**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**
Department of Education and Skills

### EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

#### REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>Little Robins Childcare</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>Balbradagh</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Robinstown</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>County Meath</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>17MH0348</td>
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**Date of Inspection: 20-02-2019**
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

Date of inspection: 20-02-2019

Inspection activities undertaken
- Meeting with the setting owner/practitioner
- Conversation with the early years practitioners
- Observation of interactions and activities in two pre-school sessions
- Review of educational resources and facilities
- Interaction and discussion with the children
- Review of relevant setting documentation
- Review of records of the children's learning and development
- Feedback discussion with setting owner/practitioner and early years practitioners

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Little Robins Childcare, established in 2017, is located in the village of Robinstown. The setting provides full day care, part-time care, pre and after-school care for school-aged children and morning pre-school sessions for children enrolled on the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. The ECCE programme is provided in two pre-school rooms, one for the younger pre-school children and the second for the older pre-school children. The owner/practitioner, four early years practitioners and fourteen children were present on the day of the inspection. The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the report, and the response of the setting will be found in the appendix of this report.

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 in the setting.
- The parents and family members were observed to be very comfortable coming into the playrooms and spending time in the morning conversing with the practitioners and the children. One younger sibling was so familiar with the routine at the start of the session that she put her older brother's bottle in the fridge for him before she left.
- The practitioners have established very positive and respectful relationships with the children. Interactions between the children and the practitioners in both pre-school rooms, are calm, responsive and gentle. Key groups have been established in each room and are clearly displayed for parents.
- There is a consistent daily routine in both pre-school rooms. Substantial time is allocated to indoor and outdoor, child-initiated play each day. There is also a daily circle time, a practitioner-planned activity and a snack time. The routine is not displayed in an accessible manner for the children.
- The practitioners, in both pre-school rooms, clearly prioritise the development of self-care skills and supporting the children to become independent. They encourage the children to do things successfully for themselves at every opportunity allowing a lot of unhurried time for the children to master skills. These include, toileting, organising their snack and bags and putting on and taking off clothing and shoes.
- The children's developing sense of identity and belonging is effectively nurtured through the photographic displays of the children's families, birthday charts and a few examples of the children's creative, individual art and mark-making. Parents regularly come into the setting to engage in activities with the children. Recent activities included, book reading, baking and discussing occupations. The setting hosts events during the year for families, such as a recent Valentine's Day tea party and a Christmas concert.

Actions advised
- It is advised that the practitioners, in both pre-school rooms, display the daily routine visually and at the children's physical level.
- To further support the development of the children sense of identity and belonging, it is advised that the photographic displays of visitors to the setting which are currently displayed in the hallway be moved into the playrooms. It is also advised that photographic displays of the children engaged
in play activities and of the local community be created and that a wider range of the children’s own creative work be displayed.

**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 that is aligned to *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. This curriculum has been documented in a very comprehensive policy which clearly details the broad-based aims and goals for the children’s learning and development. This document is not routinely used by the practitioners to inform their planning for curriculum implementation.
- The setting has a planning system in place. Planning is centred on practitioner-selected themes and template-based craft activities. Short-term documented planning does not yet incorporate the children’s current interests.
- The observation and recording system used in both pre-school rooms consists of bi-monthly narrative observations, checklists on developmental milestones and the compilation of a journal for each child documenting group learning activities and events in the setting. This system records the group experiences in the programme but does not effectively capture rich information about individual children’s interests and achievements. It does not inform planning for the curriculum.
- A moderate range of play and learning opportunities is provided in both pre-school rooms. Some interest areas have been developed. It was observed that materials and resources in the indoor learning environments are predominantly toy and plastic in nature.
- The practitioners have a very strong commitment to ensuring that the children experience extended periods of outdoor play and learning every day. Each child has wellies and wet gear and the outdoor play area is a large natural space with grass, puddles and mud. There is a very good provision for sensory and experimental play and learning. On the day of inspection, the children had free use of water, sand and muck and a wide range of real tools and equipment to play with, such as buckets, pots, pans and large paint brushes. The setting also has an additional very large, natural space which has wonderful potential to be developed to further support the children’s holistic learning and development.
- The practitioners, in both pre-school rooms, demonstrate a passion and commitment to supporting the children’s learning and development through play. They used effective pedagogical strategies such as playing at the children’s physical level, being a play partner, following the children’s play ideas and leads and sometimes offering ideas to extend the children’s ideas. Early literacy and numeracy are supported through frequent, personal conversations and the use of counting and numeracy vocabulary in play activities and in meaningful situations.

**Actions advised**

- It is advised that the practitioners begin to record frequent observations of what individual children are interested in, engaged in, thinking about and achieving. It is also advised that these observations are placed in the children’s learner journals and linked to *Aistear*.
- To support the development of a curriculum that takes account of the children’s interests, it is advised that the practitioners use their current curriculum statement as their long-term planning guide and that they incorporate observations of the children’s interests and achievements into short-term planning.
- The practitioners are advised to continue to develop the indoor learning environments, prioritising the establishment of interest areas and the introduction of open-ended, real, natural, materials, resources, props and tools.

**AREA 3**

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

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is good.
- The children are well-settled and secure in the setting. They presented as relaxed, confident and happy on the day of inspection.
• Some very good friendships are developing among the children. They notice when someone is absent and ask for them. They frequently do things to help each other unprompted.
• The children’s play skills are developing well. During the substantial time allowed for child-initiated free play, the children made many decisions and choices about who to pay with, what to play and where.
• In their play, many children demonstrated capacities to share, take-turns and to negotiate with each other.
• Many children engaged in focused exploration of materials and tools, particularly during the outdoor play period where they had rich opportunities for sensory play and experimentation with real materials and resources.
• On the day of the inspection, it was observed that the children did not engage in art and mark-making, book reading or play with literacy resources.
• The children are very eager to communicate and express their thoughts and ideas in discussion. During the inspection the topic of intense interest for the children at circle time was toilets. As the practitioner had planned to discuss hand washing as part of the current theme, this interest, while acknowledged, was not explored, supported or extended.
• Many children engaged in lengthy and detailed socio-dramatic play around baby care, acting out roles, being imaginative and representing some real-life experiences.
• The children are learning and achieving through their experiences and activities in the setting.

Actions advised
• It is advised that the practitioners provide the children with daily access and support to use a wide range of art, mark-making and literacy resources, materials and tools.
• To support and encourage the children’s motivation to discuss, question and explore ideas and topics that are meaningful to them, the practitioners are advised to plan group discussions and learning activities based on the children’s current interests and experiences.

AREA 4
QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

• The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
• A professional ethos is evident in this setting. The owner/practitioner has established a clear vision and ethos for the programme delivered which is evidently shared by the staff.
• Management structures are clear and a shared leadership approach is utilised. A system of annual appraisals has been established to affirm the practitioners’ effective practice and to identify areas for further professional development.
• The staff has a strong passion for and commitment to continuing professional development. They are all currently engaged in training, including attending workshops on equality and diversity and on the Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide. The setting owner is currently completing Leadership for INClusion in the Early Years programme (LINC) training.
• The staff meets regularly as a team with a documented agenda to address day-to-day issues in the setting. Planning for quality improvement happens informally.
• Information about the setting and the programme delivered is shared with parents through an attractive web site, a social media platform and regular newsletters.
• The practitioners share information about the learning and developmental progression of individual children through frequent, informal conversations with parents. The children’s journals are sent home twice termly.
• Transitions into the setting are well organised and parents and children visit the pre-school rooms before enrolment. At the time of inspection, the setting’s enrolment form collected minimal information about the child as a person, his/her life and previous educational experiences.
• The setting is currently working in partnership with the local primary school to develop systems to support the children’s smooth transitions into junior infants.

Actions advised
• It is advised that the practitioners establish a system of self-evaluation and planning for quality improvement in the setting using Aistear and Síolta, the national practice frameworks and the online Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide.
• To further support transitions, it is advised that the setting gathers information about the children, their lives and their educational experiences at enrolment. It is also advised that the practitioners work in partnership with parents when documenting information about the children’s learning and development to share with the teachers in the local primary schools.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The owner and early year’s practitioners engaged enthusiastically in the co-professional feedback discussion following the inspection. They demonstrated a very strong and positive ongoing commitment to quality development in the setting. The capacity of the setting to implement the actions advised outlined in the report above is 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>
<td>Very 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>
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## Language used in Early-Years Education Inspection Reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<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>
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*Published June 2019*
APPENDIX

SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT
SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection report.

Overall we are very happy with the inspection report. We feel the inspector gave us excellent feedback and was extremely positive throughout with the educators. We have made improvements to our service since the inspection, taking into consideration the feedback given.

Area 2  Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

Area 1

We take into consideration that there was not a lot of children's artwork on the wall on the day of the inspection, however this was due to the fact that the children were taking their learning journals home for Easter break. We will display art work for longer in future.

Daily routine visuals are now displayed at the children’s eye level.

Area 2

A children’s voice wall has now been introduced since the inspection took place. Children's emergent interests are considered when planning and children have the opportunity to lead the daily curriculum plan. This has been one of the most effective changes made since the inspection.

Area 3

A new defined art area has been developed in the preschool room, where children have the opportunity to paint draw, mark make and explore a range of resources, materials and tools.

Area 4

Self-evaluation tools from the Aistear Siolta Practice Guide are now being used as part of our daily routine.