### EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>Happy Days Montessori</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>Fiddown</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Piltown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>County Kilkenny</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>16KK0146</td>
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Date of Inspection: 07-06-2019
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(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>07-06-2019</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
<td>Interaction with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Review of educational resources and facilities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Review of relevant setting documents</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-inspection feedback with the setting owner and practitioner</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Pre-inspection meeting with the setting owner/lead practitioner</td>
<td>• Introductory meeting and conversations with the assistant practitioner</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Review of available records of children’s learning and development</td>
<td>• Interaction with children</td>
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CONTEXT OF SETTING

Happy Days Montessori is a private sessional pre-school setting located in the village of Fiddown. Since 2016 it has been operating from the ground floor of an adapted commercial unit. Previously the setting ran from a private dwelling. There are plans in place to further develop the recently extended outdoor space. On the day of the inspection the owner/lead practitioner, an assistant and sixteen children 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 very good.
• There is a very friendly and warm atmosphere in this setting. The practitioners build secure relationships with the children’s families; taking time to converse and share information at arrival and departure times.
• The daily routine supports child-initiated learning through hand-on engagement with Montessori and play resources. Very good opportunities for whole body movement are actively promoted.
• Times of transition within the routine support positive learning experiences for children. Children move seamlessly between the different daily activities.
• Generally, practitioners use encouraging body language, comments and positive attention to enable children recognise their learning efforts. During the evaluation, the use of stickers as a reward did not support this effective practice.
• On a few occasions during the inspection, the language used to support children’s behaviour did not focus on guiding their understanding of preferred actions.
• The children’s sense of identity and belonging is suitably supported through frequent discussions about themselves and their families. Children’s family photographs bridge a link between home and pre-school. The art work on display is representative of all children.
• Very good resources nurture children’s understanding and respect for diverse backgrounds.

Actions advised

• Practitioners are advised to re-frame the language used in guiding children’s behaviour. Consistent use of comments which focus on desired behaviour represents good practice in this regard.
• It is advised that children be further encouraged to evaluate their own efforts and achievement in learning. The practice of using stickers as rewards on completion of activities should be discontinued.
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.
- The practitioners’ balancing of the Montessori approach to education and play-based learning creates a highly effective curriculum that supports children’s learning and development. This approach is well informed by Aistear; the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework.
- A variety of assessment approaches is used effectively to gather positive information about children’s learning experiences and achievements. An online system shares narrative observations and photographs with parents; and identifies next steps in children’s learning. An individual folder that collates art work is stored outside the playroom.
- Weekly plans outline practitioners selected themes and activities with little reflection of children’s emergent interests. Introduction to Montessori materials is well planned enabling children progress to more challenging experiences.
- Practitioners demonstrate interest and respect in their interactions with children. They very effectively model how to use Montessori materials on a one-to-one basis.
- The balance between adult-initiated and child-led learning is appropriate. On the day of the inspection, the adult-led circle time for all children was not fully effective in promoting active engagement.
- The very good provision of a variety of play types is commendable. Socio-dramatic play is a key feature.
- The spacious indoor learning environment is inviting, and well-laid out into distinct learning areas. The children are successfully supported to participate in active learning experiences, to explore, to initiate their own play and to be creative.
- The easily accessible outdoor learning environment is under development. Practitioners plan to add more natural materials. The large climbing/swing set, outdoor kitchen and large sand pit promote children’s physical and social skill development.
- Practitioners extended use of vocabulary contributes to children’s language and literacy development. An attractive book area is well stocked with reading materials.

Actions advised
- In order to further develop an emergent curriculum, practitioners need to take greater account of children’s varying interests within planning. Observing what is relevant, interesting and personally meaningful to the children and building it into short-term plans, is the best way forward.
- Practitioners are advised to organise smaller-group practitioner-initiated activities which encourage children’s sustained active engagement. Interactions need to use open-ended questioning to support understanding and vocabulary.

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 are happy, settled and grow in confidence. They play cooperatively with each other and form positive friendships.
- The children display positive dispositions for learning. On the day of inspection, one group of children persevered with making a structure using cardboard boxes and sticky tape. Another group invented a turn taking action game using dice.
- Opportunities for children to plan, think and reflect on their learning have not been fully developed.
- The children enjoy musical chair games. They are very comfortable playing games with rules and expressing empathy for the winners and runners-up. The use of a Bluetooth speaker added to the ambience and song choices reflected popular titles.
- At the time of the inspection, a project on different roles and occupations in the community was effectively explored. Very good resources and activities challenged gender stereotypes and linked to children’s personal experiences.
- Creative artistic experiences for children are of high value. The regular use of open-ended materials support individual expression.
The children present as curious and observant. There were some missed opportunities for children to share their enquiries and understanding.

The children are competent communicators and express themselves clearly and articulately. They are flexible in their thinking; capable of moving comfortably between the real and the imaginary world.

The children show an awareness and appreciation of their own uniqueness and have a sense of who they are.

**Actions advised**

- Practitioners are advised to provide more formal opportunities for the children to plan, review and reflect on their learning. This will help to extend the children’s existing knowledge and thinking and will support them to make connections between past, present and future learning. Regular access to their records of learning will help in this regard.
- Building on children’s natural curiosity, it is advised that further support be provided to engage in more enquiry based thinking. By enabling children to respond to ‘I wonder why’ type questions they will be able to share their working theories.

**AREA 4**

**QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- Clear structures are in place for the smooth organisation of learning experiences. Team meetings are facilitated regularly. There is clarity around roles and responsibilities.
- The practitioners engage in continuous reflection on their practice. A recent review on transitions led to greater involvement of children and increased learning opportunities.
- The staff in the setting has engaged with the Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide and has used a number of the self-evaluation templates to reflect on areas of professional practice. Some recent changes to practice including the enhanced use of the indoor environments and planning processes were discussed during the inspection.
- The staff in the setting is committed to fostering open communication with children’s families. This happens informally on a daily basis and through an ICT application. Systematic information is shared in relation to individual children’s learning achievements and progression in learning.
- Transitions into the setting are very effectively organised. Families and children are facilitated to spend time getting to know the setting in advance of starting.
- Support for children in the move from pre-school to one of the four local primary schools is planned in the curriculum. Activities and resources build children’s understanding of school life. Children can draw or paint the most important things they want their new teacher and school to know about them on a postcard. There is scope to share more information with these primary schools.

**Action advised**

- Practitioners are advised to develop the sharing of strengths-based information with the relevant primary schools. The resources contained in Mo Scéal will be useful in this regard.

**CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE**

The capacity of the setting to implement the actions advised above is very 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>Very good</td>
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</table>

### Language used in Early-Years Education Inspection reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provision 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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Published November 2019
APPENDIX

SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT
SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

- I am happy with the outcome of the report. We will take on board all of the points made in the report and use them to improve our service.