An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna  
Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>Knock Kids Playschool</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>Knock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Abbyleix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>County Laois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>17LS0130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Date of Inspection: 17-05-2019
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: 17-05-2019

Inspection activities undertaken
- Meeting with setting manager and ECCE practitioner
- Observation of interactions during the morning ECCE session
- Interaction with children
- Review of relevant documents
- Post-inspection feedback meeting with setting manager and ECCE practitioner

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Knock Kids Playschool is a community based setting which has been in operation in Spink, Co. Laois for over thirteen years. The setting moved to its current location four years ago. The pre-school is now located in a room in the community hall where the practitioners provide care and education for local children availing of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, there were two practitioners and four children in the setting. 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 good.
- A welcoming atmosphere is evident in the setting. Practitioners greet the parents and children in a warm and kind manner at arrival and departure times. Relationships between the practitioners and the children are caring.
- There is a planned routine in the setting which children participate in and daily activities are displayed on a board. The practitioners lead the daily routine which results in children being unprepared for the next phase of the day. Part of the daily routine involves a period for free-choice play. The practitioners change the routine on the spot to accommodate the children and their requests.
- Transitions between activities are instant and accordingly, play periods are concluded abruptly rather than gradually. The practitioners verbally notify children of some transitions during the day.
- Snack time is a social occasion where the children enjoy talking about food, family life and their daily experiences.
- There are good displays which support individual and family identity and belonging within the setting. The practitioners display lots of photographs of the children and information about the children and their development.

Resources to support children’s awareness of their local community are not yet included in the environment.

Actions advised
- The practitioners are advised to create an interactive display of the daily routine with the children. This will support children to understand and prepare for the next activities and give them ownership and choice in the activities which are displayed on the board.
- The practitioners are advised to consistently prepare children for transitions during the daily routine, and to use props to support the children’s awareness of transitions within the daily routine. This will enable the children to prepare for transitions and to conclude activities in a more gradual and phased manner.
- Building on the existing individual displays, the addition of strategies and resources to support children’s community and cultural awareness is advised. These could include parental involvement, community visitors to the setting and representation of the children’s voice regarding local features.
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 good.
- The setting implements a play-based curriculum with elements of the Montessori Method. The curriculum is informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*.
- The practitioners organise their planning on a monthly basis with long-term, medium-term and short-term planning in place. Planning currently focuses on themes and the practitioners ask the children what ideas they have based on the themes selected. The children’s emergent interests are currently not planned for in the short-term plans.
- The practitioners complete regular observations which document the activities through which children develop and learn. These observations are linked to *Aistear*.
- Free-play takes place each morning allowing children to pursue their interests. Children enjoy engaging in various forms of play and have a strong interest in imaginative play. On the day of the inspection, the children enjoyed playing in the home corner pretending to run a café. The remaining activities are adult led with a focus on table-top activities and formal learning. The opportunities for play-based learning could be extended.
- The interactions between the practitioners and the children are playful. The practitioners ask some questions to introduce mathematical concepts and they focus on counting and pouring liquids and materials. They currently ask closed questions to test the children’s knowledge. The use of open-ended questions would benefit the children’s language development and knowledge.
- The indoor environment is laid out with various defined interest areas and it offers a good range of resources for the children. There are ample resources available to support the development of fine-motor skills.
- The practitioners have an awareness of the children’s needs; they seek advice to ensure that they can support these needs, and they work with parents to support the children’s needs.

*Actions advised*

- It is advised that the practitioners review their short-term planning to ensure they identify and record the children’s emergent interests and how these interests will be used to inform activities. It would be beneficial to take account of how the children’s interests are developing and to document the children’s voices in the planning.
- It is advised that the practitioners extend the use of play as a medium for learning by offering children invitations to play. These planned experiences could promote activity and movement in the course of learning. The practitioners could blend the Montessori materials into the play-based learning experiences also.
- The practitioners are advised to extend the children’s language development through the use of open-ended questions and commenting. The practitioners could create a more print-rich environment using resources that support the extension of language and speech development.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is good.
- The practitioners have created a space where the children are safe and happy to learn and develop on a daily basis.
- The children have access to an outdoor environment and on the day of the inspection the children went for a walk around the local area to see the church and stream.
- All children enjoy singing songs and this form of expression is used in various activities during the day. There is a large range of books in the environment and the practitioners have a dedicated story time each day.
- The children have access to sensory exploration and messy play. On the day of the inspection they engaged with playdough and sand. The children enjoyed these experiences, and practitioners were available to them at these times.
Throughout the inspection process, children were observed to play individually, in pairs and in small groups. As the group size was small on the day of the inspection, many full group activities took place.

There is a strong focus on using templates and worksheets to promote formal learning. On the day of the inspection, the children completed copybook work focused on counting shapes and linking the shapes to written numbers. This form of learning is not age-appropriate.

There is no mark-making area or materials freely available to the children. The children have individual learning journals which include photographs, art and the template-based work which they have completed.

The children made rice-crispy buns on the day of the inspection. The practitioners weighed and organised the majority of the activity. The children would benefit from more hands-on learning during this type of activity, and throughout the daily routine.

The children hear praise and encouragement throughout the day as they complete tasks and activities.

**Actions advised**

- The practitioners need to reduce the use of templates and worksheets which are used for formal learning and art activities in the setting. They are advised to create an open and accessible mark-making area in the room which is available to children throughout the free-play period. The practitioners need to include more process art in the children’s individual journals. It would be beneficial also to capture the child’s views on their learning within their journal.
- The practitioners are advised to focus on more age-appropriate activities which promote hands-on, practical learning, to enable the children to explore various concepts and child-led ideas. The practitioners need to ensure that the various themes introduced to the children during the year are explored to a greater degree through play and hands-on learning.

**AREA 4**

**QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- There is a good sense of teamwork and professionalism in the setting. The board of management delegate the daily running and responsibilities to the manager. The board of management communicate directly with the local county childcare committee to seek advice and support. The practitioners would also benefit from external support and mentoring.
- The practitioners are aware of *Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education*.
- The practitioners participate in continued professional development relevant to their work. They are currently completing their training in childcare.
- The practitioners regularly meet to discuss the curriculum, issues or concerns, and to plan activities and themes for the coming months. Currently, these meetings are not documented.
- The practitioners communicate with parents through a text group, a social media page, a parent booklet and daily informal meetings.
- The practitioners support the children to settle into the setting through an open day and gradual settle-in times.
- The setting has good links with the local primary school which is situated next door to the preschool. The children and the practitioners regularly visit the school to hear guest speakers and to meet visitors. In June, the practitioners take the children to the school for a visit and the teacher visits the pre-school to read a story for the children. They verbally share some information at this visit. It would be beneficial to introduce the ‘Mo Scéal’ resources.

**Actions advised**

- To support further development in practices, the practitioners are advised to access mentoring and support from an external organisation. To support self-reflection and a sustained focus on improvement, the practitioners are advised to engage with the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide*.
- The practitioners are advised to record the minutes of their meetings and to ensure that their key decisions and changes in the setting are documented. This will support improvement, and create a record of the quality work which practitioners engage in throughout the year.
To guide further development in the practices which support the children’s transition to school, the practitioners are advised to introduce the ‘Mo Scéal’ resources made available by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.
### Summary of Overall Inspection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Quality Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of context to support children's learning and development</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of processes to support children's learning and development</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of children’s learning experiences and achievements</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<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>Quality Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>