belonging, and their awareness of members of the wider community and places of interest in the locality.
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.
- Provision for children’s learning is informed by *Aistear; the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. The practitioners are in the early stages of implementing a play-based curriculum.
- Planning for children’s learning incorporates the practitioners’ ideas and seasonal events. There are different approaches to planning evident in the pre-school rooms. Formal short-term planning is undertaken in one of the pre-school rooms, while in the other rooms short-term planning is more informal. At the time of the inspection, children’s emergent interests were not consistently used to inform short-term planning.
- The practitioners use photographs and the children’s art work to record their participation in activities. These are placed in the children’s’ individual learning journals. The practitioners demonstrate an awareness of the importance of following and documenting the children’s learning and their emergent interests. Currently, formal assessments of children’s learning are not a regular feature of the practitioners’ practice.
- The practitioners use a variety of positive interaction strategies to support the children in their learning. On the day of the inspection, as they interacted with the children, the practitioners sat alongside them and encouraged the children’s participation in the learning experiences. The practitioners’ use of open-ended questions to deepen the children’s understanding on a number of occasions was noted positively.
- The indoor learning environments include interest areas and a variety of materials for children to use during their self-initiated play opportunities. These resources are easily accessible and available to the children. At the time of the inspection, there was a small amount of sensorial and open-ended materials for children to explore and enjoy.
- The children have access to an outdoor learning environment where they can engage in physical activities, such as climbing and running. There is potential to increase opportunities for children’s learning in the outdoor environment.
- The practitioners have taken a number of steps to develop inclusive practices and to promote children’s participation in the ECCE programme. These includes the setting’s engagement with the Better Start Access and Inclusion Model and the facilitation of meetings with parents to discuss their child’s learning needs. The programme of activities does not sufficiently differentiate between children participating in year one and year two of the ECCE programme.

*Actions advised*

- The practitioners are advised to develop their approaches to short-term planning and to ensure that plans incorporate the children’s individual learning needs and their emergent interests. The templates and advice in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* will aid the progression of this action.
- The practitioners are advised to more regularly record information on the children’s learning, including their dispositions and skills. This information can then be used to inform the next steps in children’s learning and development and their progression. This may be facilitated through the use of *Aistear* learning records, anecdotal notes, the children’s mark making and process art work.
- The practitioners are advised to use the audit tool in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* to enhance the availability, breadth and variety of resources and materials.
- The practitioners are advised to develop additional strategies to foster the children’s engagement and inclusion in learning activities. The use of the key workers’ knowledge of the children, and the organisation of activities which focus on each child’s uniqueness and his/her stage of development will assist in this regard.
QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is good.
- During the inspection, the children demonstrated interest and motivation in the learning activities. These experiences included the children’s enthusiastic participation in their exploration of the sensorial rice and Easter-themed materials.
- Some children display positive learning dispositions and curiosity in their learning experiences. On the day of the inspection, these examples included one child’s explanation about the colour he had made as a result of mixing paint on his rainbow picture; he compared what happened when a blue and green pen are used at the same time. There is potential to provide for a greater range of activities to promote these positive learning dispositions.
- The positive relationships that exist among the children contribute to the effective collaborative play which they experience. Examples include children playing co-operatively in pairs and small groups. Many children display their developing personal and social skills such as the ability to turn take and to share resources.
- On the day of the inspection, many children demonstrated their capacity to express themselves creatively. An example of this was their imaginative responses to the practitioners’ questions about who was in the helicopter which they had seen during outside time. Their responses included ‘Santa’ and ‘The man who takes the photographs when he’s high in the sky’.
- Children display a growing understanding of mathematical concepts and the meaning of mathematical language. They were observed classifying, counting and comparing ages. During the inspection, there was a small amount of everyday materials available to children to maximise these emerging skills.
- Many of the children are developing emergent language and literacy skills. Examples include their turn taking in conversations, and their participation in a small variety of activities, such as reciting rhymes, singing songs and choosing books to read.

Actions advised
- The practitioners are advised to provide additional opportunities for children to explore and experiment and to further develop positive learning dispositions. This will help scaffold children’s learning and nurture their natural curiosity.
- The practitioners are advised to plan for additional activities and learning experiences to maximise and foster the children’s emergent literacy and language skills. The tip-sheet ‘Enhancing Language’ from the Aistear Siolta Practice Guide will assist in this regard.

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- There is a good ethos of teamwork and professionalism among the ECCE team at Little Sparrows. There are daily informal review discussions between the practitioners in each of the pre-school rooms. At the termly team meetings, areas in need of improvement are identified and discussed in order to enhance provision. At the time of the inspection, the Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide was not used as part of this review practice.
- The practitioners have participated in training pertaining to the early years. This includes a workshop on the implementation of Aistear and mandatory topics, such as First Aid and Children First. The setting is a member of Early Childhood Ireland and avails of support from their county childcare committee.
- On the day of the inspection, the owner/practitioner articulated a clear vision and direction for the work of the setting. There is potential to build on this vision through the extension of practitioners’ roles and responsibilities with regard to educational activities.
- The practitioners share information on the children’s learning with parents through daily informal discussions, and the children’s art work that they bring home. Social media is also used as a medium to inform parents of what is happening in the setting. The children’s learning journals are sent home at the end of the pre-school year. At Christmas time, parents are invited to visit the setting and view the children’s achievements.
During the pre-school year, one-to-one meetings between the practitioners and parents are facilitated to discuss children’s learning and progress. Following these discussions with parents, the practitioners facilitate pertinent learning experiences for the children. Topics have included ‘How to cross the road safely’; ‘The use of car seat belts’; and ‘What to expect when travelling on an aeroplane’.

The practitioners have developed effective strategies to support children’s transition into and from the setting. Children are invited to visit the setting prior to commencing the ECCE programme. The children are brought on a visit to the local primary school to see the school yard and classrooms. Visits from teachers of the local primary school are facilitated to ensure the sharing of relevant information, and to support continuity of experiences and progression in learning for children.

**Actions advised**

- The practitioners are advised to use the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* to help them develop formal self-review and professional reflection practices. During regular team meetings, the owner and practitioners could use the guide to develop an action plan to address agreed prioritised areas for improvement.
- To build on the practitioners’ effective teamwork, it is advised that formal support and supervision systems are implemented. This will provide greater clarity regarding the practitioners’ roles and responsibilities.
- The practitioners are advised to share the children’s observations and progress with parents on a more regular basis. This will also increase parents’ awareness of, and involvement in, their child’s learning.

**CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE**

The capacity of the setting to implement the actions advised above is good.
## 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>Fair</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>
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</table>

## Language used in Early Years Education Inspection reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>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>
</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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APPENDIX

SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT
SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

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

- The manager has implemented all suggestions made in the report, in particular regarding documentation. The team are working on time management in order to meet these areas. We were satisfied with the inspection and welcome ideas/suggestions which enhance the service and needs of each child attending.