An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna  
Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>Sunflowers Shinrone</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>3 Clover Lodge</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shinrone</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Birr</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>County Offaly</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>17OY0112</td>
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Date of Inspection: 17-01-2019
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: 17-01-2019

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

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Sunflowers Shinrone, in Co. Offaly, has been in operation since September 2017. The main pre-school room is divided into two areas where the owner/manager provides care and education for local children availing of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. The children are allocated to different groups according to their age and stage of development. On the day of the inspection, the owner/manager and ECCE practitioner were present with ten children. The setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised in this 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.
- A warm and welcoming atmosphere is evident. Parents and children are greeted warmly and with respect at arrival and departure times.
- Relationships are respectful and responsive to the needs of children. The practitioners know the children well and discuss family and community topics with them.
- There is an open and flexible routine in the setting which children enjoy participating in. Children have extended free play opportunities. Transitions between activities are minimal and practitioners use timers and buzzers to signal change in the routine.
- The practitioners use a rolling snack time to encourage the children to be independent and to support minimal change during the routine; the children are very familiar with this routine and it works well in the setting. The practitioners sit with the children at various times during snack to support conversation.
- The children are given some opportunities to develop their self-help skills and a helper board display supports this. The practitioners have created a self-help area in the room. There is potential to extend this to support children’s independence further.
- The practitioners praise and encourage children throughout the day. They lead conflict resolution and resolve the few conflicts which take place during the day. They support children to negotiate and to deal with various social issues.
- The children’s individual identity and belonging is nurtured and celebrated through displays throughout the environment, photographs of the children and their families, a detailed community wall and links with the surrounding areas. Recently, the children completed a project about Ireland and Poland to support inclusion in the setting. The practitioners organise visits to and from the local amenities in the area including the nursing home and the primary school. There are visual resources in the environment which support the children’s awareness of cultural diversity and of their local community.

Actions advised
- Building on the good practices currently in place, it is advised that the practitioners extend opportunities for independence during the preschool session. To this end, the practitioners could extend the current self-help shelf to include more resources for cleaning up and self-care.
- Practitioners are advised to support children to develop their conflict resolution skills through discussion, and by encouraging them to discuss scenarios and possible solutions with their friends. This will also further develop the children’s negotiation skills and confidence.
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 curriculum is informed by Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework and a play-based curriculum is evident in the daily activities and experiences. The setting has a well-written curriculum which details how it uniquely links the themes and goals of Aistear to their daily routine. This curriculum is the long-term plan for the setting.
- Curriculum plans include theme-based, medium-term plans and there is a range of evidence gathered to record the activities that have taken place. The practitioners report that the planning process is flexible and they discuss plans with children so that their emergent interests are taken into account. There is potential to develop the planning and review processes to ensure that the emergent curriculum is documented.
- The practitioners complete observation and assessment records on a monthly basis. They record the learning experiences of the child, set out general future plans and occasionally make links to Aistear. These observations primarily reflect children’s holistic development. The observations are shared with parents. There is scope to develop the observation process further.
- Play is the main medium for learning. Children have access to a variety of different play processes and there is a strong focus on imaginative and role play. Children are given extensive time to explore different roles and scenarios through their play.
- The practitioners are good play partners with the children and are available to the children throughout the daily routine to support and converse in their play. Interactions between practitioners and children are playful and practitioners use topic specific language to promote areas of interest.
- The setting provides an inclusive environment and it works with parents to optimise the children’s learning experiences. This supports all children to develop their social skills and engage in all activities throughout the morning. The manager has completed the Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) in the Early Years programme.
- The indoor environment offers a free-flow system between two rooms for the children to discover and explore. There are interest areas including a home corner and construction area in one room, with table top activities organised in the second room. The division of areas currently limits the children’s play experiences. There are various play materials throughout the environment for children to manipulate.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the practitioners develop short-term plans which focus on the emergent interests of the children. It is important to review these plans and support them with evidence of work and self-reflection inputs from the children also. The children’s future plans need to be incorporated into the setting’s planning processes.
- The practitioners are advised to observe the children with a specific focus on identifying their strengths, dispositions, interests and learning needs.
- The practitioners are advised to review the current layout of the two rooms to ensure defined areas are created with common areas of interest located beside each other. During this review, the practitioners can capture the child’s voice to find out what they use in each of the areas. More real-life equipment is required.

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 are safe and secure within their environment. They benefit from the practitioners being available and interested in their play.
- The children have access to an attractive book area where they freely choose, access and read a variety of books independently throughout the day. Songs and rhymes are planned for within the daily routine and children enjoy singing songs where they mention themselves and their friends.
- The practitioners focus on asking testing questions and reinforce the theme of the week while asking questions and commenting on activities. On the day of the inspection, the practitioners
focused on asking children to name various fruit and vegetables as the theme of the week was “Healthy Eating”. These types of questions are limited in scope.

- The children have access to sensory exploration and messy play. On the day of the inspection, children engaged with playdough, and sensory boxes created around their interest in farming and animals. These opportunities support children’s hands-on learning experiences.
- Throughout the inspection, children were observed to play with their friends and were confident to play alone or to join in group activities. There were some occasions where large group learning also took place.
- Children can independently choose the areas they want to explore. This encourages them to take ownership of their learning. They gain a sense of accomplishment as they interact with practitioners and children playing mammy and daddy, hairdressers and role play in a café environment.
- The practitioners have reduced the use of templates and are planning on eliminating these forms of activity completely in the coming months. There are examples of process and mark-making art which take place during planned group activities. There is an unused easel in the room located beside a high shelf with art materials displayed on it.
- The practitioners are currently developing their outdoor environment focusing on more risky play and gross motor development. Children have daily access to the outdoor area.

**Actions advised**

- Practitioners are advised to extend the use of open-ended questions and commenting and to scaffold the children’s learning to a greater extent. This will extend the children’s speaking skills and vocabulary and will deepen their learning and knowledge.
- The children would benefit from access to a large and attractive art and creative area where they can freely explore mark-making. In developing this area, practitioners could use the easel which is currently in the room, and could provide a range of art materials at a lower level for the children to freely access.

### AREA 4

**QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- The owner/manager and practitioner have a very good working relationship, very good teamwork skills and have delegated roles and responsibilities within the setting. It was evident on the day of the inspection that they have worked hard to create a professional ethos since opening last year.
- The manager is a good leader and role model and she shares a clear vision for the setting with the practitioner. They work together to implement ideas. Since opening the setting they have implemented a play-based curriculum and are currently focusing on developing and reviewing the outdoor area. They are involved in the Heathy Ireland Natural Outdoor Play Project in conjunction with the county childcare committee. The practitioners are aware of the Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide.
- The practitioners complete continued professional development as relevant to the setting and its needs. The manager has completed LINC, and is completing her Degree in Childcare. They partake in various workshops with the county childcare committee, as well as compulsory training as required.
- Along with daily discussions, there are formal monthly staff meetings held where the curriculum is planned and any issues of concern are discussed.
- The setting communicates with parents using social media links, a parent handbook, daily informal meetings and an organised annual open day. The parents come to various events in the setting and local community.
- There is a ‘bring home bear’ in the setting which visits all families in the setting. The children create pictures, photographs and stories to share with their friends about the bear’s visit to their family home. This promotes communication between the setting and families, as well as supporting identify and belonging.
- The children’s transition to primary school is supported. There are photographs of the school on display, there are visits from the school teacher, and the practitioners and the children visit the school. There is potential to further support the children’s transitions.
**Actions advised**

- It is advised that the practitioners use the *Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide* as a resource for supporting self-reflection. The practice guide will also enable the practitioners to document evidence of changes and development in the setting.
- Practitioners are advised to develop a transition policy setting out the strategies and procedures will support the children’s transition to primary school. The *Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide* pillar of practice ‘Supporting Transitions’ will be useful in this regard.

**CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE**

The capacity of the setting to continue to implement the actions advised above is very good. The setting owner and ECCE practitioner communicate well with each other and they work together in the interests of the children. This will support the implementation of the actions advised.
## 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>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of management and leadership for learning</td>
<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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