

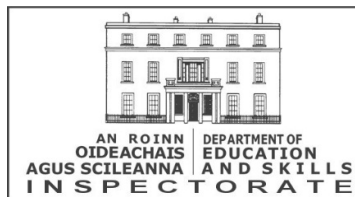
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Early-Years Education-focused Inspection
Report

Ballinrobe Bright Beginnings
15MO0180

Convent Road
Ballinrobe
County Mayo

Date of Inspection: 24 March 2017



CONTEXT OF SETTING

Ballinrobe Bright Beginnings is a privately-owned, sessional pre-school and after-school service. It is located in Ballinrobe, County Mayo and has been in operation for two years. The service offers the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, three practitioners with eight children were present. A number of children attending speak English as an additional language. The pedagogical approach adopted within the setting is informed by HighScope and *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. The manager and practitioners 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.
- A very warm, welcoming and unhurried atmosphere was evident in the setting on the day of the inspection. This is characterised by the practitioners' good humoured conversations with parents and children on their arrival.
- The practitioners place importance on promoting children's self-confidence, creativity and cooperation. This philosophy for learning was clearly evident in practice. On arrival, the children were motivated to settle into their play activities quickly; they were busy making dinner in the home corner, setting up their hairdressing business and making price tags for their shop. For children who needed a calmer atmosphere and time to settle into their activities, the practitioners provided quiet, sensory-based grounding activities, such as sand, water and free drawing and painting activities.
- Many valuable routines and procedures have been established which promote children's physical, social and emotional well-being. The visual schedule available in the environment helps the children to feel secure and have a sense of place and ownership in their learning.
- Children's sense of identity and belonging is carefully nurtured in the well-represented family wall and creative gallery on display. At circle time, the children were encouraged to bring their pencil and papers to take notes and represent their thoughts on paper. This activity supported children's individual creativity and sense of self.
- The times of transition are managed effectively and respectfully; the children are given time to complete their activity. Some children are still getting used to the routine and need additional guidance and support during these times of transitions.
- Recognition, praise and encouragement are constant features of the practitioners' responses to children. The practitioners are very effective in naming and affirming what is important and unique to children's sense of being, using comments, such as 'I think you are going to be an artist today'.
- The service is very connected with its local community and this is a significant strength in this setting. The close and positive relationships that have been established with the members from the local community has resulted in the development of an innovative and inspired outdoor learning environment. The manager and practitioners have transported this learning into the playroom. The large community map displayed in the environment is the result of a collaborative project where children's participation was clearly evident.

Action advised:

- The practitioners are advised to make greater use of the opportunities that arise in the daily routine for children to experience a sense of individual importance. Building on the good practice of using the visual schedule in place, the practitioners can plan and consult with the children about the roles and responsibilities they could take in these routines and display visual reminders to support the children's sense of independence and ownership. These routines could include preparing for snack time, feeding the fish, tidy-up time and getting ready for circle time.

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 very good.

- A broad-based curriculum, informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*, is used to support the children's learning and development. The planned approach in place focuses on small-group and large-group activity time, linked to the learning goals and themes of *Aistear*. This planned approach is effective for the adult-initiated activities. A greater emphasis on incorporating children's interests and play themes will help the practitioners plan experiences and add language that will respond to children's own ideas and thinking, in particular for the children who are learning English as an additional language.
- The information about children's learning is gathered through the key person system. Each practitioner regularly documents information about their designated children. They use learning stories and anecdotal notes to document their observations of children's learning experiences. The information documented under the extension ideas, support and reflect the children's dispositions for learning.
- The high quality interactions observed between the children and the practitioners were characterised by the use of open-ended questions that enhanced children's learning and challenged their thinking. This was evident when the children were cutting their clay and the skilful use of questioning helped the children to describe and explain how they made 'two pieces from one big piece'.
- Play is used as a medium for children to interact with, explore and make sense of the world. The rich indoor and outdoor environment supports the development of children's creativity, imagination and their desire for exploration. The clearly defined interest areas support the children's engagement and development in the different types of play, including a variety of multi-sensory experiences. The practitioners' attentive approach has created a homely atmosphere where a variety of natural items, such as real tea cups, cutlery and curtains, decorate the home corner. The book area is a comfortable and quiet place where children can relax and enjoy looking at a variety of themed and interest-based books.
- The children have regular access to the outdoor learning environment. The practitioners are to be commended for their promotion of outdoor play as an integral element in the children's daily routine. The outdoor environment provides endless opportunities for children to engage in open-ended play, to challenge themselves, explore and play creatively with their friends or alone. The outdoor environment consists of an orchard, chicken house, nature walk, digging area, playhouse, a purposefully placed tree trunk, climbing frame, cars, sand/mud area, and large sized tyres.
- Children's emergent literacy and numeracy are fostered through their conversations with the practitioners and in their interactions with the environment. The writing area with pencils, notepads and keyboards, the numbers painted onto the climbing frame ladder are simple, playful ways for children to connect with letter and number in real and meaningful contexts.

Actions advised

- Moving forward, the practitioners are advised to further develop their short-term planning to include 'spontaneous planning', which will help them respond to children current interests and enquires. The information booklet, 'Planning and Assessing for Children's Learning and Development' which is available in the 'Planning and Assessing' pillar, in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide*, under 'Resources for Sharing', will help in this regard.
- To help support children's expressive language and enquiry-based learning, in particular for children with English as an additional language, the practitioners are advised to think about the key words and questions they can use in the short-term planning, linked to children's play and emerging interests.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is very good.
- The children demonstrate enjoyment and sustained engagement in purposeful play both in the indoor and outdoor environment.
- Children demonstrate a growing capacity to make healthy choices about nutrition. The healthy-eating project has created a sense of enthusiasm and energy among the children. At snack-time, they engaged in lively discussions and took pride in sharing their knowledge about why healthy eating is important. The practitioners have documented children's views and opinions about

different food types, their likes and dislikes, and these are creatively displayed in the entrance hallway for the families to see.

- Children are seeing themselves as competent learners as they make decisions and choices about their own learning. On the day of inspection, children saw themselves as the experts in constructing and building train tracks. They shared their expertise by explaining in detail about where they should build the track and how many carriages they would need for each train. This involved the children having to plan and negotiate with each other.
- The children are learning to nurture and respect the natural environment and living things. The children were observed reminding the practitioners to bring the leftovers from snack time to feed the animals. A key aspect of learning in this setting is the sense of connectedness and the flow of learning that moves naturally between the indoor and the outdoor learning environments.
- The children who are learning English as an additional language are supported by the practitioners' efforts to learn and communicate with the children in their home language. The children's journals are kept in the book area. The children were observed looking at their name and photograph displayed on the cover on the journal. This stimulated a lovely conversation between the practitioner and the child about the spelling and letters used in their name. The journals include some of the children's art work.
- The children are experiencing success in their learning. This was observed in the outdoor area, where a child set out to achieve a personal goal that involved a challenge. The achievement was expertly facilitated to enable the child to feel a sense of mastery and ownership in their learning.
- Children demonstrate creativity and a sense of wonder and natural curiosity. This was evident when a small group of children used their free drawings to help them visualise and plan what they were going to make with their clay.

Action advised:

- As a collaborative project, the practitioners are advised to develop the journals with the children so that they can be a visual tool to help the children to talk about themselves and the things they are interested in. The practitioners can include and use their anecdotal notes of children's questions and conversations which are connected to their free drawings along with the photographs of their learning experiences to further extend the learning.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- An ethos of professionalism and partnership is evident among the staff. The manager and practitioners work very well together and their commitment to working with families and the community is commendable.
- The practitioners meet on a weekly basis to review and discuss their curriculum planning. These meetings have contributed to the smooth organisation and the clarity around the roles and responsibilities, with regards to the educational activities. The manager is aware of the *Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide*.
- The practitioners in the setting avail of the support and training that is provided by the local County Childcare Committee. The manager was participating in further training at the time of the inspection.
- The practitioners share information on children's learning and achievements with parents and families in a spirit of openness, mutual respect and transparency. They share their observations of children's learning experiences with parents throughout the year. Information about the children's conversations and what they are learning is on display in the entrance hallway. The parents are also actively involved in the children's health promotion programme. The children are encouraged to bring items into the pre-school from home that are connected to what is happening in their play and in their learning environment. The informal conversations and sharing of information at home time and in the morning, are valued by the practitioners. The parents are welcomed into the playroom to spend time and observe what children are doing and experiencing in their play and learning activities.
- Transitions from the pre-school setting to primary school are managed effectively to support children's learning and development. Nearing the end of the year, the manager liaises with the

local primary school and shared visits with the teachers and children are organised, to help support the continuity in children's educational experiences.

Action advised:

- The practitioners are advised to engage with the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide*, to support their self-review process. The practitioners can refer to the examples and ideas for practice and the resources for sharing under the pillar 'Transitions and Planning and Assessing'.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The practitioners are highly motivated to deliver a quality service for the children and families. The capacity of the service to implement the actions advised above is very good.

Summary of Overall Inspection Findings

Area	Quality Level
Quality of context to support children's learning and development	Very good
Quality of processes to support children's learning and development	Very good
Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements	Very good
Quality of management and leadership for learning	Very good

Language used in Early-Years Education-focused Inspection reports

Excellent	Provision that is excellent is exemplary in meeting the needs of children.
Very good	Provision that is very good is highly effective in meeting the needs of children.
Good	Provision that is good is effective in meeting the needs of children but with some aspects to be developed.
Fair	Provision that is fair requires practice to be improved to meet the needs of children.
Poor	Provision that is poor is inadequate and requires significant improvement to meet the needs of children.