EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>Tiny Tots Montessori and Afterschool</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>Educate Together National School</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Killegland</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ashbourne</td>
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<td></td>
<td>County Meath</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>16MH0324</td>
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Date of Inspection: 27-05-2019
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

Date of inspection: 27-05-2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inspection activities undertaken</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Meeting with setting owner</td>
<td>• Interaction with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Observation of interactions during the morning ECCE session</td>
<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• Post-inspection feedback meeting with setting owner and ECCE practitioners</td>
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CONTEXT OF SETTING
Tiny Tots Montessori and Afterschool has been in operation in Ashbourne, Co. Meath for three years. It is currently located in a classroom in a primary school in the town and it will move to a new purpose-built location in September 2019. There were three practitioners and eighteen children present on the day of the inspection. All children present were availing of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. 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 very warm and welcoming atmosphere is evident as parents and children arrive to the setting. All practitioners greet the children each morning and support them to settle into their environment.
- The practitioners have developed respectful relationships with the children in the group and know the children well.
- The daily routine is busy and children are active and engaged in the activities. There are opportunities for the children to make decisions: they choose where to play and when they want to go outside during the free-play period.
- The practitioners verbally signal some transitions between activities while other transitions happen instantly for children; a review of this approach to transitions is merited.
- Snack time is a social occasion and the children sit with their friends and the practitioners during this period. On the day of the inspection, the practitioners and children discussed food from different countries and decided on new foods they would like to taste. The children are independent during snack time and have good self-help skills which are effectively supported.
- There are various displays which support children’s identity within the setting. There are various displays in the environment including displays about different houses and homes, family portraits drawn by the children, and community buildings and maps. The practitioners invite visitors from the community into the setting to speak with the children.

Action advised
- It is advised that the practitioners consistently give children time to prepare for transitions. Short transition periods using displays and props to support the children’s awareness will enhance the daily routine.

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 curriculum is well organised and incorporates the Montessori Method linked to play-based learning. The practitioners report that they have moved to this approach in recent years. The curriculum is informed by Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework.
- Curriculum plans are organised with long-term, medium-term and short-term planning in place. Planning currently focuses on learning goals and themes. The weekly plans detail adult-led
activities with occasional records of the children’s emergent interests linked to the themes. The short-term plans could be reviewed to support a more natural emergent curriculum.

- The practitioners use a variety of observation methods including Montessori checklists and narrative observations to record the children’s development. These assessments document the future plans for children and link to Aistear. The practitioners also complete individual journals for each child which contain photographs and art projects.
- The outdoor area is under construction and accordingly, the children currently use the school basketball court for their outdoor play. The children visit the sister setting on a regular basis to access the outdoor environment. The indoor environment offers various interest areas including a range of Montessori materials. It is a print-rich environment with extensive and purposeful visual and written resources in all play areas in the room.
- Play is the main medium for learning with extensive time given to children to allow them to pursue their interest and to persist with challenge. The children enjoy accessing the home corner and construction area throughout the morning routine.
- The practitioners are very good play partners with the children, they guide and support their learning, exploration and play scenarios. Practitioners include elements of literacy and numeracy throughout the morning. To nurture their understanding further, the children would benefit from practitioners using more open-ended questions and comments which encourage them to explore and investigate further.
- The setting provides an inclusive environment and there is a written policy to support this practice. Children with additional needs have access to the Access and Inclusion support (AIM) and the practitioners have detailed specific plans to support the learning and development of the children accessing AIM.

**Actions advised**

- Practitioners are advised to broaden their short-term planning to support a more emergent curriculum. The short-term plan needs to document the children’s interests as evident during the blended Montessori work and the free-play experiences. It should also include a focus on the children’s developmental needs and long-term interests.
- Practitioners are advised to extend the use of open-ended questions and commenting and to scaffold the children’s learning to a greater extent. This could be achieved by prompting them to elaborate on their thoughts and ideas, and to make connections with their previous learning and knowledge. This will help to optimise the children’s daily learning and development opportunities.

**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 have fun in the setting and demonstrate a keen interest in learning and exploring. The children have a positive sense of well-being.
- The children enjoy engaging in activities throughout the day. On the day of the inspection, they practised their graduation songs and demonstrated confidence and enthusiasm in singing songs.
- The children have access to planned sensory activities which include using playdough, sand and gloop. On the day of the inspection, the children accessed water through the Montessori equipment.
- During the inspection process, children were observed to play individually, in pairs and in small groups, and some large group learning also took place. The children enjoy working cooperatively together and are developing friendships in the group.
- The children engage in creative work and mark-making on a daily basis. The children ask for the materials they want to use. There are some displays of process art. The individual learning journals contain template-based art and children have copybooks for pre-writing skills, and on the day of the inspection, template-based art activities were undertaken. The use of templates and copies needs to be reviewed.
- The children enjoying participating in all activities during the day. They are active and engaged during the free-choice play and work period. At times children sit for long periods and become distracted. There is potential to ensure the activities support movement and the development of gross motor skills.
The practitioners support the children to understand their feelings and emotions throughout the day as they name and talk about how the children feel. On the day of the inspection, one child fell while outside playing. The practitioner acknowledged the child was hurt and praised her for being so brave in the situation.

The children enjoy using their imagination to explore ideas and to understand concepts. They explore maths and science while building towers, making cakes in the home corner and playing hair dressing with their friends.

**Actions advised**

- Practitioners are advised to reduce the use of copies and templates as a basis for pre-writing and group art activities. In place of this approach, it would be beneficial to create a designated mark-making area which the children access and use independently. This area could offer the children the opportunity to engage in junk art, informal pre-writing experiences and 3D art.
- The practitioners need to provide further opportunities for the children to be active and to move around during the daily activities, and they need to ensure that activities support the children’s gross-motor skills. It would be beneficial to offer a variety of experiences including floor-play, sensory play and risky play in both learning environments.

**AREA 4**

**QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- There is a professional working ethos and a strong sense of teamwork evident in the setting.
- The owners delegate various tasks and responsibilities to the ECCE practitioners. The practitioners work well together to optimise the learning and development for the children in their care. There are staff meetings during the year to support curriculum planning and annual events. End-of-year support sessions are arranged to enable the practitioners and the owners to discuss practice.
- The setting is moving location next year and the team has a clear vision for the new location. They are keen to develop an outdoor environment with various play areas for the children.
- The practitioners report that the setting is a positive, supportive working environment. There is currently limited time available for self-reflection and review.
- All practitioners participate in compulsory training and in continuous professional development relevant to their work and the children’s needs. One practitioner has completed the Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) in the Early Years programme and all staff have been involved in making various changes to the environment following the new found knowledge.
- Parents receive regular emails, the practitioners use the child’s home language to communicate with parents, and some parents share their skills with the children during the year. The setting also has a ‘Bring the Bear Home’ initiative; the bear visits all of the children’s homes during the year. On an annual basis, parent meetings are facilitated. There is potential to provide more regular updates for parents and more opportunities for parental involvement.
- The setting is located in a primary school; this facilitates a strong relationship with the principal and teachers, and the children are familiar with the school and playground. The children go on a tour of the school where they meet their teachers and see the junior classrooms. The practitioners share key information with the teacher to ensure a smooth transition to primary school.

**Actions advised**

- The practitioners need to be given regular time to engage in self-reflective practice and key decisions about setting developments need to be documented. To this end, it is advised that the practitioners use the Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide as a tool to support self-reflection and to facilitate staff meetings.
- It is advised that the practitioners extend parental involvement within the setting, particularly in relation to curriculum implementation and sharing children’s progress. Parental involvement in setting activities will also support and enhance the children’s experiences.
## 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>
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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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</thead>
<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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