

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	The Blossom Tree
Setting Address	Curtistown Kilmessan County Meath
DCYA number	16MH0322

Date of Inspection: 21-10-2019



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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	21-10-2019
Inspection activities undertaken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interaction and discussion with children • Review of relevant setting documentation • Review of records of the children's learning and development • Feedback discussion with setting owner/practitioner and early years practitioner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with setting manager/practitioner and early years practitioner • Observation of interactions and activities during two pre-school sessions • Review of educational resources and facilities 	

CONTEXT OF SETTING

The Blossom Tree is a private early years setting located in a rural location in County Meath. It provides a morning and an afternoon sessional pre-school programme for twenty-one children enrolled on the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. The inspection was conducted during a morning and an afternoon pre-school session. The owner/practitioner, one early year's practitioner and nineteen children were present during the inspection. 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 excellent.
- There is a notably warm and welcoming atmosphere in the setting. The practitioners prioritise engagement and building positive relationships with families in order to best support the children's learning and development.
- Relationships between the children and practitioners are characterised by positivity, gentleness and consistent support.
- There is a well-balance daily routine in place; times are allocated daily to indoor and outdoor child-initiated play and snack time. Children are viewed as active agents and supported to direct their personal learning agendas.
- The few transitions in the pre-school session are clam and are clearly announced to the children. This allows the children to complete activities at their own pace before joining the next activity.
- The practitioners offer highly effective and consistent guidance to support the children's positive behaviour.
- The practitioners use highly effective strategies and practices to support the children's developing sense of identity and belonging. They endeavour to get to know each child and his/her family, engaging in in-depth conversations with the children about themselves and their lives. Practitioners create attractive photographic displays and invite families and members of the local community to visit the setting.

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 have established a play-based curriculum which incorporates some aspects of the Montessori approach to education. The aims of the curriculum programme for the children's learning and development are broad-based and are fully aligned to *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*.
- Throughout the inspection, it was highly evident that the practitioners have a passionate commitment to promoting the children's learning and development though playful engagement and

appropriately playful activities. This ethos is reflected in the setting's documented curriculum statement.

- The curriculum programme is planned long-term around seasonal and cultural events and celebrations that are meaningful to the children. Short-term weekly planning is developed by the practitioners from observed current interests of the children. At the time of inspection, the children were not engaged in identifying and planning for their own learning interests.
- The practitioners use a wide variety of methodologies to effectively record the children's learning and development. These separate pieces of information are not integrated into one rich picture of each child's personal learning journey.
- The learning environments, indoor and outdoor, are very well structured and resourced to provide for a wide variety of play, learning, exploration and discovery.
- Interaction strategies employed by the practitioners are highly effective and are very well-matched to the children's individual interests and learning needs. They play as partners with the children, following the children's play ideas, offer extensions and modelling a wide range of vocabulary.
- The children's early numeracy and literacy skills are notably well supported by the practitioners through playful activities and conversations.
- The children are learning in an inclusive environment. The setting has accessed support from the Better Start Access and Inclusion Model (AIM). The practitioners work in very close partnership with parents to ensure that children's individual needs are supported.

Actions advised

- To create a rich picture of the children's progression in learning over time, it is advised that the wide variety of observations are compiled into a learning journal/portfolio for each child. It is advised that the children play a role in compiling and reviewing their own journal.
- To build on the very good curriculum provision already established, it is advised that the practitioners begin to introduce enquiry-learning approaches by engaging the children in planning and deciding what they would like to learn and enquire more about.

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 a very high levels of well-being. They are very well-settled and arrive eager to begin play and conversation.
- The level of focused engagement and motivation in both sessions during the extended indoor and outdoor child-initiated play time was notable. The children are actively involved in making many decisions and choices and the practitioners support them very effectively to lead their own personal play and learning agendas.
- Many periods of extended socio-dramatic play were observed. The children explored familiar roles, tested boundaries and explored foundational numeracy and literacy concepts during these play episodes.
- A high level of cooperative play was observed. The children, in constantly changing groupings, negotiated roles and control with each other. The practitioners' close monitoring and allowance of time for the children to work things out for themselves are greatly supporting their developing social skills.
- The children are very eager to communicate in many varied ways. A few children used the art and mark-making materials made available to create very imaginative, complex and self-expressive pieces.
- Using the range of open-ended and real materials freely accessible in the environment is allowing the children to be creative and inventive in their exploration. Three children all negotiated how to fit into a cardboard box and drive it to the shops.
- The children are achieving and learning in line with their personal capacities.

Action advised

- It is advised that practitioners create a distinct interest area for literacy and increase the access and range of resources and real props to support the children's early literacy and mark-making skills.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is excellent.
- Notably strong and positive teamwork was evident on the day of the inspection. Roles in the setting are clear and responsibilities are shared equitably.
- The staff maintains their continuous professional development through attendance at training events and actively planning for the implementation of new learning into the programme.
- Reflective practice is a strength in the setting. The practitioners are very familiar with *Aistear and Síolta* and use the national frameworks to guide reflection and planning for quality improvement.
- The staff meets daily and documents planning activities.
- Information about the setting is shared very effectively with parents in many ways including; an open-day, letters, a closed social media group and a handbook. Parents are regularly invited to get involved in the programme in any way that they might feel comfortable.
- Information about the children's individual achievements and progress is shared with parents through daily informal conversations, note books and portfolios of learning.
- The setting has established very professional relationships with the local primary school. The practitioners use many effective strategies and activities to support the children's transition between the settings, including the sharing of relevant information.

Action advised

- To further support the children's transition to primary school, it is advised that the practitioners begin to explore using the '*Mo Scéal*' learner profiles available at www.ncca.ie.

Summary of Overall Inspection

Area	Quality Level
Quality of context to support children's learning and development	Excellent
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	Excellent

Language used in Early-Years Education 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.

APPENDIX

SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report.

We found the inspection process a very positive experience. The focus of the inspection was very clear and enables us to work on the feedback given and help us to further improve the children's learning journey.

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

Area 3

Our reading/literacy area has been rearranged to allow easier flow and access. Extra materials have been ordered to help the children's literacy skills develop.

Area 4

We have looked into the "Mo Scéal "process and will include this in our preparations for this year's graduates.

