An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>Happy Days Oxfield</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>Oxfield Road</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carney</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>County Sligo</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>15SO0116</td>
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Date of Inspection: 22-11-2019
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of inspection</th>
<th>22-11-2019</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meeting with the setting leader/sole practitioner</td>
<td>• Interaction with the children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Observation of interactions during one pre-school session</td>
<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interaction with the children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Feedback to the lead practitioner</td>
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CONTEXT OF SETTING

Happy Days is a privately owned, pre-school facility that is located in a community building in Carney, County Sligo. It offers one morning session to children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, a sole practitioner and seven children were present. The practitioner attended the post-inspection feedback meeting. The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the report; a response was not received from the setting.

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 warm, nurturing and welcoming atmosphere is created by the personal exchanges between the practitioner and the children upon arrival into the setting.
- The daily routine includes a prolonged period of free-play and is available in printed format only on a notice board in the room. There is no visual routine in place to communicate the outline of the session to the children. Although a physical activity was offered at the end of the session not all children participated and some engaged for longer periods than others.
- Snack time enables the children to engage in personal conversations with their peers and the practitioner and encourages the development of self-help skills.
- The practitioner uses both verbal and auditory cues to signify the transitions in the routine. This supports the smooth flow of the session as children are offered time to process the upcoming activities.
- The practitioner is warm and sensitive to the needs of the children. She offers good problem-solving strategies to support them to reflect on their actions during minor disagreements.
- The children’s uniqueness is recognised in the setting. They have a personal space for their belongings, there are displays of their crafts and their individual journals are placed in the library area.
- There is an annual opportunity provided for the children to go on a Christmas outing with the pre-school children from a sister-setting. The children have some opportunity to learn about community roles and cultural diversity through curriculum activities. Opportunities for the children to actively engage with people from the local community, with parents and with wider cultural experiences in more meaningful contexts are limited.

Actions advised

- It is advised that a visual routine is provided and used to support the children’s awareness of the outline of daily activities. Using the routine to provide for more frequent physical activity will further support the children’s learning experiences.
- It is advised that the practitioner encourages parental participation throughout the year and develops opportunities for the children to become more integrated in the local community. This will support stronger partnership with parents and a greater sense of identity and belonging in the community for the children.
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.
- Planning for curriculum experiences is informed by *Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and is organised on a short-term basis. Planning is pre-dominantly adult-led and at times is overly-focused on formal content such as number and shape. There are some connections made to the children’s observed interests.
- The practitioner utilises the children’s individual journals to record observations regularly. Photographs of the children engaging in various activities are included.
- The practitioner views the children as highly competent and they are assigned various helper roles during the morning session. She knows the children very well and interacts with them in a respectful and caring manner.
- The practitioner engages playfully with the children and uses open-ended questions frequently to support the development of their cognition.
- The indoor environment presents opportunities for the children to engage in socio-dramatic play, sensorial play, construction activities and painting. Although there are some authentic resources available in the kitchen and post-office areas, there is limited access to authentic, open-ended and richer creative experiences overall.
- Play is the central medium through which the children learn with opportunities provided to plan for and reflect on aspects of their learning experiences.

Actions advised
- It is advised that the practitioner develops an emergent, enquiry-based approach to planning through the use of the children’s interests and observations to enhance further holistic learning experiences and provide balance to adult-led planning.
- It is advised that opportunities are provided for the children to use accessible, open-ended, creative and natural materials in the indoor environment to further skills of exploration, investigation and imagination.
- It is advised that the practitioner utilises playful interactions to develop mathematical language and to extend vocabulary to enhance the children’s language and cognition.

AREA 3
QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is good.
- The children demonstrate enjoyment when mixing paint, exploring the sand and during role-play with their peers. These experiences provide opportunities for the children to play independently and to develop peer relationships in small groups.
- The majority of the children demonstrate self-confidence and imaginative dispositions. They make decisions and assume responsibility during playful scenarios when they were observed preparing a tea-party for a friend’s birthday party.
- The children experience achievement and are affirmed for their efforts. They enjoy accessing their individual journals and reflect on learning activities with their peers. There is scope to enhance their journals further to highlight the children’s voices and to individualise the learning contained in the observations.
- The children confidently communicate their preferences, personal experiences and share stories from their family backgrounds. They are developing strong social skills that enable them to play co-operatively, negotiate and build relationships.
Some children highlight an awareness of mathematical concepts and language. This is supported during one-to-one activities and occasionally in groups that can sometimes be overly adult-directed.

The children are encouraged to reflect on their learning regularly through opportunities provided to respond to open-ended questions.

The children explore the natural environment from time to time during walks in the area. They have some involvement in planning for activities although this can be on a superficial level with missed opportunities to broaden their sense of the world through the discussion of shared interests and collaborative investigations.

**Actions advised**

- It is advised that the information documented about the children’s learning reflects their individual achievements, interests and learning progression and that it is made accessible to the children.
- It is advised that the children are provided with meaningful and playful opportunities to develop mathematical concepts. The addition of a range of resources such as weighing scales, cookery books and measuring tapes would support the development of early numeracy skills through playful strategies.
- It is advised that the children have frequent opportunities to develop a range of projects based on their current knowledge and interests in order to broaden their sense of the world in a child-led manner.

**AREA 4**

**QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- The practitioner operates a well-organised pre-school session that is smoothly run; appropriate systems have been established for the facilitation of planning and observations.
- Staff meetings with the manager and practitioners from a sister setting occur bi-monthly. The manager conducts regulatory child protection training on occasions with the staff-team. Currently there are minimal opportunities provided for the practitioner to engage in internal practice review.
- Parents are warmly welcomed into the setting and are provided with songs and rhymes each month to support continuity of learning between the home and the pre-school setting.
- There is a parents’ notice board in the setting. Parents are provided with access to a monthly journal of photographs, demonstrating the range of play activities that the children have experienced.
- The children’s individual journals are distributed at the end of the year. This limits the scope to collaborate with parents and invite them to share their opinions and thoughts regarding their children’s learning on an ongoing basis. There are no systematic opportunities provided for parents to meet with the practitioner regarding their child’s learning and experiences.
- The settling-in process is supported by inviting the children and their parents into the pre-school prior to their commencement. An open-door policy is utilised to encourage parents to stay with their child until they have settled. Whilst a registration form is used, there is not much child-specific information garnered regarding their prior experiences to support them during the settling-in period.
- The practitioner offers some opportunities for the children to discuss the transition to school prior to the end of the programme in June. As the setting has not yet developed professional relationships with the local primary schools, there is no systematic sharing of information regarding the children’s learning to support continuity of experiences as they transition to school.

**Actions advised**

- It is advised that the manager and practitioner facilitate regular opportunities for self and collaborative review of practice using the *Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide* to enhance improvements in the setting.
- It is advised that the practitioner introduces further informal and formal measures for communicating with the parents. Sharing the individual journals on an ongoing basis, inviting parental contributions to the documented observations as well as offering formal opportunities to meet and discuss the child’s progression would benefit this aspect of practice.
It is advised that communication measures during the transitional points of the ECCE Programme be improved by developing a visual parent /child handbook, garnering information regarding the children’s prior experiences on enrolment and by providing an end-of-year summary of learning. This will support the children during the settling-in process to gain familiarity with the setting and in the transition to school by sharing information with the parents and with the primary school, with parental permission.
### 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>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>
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### Language used in Early-Years Education Inspection reports

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