EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>Best Start Early-Years’ Service</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>Jobstown Community Centre</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Fortunestown Way</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tallaght</td>
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<td>Dublin 24</td>
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<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>17DS0410</td>
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Date of Inspection: 29-11-2018
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of inspection</th>
<th>29-11-2018</th>
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| Inspection activities undertaken | Interaction with children  
- Meeting with the manager  
- Observation of interactions during the pre-school session  
- Review of relevant documents  
- Feedback meeting with the manager and practitioners |

**CONTEXT OF SERVICE**

Best Start Early-Years’ Service was established in 2016. It is a privately owned setting located in Dublin South West. The setting operates from a room which is a shared space in a community centre. A morning, pre-school session is provided for children from the local area who are enrolled in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, six children, the manager and two practitioners 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; 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 fair.
- On arrival, parents and children are greeted in a friendly manner. The manager and practitioners know the children and their families well.
- On the day of the inspection, the atmosphere of the setting was not calm or conducive to learning. The organisation of the room and the procedures established to ensure an orderly environment for children were not adequate.
- The daily routine is displayed in picture format and the practitioners report that it is used along with picture cards from the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) resource pack to guide the children through the daily activities. On the day of the inspection, neither of the documented routines were followed and the children appeared to be unfamiliar with the daily sequence of events. The extended waiting period at the end of the session and the shortening of free-play time to deal with behavioural difficulties reduced the children’s deep engagement in activities.
- During the inspection, transitions were signalled by practitioners using verbal reminders and cymbals; tidy-up time was encouraged through verbal instructions. It was observed that most of the children found transitions throughout the day difficult. A significant number of the children’s refusals to follow instructions impacted negatively on the tidy-up routine and resulted in transitions being disorganised and challenging.
- The children and the practitioners sat together at snack time and engaged in some conversations for a short period of time. During this time, many children became distracted by an activity taking place in the art area and did not eat their lunch or tidy away their belongings.
- While some brief, positive aspects of interactions were noted, the practitioners’ guidance and encouragement of the children towards appropriate behaviour requires significant development. Throughout the inspection, the children demonstrated challenging and, in some instances, aggressive behaviour. The practitioners’ use of a behaviour chart to reference inappropriate behaviour was not effective in supporting children to self-regulate, in reducing incidents of outbursts or in encouraging respect and the strengthening of relationships.
- The children’s sense of identity is represented through photographs, the birthdays’ chart and their displayed art work. A family wall is being developed to enhance children’s sense of belonging to family groups and their appreciation of diversity.
- The children’s parents are invited to the end-of-year graduation event and grandparents are invited to read stories with the children. Links to the wider community are fostered through relationships.
formed with the community centre, trips to feed the horse in a field behind the centre and visits to the post box to post Santa letters.

**Actions advised**
- Practitioners are advised to consistently follow the daily routine to help support the children to predict daily events. In doing so, the practitioners will help promote the children’s sense of security and their social and emotional development.
- The practitioners are advised to revise the daily routine with a view to ensuring that the period for free play is extended to at least one hour in duration. To ensure that the children stay actively engaged in activities for the duration of the ECCE programme, it is advised that steps be taken to reduce waiting periods, particularly before the children go home.
- To ensure that times of transition are a positive learning experience for all children, it is advised that practitioners reflect on how transitions are managed and develop transition strategies to encourage the children to tidy up in line with their needs and abilities. This could include giving children clear, short instructions while making eye contact with them, using individual cards depicting items that support tidy-up routines and allocating small jobs to children. It is also advised that the children be encouraged to tidy as they move between self-chosen activities and that the practitioners use this time as an opportunity to teach children how to tidy up.
- The practitioners are advised to support the children to problem solve in order to resolve conflicts using child-appropriate, conflict-resolution strategies. It is further advised that the practitioners place a greater focus on promoting positive behaviours through the use of praise and recognition and encouragement of children’s positive engagement throughout the day.

**AREA 2**

**QUALITY OF PROCESSES TO SUPPORT CHILDREN’S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

- The overall quality of the processes to support the children’s learning and development is fair.
- A play-based curriculum informed by *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* is implemented in the setting.
- Curriculum planning is informed by the children’s interests and seasonal events and is organised on a long-term, medium-term and short-term bases. A number of different templates are used to document short-term plans. The children’s interests are not always evident in planning.
- A strengths-based method of recording children’s development is effectively used by the practitioners. Information on the children’s learning and development is gathered through the use of checklists, anecdotal notes, recorded learning observations for each child, samples of the children’s creative work and photographs. Individual and group learning journals are also used to document learning. A copy of children’s learning observation records is regularly shared with the parents.
- The learning environment consists of a large room, an adjoining garden area and access to the community centre’s hall. The children have daily opportunities to play outdoors.
- On the day of the inspection, the layout of the pre-school environment into interest areas was not clearly defined and there were insufficient amounts of resources and materials, particularly natural and creative items. During the inspection, the children did not have access to sand or water activities; the practitioners report that these activities are usually provided in the outdoor environment.
- The practitioners view play as central to the children’s learning and development. A small number of positive interactions between the practitioners and the children took place when they sat together during the adult-led art activities and as children played with the kitchen. In general, the practitioners appeared unclear about their role during playtime; very little playful engagement, prompting or guidance was observed and the practitioners did not fully immerse themselves in the children’s activities.
- The practitioners promote an inclusive environment. Parents are assisted to make referrals and links with external professional agencies are made as required. The setting has availed of support under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM).

**Actions Advised**
- To build on the planning practices already established, the practitioners are advised to reduce the number of templates used for short-term planning and to align plans more closely with the
children’s individual learning observations. Engaging with the ‘Planning and Assessment’ pillar in the Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide will support this action.

- The practitioners are advised to undertake an audit of the indoor and outdoor environments using the ‘Environment’ pillar in Aistear Síolta Practice Guide. In particular, the practitioners’ focus should be placed on dividing the indoor space into defined interest areas and neatly displaying equipment and materials within these areas. It is further advised that the practitioners provide a variety of real and natural learning resources and play equipment that will support the children’s sensory and creative development and the promotion of their mark-making skills and pretend-play ideas.
- The practitioners are advised to actively engage to a greater degree with the children as play partners during pretend-play activities. This will help nurture the children’s deeper level of engagement and concentration skills during their self-selected activities.

**AREA 3**

**QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

- The quality of the children learning experiences and achievements is fair.
- On the day of inspection, while the majority of children actively enjoyed playing for short intervals in the community hall, when visiting the horses and engaging in art activities, overall, they demonstrated low levels of well-being and motivation.
- The children’s ability to play co-operatively and to positively engage with their peers is in the very early stages of development. Practitioners could have used additional strategies to support children to express their emotions, to self-regulate, share or take turns with others.
- The children’s social skills are in the very early stages of development. While friendships are emerging between a few children, many of the children played alone and did not actively engage with the group activities.
- The children’s communication skills are in the early stages of development. Additional strategies could be used to support children in the development of their receptive and expressive communication skills. This would also reduce children’s levels of frustration and help them to become more independent and confident.
- Children, with support from the practitioners, can put on their coats and some help to retrieve lunch bags for snack.
- The children are beginning to make connections with the world around them with support from the practitioners. For example, they picked grass and brought in apples from home to feed the horse.
- For very short periods of time throughout the session, there was some evidence of the children being creative; they drew monsters and painted pine cones and explored the mixing of colours to create new colours. Most children displayed good gross-motor skills as they climbed trees, negotiated bushes in the garden when they hid, ran and kicked footballs.
- Language and early literacy and numeracy skills are fostered through rhyme and song and story, posters, books and mark-making materials. On the day of inspection, most of the children found it difficult to sit and engage in these activities, while some moved in and out of these activities at will.

*Actions advised*

- To promote the children’s positive sense of well-being, the practitioners are advised to support the children’s social and emotional development by establishing simple strategies to support children to become more independent in their own self-care and to interact positively with other children. To build the children’s capacity for empathy and respect for their environment, it is advised that all practitioners develop simple ‘rules of behaviour’ with the children and then use these to consistently reinforce positive examples of good behaviour when it occurs.
- The practitioners are advised to give children helper roles throughout the day in order to further develop their sense of responsibility and social skills.
- The practitioners are advised to plan circle time, story time and rhyme time in smaller groups in order to encourage the children to engage in group activities and to develop their communication and listening skills. Greater use of the key worker system to facilitate small group discussions will provide children with greater opportunities to share their thoughts and ideas and will also support children’s sustained engagement in shared discussions.
AREA 4
QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is fair.
- Respectful relationships between the practitioners and the manager are evident.
- The manager and practitioners meet weekly to plan and reflect on activities, to discuss issues and concerns and to share information on children’s interests. The manager offers ongoing support and individual supervision to practitioners and the manager is supported from time-to-time by the owner.
- The setting has established links with professional bodies, such as the local childcare committee, Early Childhood Ireland and private early years consultants, for support, advice and training.
- During the inspection, it was observed that the practitioners’ knowledge of practice underpinning the implementation of an emergent-based curriculum required further development.
- The two practitioners using the key worker approach are responsible for leading learning and have responsibility for observing and documenting children’s learning and development.
- On the day of the inspection, it was noted that the organisation of educational experiences and activities to support children’s learning and development was not appropriate and the responsibilities of the team members to support learning and development were unclear.
- There are a number of established channels to support communication and the sharing of information with parents. These include a parents’ handbook, a parents’ notice board, weekly newsletters and daily check-in discussions. Formal meetings to discuss children’s developmental needs are held with parents regularly.
- A settling-in policy is in place to support children. Parents are provided with a settling-in information pack. They are invited to visit with the children before they begin in the setting and are encouraged to stay with children until they settle.

Actions advised
- The management of the setting is advised to avail of professional support from Better Start: the National Quality Mentoring Service in order to support the practitioners individually and as a team to implement the actions advised in this report.
- It is advised that the practitioners seek further training to support them to develop their capacity in relation to behaviour management.
## 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>Fair</td>
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<td>Fair</td>
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## Language used in Early Years Education Inspection reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Provision that is excellent is exemplary in meeting the needs of children.</td>
</tr>
<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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