EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>Playdays</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>Malin Head Community Centre</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ballygorman</td>
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<td>Malin Head</td>
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<td></td>
<td>County Donegal</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>17DL0230</td>
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Date of Inspection: 12-02-2019
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>12-02-2019</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meeting with setting manager</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Meeting with practitioners</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Observation of interactions during one pre-school session</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Review of relevant documents</td>
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<td>Feedback discussion with setting manager and the practitioners</td>
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CONTEXT OF SETTING

Playdays is a community-based, sessional pre-school and after-school setting, located in Malin Head, County Donegal. The pre-school offers the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme to participating children. On the day of the inspection, one lead practitioner/manager, three practitioners and fifteen children were present. The manager and two of the practitioners 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; 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 practitioners demonstrate respect for the children and their families, holding both in high regard. Timely interactions at arrival and collection highlight a warm and welcoming ethos.
- There is a daily routine in place which provides a variety of activities for the children to enhance their physical, social and emotional learning. Practitioners are highly responsive to the needs of the children and offer comfort during caring exchanges.
- Practitioners value the children as active agents during the session. They empower them to make choices through play and support them to develop independence and self-help skills.
- Verbal cues are used pre-dominantly to highlight transitions in the routine with minimal lead-in periods provided to prepare the children for upcoming changes. Visual and auditory cues were used sporadically at transition times during the inspection.
- Practitioners continually affirm the children’s efforts and provide respectful guidance towards positive behaviour.
- Practitioners are assigned designated children to facilitate a system for observing their learning. Although this has similarities to a key-person approach, it could be extended to support small group learning experiences.
- The practitioners have exploited commendable opportunities to nurture the children’s identity. The children’s creations along with their personal and family photographs are displayed effectively within the pre-school environment. Practitioners provide opportunities for parents and grandparents to attend events at Halloween and Christmas along with a graduation at the end of the year.
- The setting utilises local amenities and the natural landscape to support the children’s learning and their sense of belonging. The children go on walks to the local post-office, shop, woods and beach. They discuss their knowledge about who dwells in the locality.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the range of transition strategies utilised during various parts of the routine is used consistently throughout the morning to prepare the children for the upcoming changes in the activities.
- It is advised that the practitioners develop a more effective key person approach. Outlining the organisation of the key groups to parents and children along with creating frequent opportunities for practitioners to engage in small group experiences with their key children would be beneficial.
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.
- There are broad long-term and short-term plans in place which are beginning to respond to some of the children’s emergent interests within the weekly notes section. There are no explicit connections made to Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework.
- Practitioners conduct some observations during the year for each child. They frequently note group learning observations to highlight the variety of activities experienced by the children and outline plans for extensions in play within the majority of records.
- The practitioners interact with the children effectively, scaffolding their learning by modelling extended language and enriched vocabulary during their play exchanges. They know the children well and use this knowledge to motivate and support the children to make connections in their learning.
- The indoor environment is well-defined with a range of interest areas such as a role-play area, an art/craft area, table-top activities, construction and a nature area. Multi-sensory play is promoted through a large tray of slime and the provision of lentils with scoops to enhance investigation. The resources in the role-play and creative areas were limited in terms of their authenticity and in the availability of open-ended materials.
- Children access the outdoor play area regularly. They have the opportunity to develop their gross motor-skills using wheeled vehicles, balancing on tree stumps and climbing up to the slide. In addition to this, the community hall is used on occasions to support physical play.
- Practitioners encourage the children to express their views during the daily circle-time discussion and promote a respectful balance between speaking and listening.
- Practitioners have successfully introduced early positive dispositions towards science among the children. They conduct frequent experiments and practitioners refer to the children as ‘scientists’ and ‘investigators’ during their exploratory play with magnets.
- Practitioners provide many opportunities for the children to achieve fulfilment, success and mastery during learning activities such as mark-making and the discovery of magnetic force.

Actions advised
- It is advised that practitioners develop an emergent, enquiry-based approach to planning based on the children’s evolving interests and informed by their varied learning needs. Making visible connections to the goals of Aistear within the long, medium and short-term plans would further support this action.
- It is advised that practitioners further develop the indoor and outdoor environments to include more authentic, creative, open-ended materials to extend the children’s play opportunities.

AREA 3
QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is very good.
- Children are motivated and interested when engaging in a range of play opportunities. They demonstrate a sense of wonder and natural curiosity as they explore and discover the property of magnets, slime and lentils.
- The children’s voices are heard, respected and acted upon. Records of the children’s voices are annotated on their detailed creations. A recent trip to the beach to discover ‘alien slime’ represents the respect awarded to the children’s unique ideas.
- A range of photographs of the children’s work is on display along with their creations to celebrate their learning achievements. Children create their own successes by independently selecting areas of interest which promotes engagement and individual learning.
- Each child has an observation book. As the information provided contains restricted narrative based on infrequent observations, the observation books are not utilised to promote the children’s understanding of their individual learning journeys.
• The children are developing a strong sense of identity and belonging through the very many opportunities provided to discuss personal experiences and backgrounds. They are developing strong friendships and are very aware of the roles of people within the rural community.
• Children have many opportunities to communicate their experiences, ideas and thoughts during the session. Many children utilise the arts and craft area to represent their thoughts through mark-making. Some children demonstrate the ability to problem-solve and predict during play, whilst others require further support in acquiring these skills.
• Many children use books and have requested that the practitioners use information and communication technology (ICT) to further their knowledge and interests. Books about space and a large space-rocket created from boxes were used effectively by the children to make connections in their learning.

**Actions advised**

- It is advised that frequently annotated observations within the children’s individual observation books build rich, unique and regularly updated pictures of their learning. Representations of the children’s interests, their connected learning experiences and creative illustrations will help reflect their learning in a purposeful manner.
- It is advised that the children have further opportunities to develop reflective thinking and problem solving capacities. The use of a range of open-ended questions will support the children develop the skills of prediction and inquiry.

**AREA 4**

**QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- The manager provides a weekly opportunity for the practitioners to formally reflect on the planned activities and to develop further experiences and provision for the children. The minutes of these meetings are not currently recorded with no organised opportunities provided for collaborative evaluation to inform improvement practices.
- The manager articulates a clear vision and direction for the work of the setting. While practitioners attend some regulatory training, there are no formal measures in place for staff supervision and appraisal. This would help management to progress training needs.
- Practitioners work in a collaborative manner and are aware of their responsibilities throughout the session. Through the effective positioning of the practitioners within the various defined areas, they assume leadership roles to promote good quality learning.
- The setting regularly shares visual information regarding the children’s play experiences with the parents. Daily updates are uploaded to a private social media page and the daily informal discussions at arrival support two-way channels of communication. There are no formal opportunities provided to promote consultation with the parents regarding their children’s learning.
- The setting is supported by a management committee and frequent communication occurs with the board. An annual general meeting is organised which encourages parents to become involved in the work of the committee.
- The manager organises an annual open day to support the children and their families with the settling-in transition. They are provided with a registration form and a family information form which garners useful information to support continuity of experiences for the children. Staggered visits are organised to ease the children into the pre-school environment.
- The transition to school is supported by a planned visit from the junior infant teacher from the primary school to which the majority of children transition. A local ‘Starting school’ initiative enables the children to visit a primary school environment and to meet other children who will transition with them.

**Actions advised**

- It is advised that the manager creates systematic review opportunities within formal staff meetings to develop and document actions for improvement using the Alstear, Síolta Practice Guide.
- It is advised that the manager develops appropriate systems for the supervision and appraisal of staff that recognises the need for further continuing professional development opportunities for all practitioners.
• It is advised that the manager develops formal and consistent measures for the sharing of information with parents regarding their children’s learning throughout the year and when moving on to primary school.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the service to implement the actions advised above is very good. The manager and practitioners demonstrate strong commitment to ongoing improvement in the quality of provision in the setting.
### 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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<tr>
<td>Quality of management and leadership for learning</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 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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