An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>Stepping Stone Pre-school</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>Main Street</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ardmore</td>
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<td></td>
<td>County Waterford</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>16WD0089</td>
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Date of Inspection: 17-06-2019
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>17-06-2019</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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<td></td>
<td>Review of relevant setting documents</td>
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<td>Post-inspection feedback with the setting owner/manager and lead practitioner</td>
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- Pre-inspection meeting with the setting owner/manager and lead practitioner
- Introductory meeting with relief practitioner
- Observation of interactions between practitioners and children
- Review of available records of children’s learning and development
- Interaction with children
- Review of educational resources and facilities
- Review of relevant setting documents
- Post-inspection feedback with the setting owner/manager and lead practitioner

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Stepping Stone Pre-school is a private sessional setting. This is the second of two services operated by the owner/manager. It is located on the ground floor of an adapted building in the centre of the seaside village of Ardmore. A relief staff member from the other setting was covering a period of staff leave on the day of inspection. The owner/manager, lead practitioner, relief practitioner and twenty children were present. The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the 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.
- The very friendly and warm atmosphere is supportive of the children’s development. The child-centred arrival routine is designed to offer children choices on how they are welcomed into the room.
- Practitioners display very positive regard for children. A key person approach supports secure attachments and facilitates planning to meet the needs of individual children. Practitioners use a good range of affirming responses to acknowledge children’s learning.
- Suitable guidance and modelling towards positive behaviour is provided. A useful visual of the rules promotes understanding. Occasionally during the inspection, children were not fully encouraged to offer their solutions in managing interpersonal conflicts.
- The daily routine provides children with a predictable sequence of events which effectively supports their active learning and development through play. There is a very good balance between structure and flexibility. Ample time is provided for child-led playful experiences. A visual of the environment supports children to make independent choices.
- The transitions made by the children from one activity to the next are consistently well managed; using timers and verbal prompts prepares the children for what is coming next.
- Lunch time is a social occasion where the children sit and eat together. The children are suitably supported to be independent in managing their own hygiene and personal needs.
- Visual representations of the children and their families nurture children’s sense of identity and belonging. Specific events are organised to promote the inclusion of families and the local community. A weekly visit to the beach is facilitated.

Actions advised

- Practitioners are advised to further support children to find their own solutions to everyday conflict situations. This will help to build capacity for self-regulation.
- Practitioners are advised to use greater depth and detail when commenting on children’s creations and enquiring into their actions and efforts. This will support children to describe and reflect on their learning and will lead to self-evaluation.
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 play-based curriculum is very well informed by Aistear; the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework.
- A detailed curriculum statement guides practice and provision in line with Aistear. A weekly plan supports the development of children’s dispositions, skills, understanding and attitudes. In some instances, planning builds on children's emergent interests.
- The practitioners capture children’s rich learning journeys in scrapbooks. These are available to children daily and are shared with parents at the end of the year. Strength-based observations support the identification of learning goals. Past learning experiences based on group activities are on display for parents to view.
- The inviting indoor learning environment is comprised of two connecting rooms that are organised into distinct learning areas. A rich variety of materials support and stimulate children's creativity and imagination.
- The outdoor learning environment is accessed daily. It provides the children with suitable resources and a connection to nature that promotes their physical and social skills. The sand boxes, mud kitchen and soil patch supports their desire for exploration.
- These natural items combined with the educational materials provide children with appropriate hands-on meaningful ways to develop an understanding of mathematical concepts. Children have some opportunities to develop dispositions towards science, technology and engineering.
- Frequent introductions to songs and rhymes builds children’s age-appropriate language skills and vocabulary.
- An inclusive approach promotes the engagement of all children in their learning. Key words listed in home languages supports children with English as an additional language.

Actions advised
- Practitioners are advised to take greater account of children’s varying interests in short-term planning. This will strengthen the provision of an emergent curriculum.
- It is advised that practitioners incorporate an extended range of activities to connect and support early positive dispositions towards science, technology and engineering.

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 demonstrated sustained engagement and enjoyment in their learning during the evaluation. Practitioners consult with children on matters that affect them.
- On the day of the inspection, the children actively participated in mindful exercises. This supports a positive sense of well-being.
- The regular access to learning journals is highly effective in supporting children to reflect on their learning. Some opportunities are provided for children to share their play intentions.
- The children display positive learning dispositions, such as resilience and resourcefulness. While playing in the soil patch, a number of children sourced additional items to pursue their interest in transport.
- Children make choices in leading their learning throughout the environment. On the day of inspection, the majority of children stayed outside exploring, reading, and combining materials; some children moved seamlessly indoors.
- The children display control and coordination over their fine and gross motor skills.
- The children have valuable opportunities to experience aspects of their local area. This includes visits to the beach and fire station. Some materials and displays support children to extend their thinking on these experiences.
The children display positive social interactions with their peers. Using their developing language skills they ask questions, share ideas and listen attentively.

**Actions advised**

- Practitioners are advised to enable children share their plans for self-directed learning activities. This will complement opportunities for child-led reflection.
- Practitioners are advised to extend the range of materials and activities that connect the local area in the learning environments.

**AREA 4**

**QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- The manager and lead practitioner demonstrate very good knowledge of the national quality frameworks. Engagement in self-review of the curriculum happens annually. Materials from the *Aistear Siólta Practice Guide* have been used to assess the learning environment; and this has led to implementing a quality improvement plan.
- The manager actively promotes high standards and articulates a clear vision for the work of the setting. The staff team meets weekly to organise the educational experiences.
- Cross-setting collaboration among staff enriches knowledge about best practice in supporting children’s learning and development.
- Parents are made aware of the policies and procedures. An open door policy is in place. Daily conversations with parents facilitate effective sharing of information about children’s experiences in most instances.
- The children’s transition into the setting is very effectively supported. Information is mutually shared and a gradual introduction for children is facilitated.
- Practitioners prepare an end of year report for parents which details their child’s strengths. Curriculum activities support children to think and talk about going to primary school. A ‘transition flower’ document is under review in an effort to improve information sharing with the primary school.

**Action advised**

- Practitioners are advised to provide regular opportunities for parents to see information gathered about their child’s learning. Formal meetings between key workers and parents need to be facilitated to ensure progress is discussed in all instances.

**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>
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<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
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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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