

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	Mighty Oaks Pre-School
Setting Address	St Colmcille's GFC Hollybank Swords County Dublin
DCYA number	18FL0625

Date of Inspection: 21-11-2019



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agus Scileanna
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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

Date of inspection	21-11-2019
Inspection activities undertaken	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interaction with children• Review of relevant documents• Feedback to setting co-owners and practitioner
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with setting co-owners and practitioner• Observation of interactions during a number of sessions	

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Mighty Oaks Pre-School is a private, early years setting located in Swords, Co Dublin. It offers a morning and an afternoon pre-school session for children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, there were twenty-five children and two practitioners, one of whom is a co-owner, present. 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 good.
- The practitioners have created a pleasant and caring atmosphere. The children and their parents are warmly welcomed as they arrive in the setting.
- The daily routine consists of predominantly whole-group adult-initiated experiences, including circle time, snack time and table-top activities. Children have some opportunities to make decisions in their learning.
- The practitioners use verbal reminders and props to inform children of impending changes in activities. During the inspection, the transitions to snack time were overly long and a small number of children became disengaged.
- Snack time is used effectively to promote social interactions and to foster healthy eating habits. During this time, the children and practitioners engaged in discussions about the importance of eating healthy foods.
- On the day of the inspection, on many occasions, the practitioners were positive and encouraging of children for their efforts in activities. There were a small number of occasions when the guidance offered to children to support their appropriate behaviour was instructional.
- Special occasions are organised during the pre-school year that bring children, parents and the practitioners together. These include the Christmas party and the graduation ceremony.
- The practitioners successfully foster the children's sense of identity and belonging. There are a number of displays, including the family wall; a few children used the photographs to discuss their families.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to review the organisation of the daily routine to ensure a greater balance between adult-initiated and child-initiated learning activities. This will help to further promote children's independent decision making in their learning.
- The practitioners are advised to develop further strategies to promote children's engagement during transitions. As part of this process, the use of a broader range of visual and auditory strategies, including action songs and the visual schedule, is advised
- The practitioners are advised to more regularly use positive strategies that support and build on children's developing self-regulation skills and their understanding of appropriate behaviour.

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's play-based curriculum is informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*.
- Planning for both sessions is similar, it incorporates seasonal events, the practitioners' ideas and play experiences for children to enjoy. The children's emergent interests are not used to inform short-term plans.
- The practitioners use termly *Aistear* learning records to document children's participation in activities and to inform the next steps in their learning. Currently, the links between this information, short-term plans and the tracking of children's progress are not always obvious in the documentation
- During the inspection, there were a number of occasions when the practitioners' interactions supported and stimulated children in their learning. These included the practitioners' effective use of probing commentary and some open-ended questions.
- The indoor learning environment is well maintained and safe. It has clearly defined interest areas where children can engage in different types of play, such as socio dramatic play, language play, construction play and creative play. There is a small range of open-ended, real and natural materials to promote children's participation in sustained, child-initiated play.
- The practitioners clearly value the benefits of play in children's learning. During the session, children had opportunities to participate in play activities on their own, in pairs and in small groups. A longer period of child-initiated, free play will promote children's participation in more purposeful, enquiry-based learning experiences.
- The practitioners provide regular opportunities for children to engage in activities to develop their physical fitness and gross motor skills. Children have access to an outdoor area and a large indoor hall where they can be physical active.
- The children are learning in an inclusive learning environment. The practitioners engage with external agencies to support children's participation in the ECCE Programme. During the inspection, the practitioners successfully encouraged children's involvement in activities.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to further develop their short-term planning and assessment practices. This includes the development of planning that is underpinned by the children's emergent interests and in line with their individual learning needs. As part of this process, the practitioners are advised to use the findings from regular *Aistear* learning records, the children's art work, photographs and their comments to inform short-term plans. The templates and advice on 'Planning and Assessing' in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* will assist practitioners in this regard.
- The practitioners are advised to use the audit tool in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* to guide the enhancement of the learning environments. In so doing, the organisation of more appropriately laid out and resourced areas that contain a greater variety of real, sensorial, natural and open-ended materials is advised.
- The practitioners are advised to increase the time allocated to free play and to provide more opportunities for children to explore and experiment. Practitioners are encouraged to become play partners with the children and to extend their use of prompting and thought-provoking questions so as to enhance children's learning and their sense of enquiry and exploration.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is good.
- The children demonstrate interest and fun in their learning. During the inspection, they were eager and enthusiastic as they participated in activities, such as the water play and the pasta exploration activity.
- The children experience achievement and success in their learning. This is supported by the practitioners' acknowledgment of their ideas and through having their comments transcribed onto their creations. At the time of the inspection, regular opportunities for children to think about and share their learning with others were not a regular feature of the daily programme.
- The children have a few opportunities to participate in playful experiences that foster their developing language skills. Children were observed participating in story-telling activities, reciting a small number of rhymes and using instruments. In addition, the practitioners have established a lending library to foster children's life-long love of reading.
- The practitioners facilitate opportunities for children to develop an awareness of members of the community and places of interest. In the past, a local plumber, a musician and a lollipop lady have visited the children. Plans are in place to invite other members of the community to share their skills with the children.
- Many children are developing self-help and independent skills. They put their lunches away with little assistance and many of them engaged in tidy-up time. There were a number of occasions when the practitioners assisted the children in their self-help and care routines.
- Many children demonstrated their capacity to express themselves creatively. This included their enthusiastic mark-making creations of their favourite fruit. There is some use of templates for colouring in, pre-writing and art and craft activities.
- It is clearly evident that the children are developing positive social skills and are building relationships with others. There were a number of instances when they co-operated, took turns, sought each other out and positively acknowledged their friends who were absent on the day.
- A number of children are capable of making connections with their prior learning experiences. For example, two children recalled the correct way to wash their hands according to 'Rufus'; they had previously participated in a learning activity about washing hands.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to facilitate a greater variety of learning experiences to encourage children's emerging language development, including children for whom English is an additional language. The tip sheets 'Supporting children to be bilingual or multilingual' and 'Enhancing language' in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* will assist in this regard.
- The practitioners are advised to provide regular opportunities for children to collaborate, reflect on, and share their ideas and learning achievements with their peers and the practitioners. The facilitation of small-group activities where children review their learning journals, play and learning experiences will support this action.
- The practitioners are advised to provide additional opportunities for the promotion of children's independent and self-help skills.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- There is a strong sense of teamwork and partnership evident among the staff of Mighty Oaks Pre-School. Their commitment to the children and the families who attend the setting was positively noted.
- The practitioners regularly plan and reflect on practices in order to improve the quality of children's learning experiences. There are daily discussions, weekly planning meetings and monthly staff meetings. While the practitioner and co-owners document their reflections, they have yet to use the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* as part of their self-review practices.
- Continuing professional development is valued in the setting. The co-owners have participated in training on Diversity and Inclusion and one of them is currently participating in Leadership for Inclusion in Early Childhood (LINC) programme. They link with their local county childcare committee for support and advice.
- The co-owners and the practitioner demonstrate a heightened awareness of the importance of aligning their curriculum statement and their day-to-day practice.
- Information about the children's learning is effectively shared with parents. There are daily exchanges between the practitioners and parents. Parents are invited into the setting on a regular basis to review the learning books with their child. Plans are in place to develop a monthly newsletter to share information with parents.
- Prior to commencing children are invited to meet the individual practitioners. In addition, children can attend an open day where they meet other children and the practitioners. Parents receive a copy of setting's comprehensive parents' handbook. With parental permission, the practitioners share information with the primary school to promote continuity in the children's learning experiences. The practitioners have yet to establish formal links with the local primary schools.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to use the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* to strengthen their review and reflective practices. The self-evaluation tools in this guide will help to affirm areas of high quality practice and assist in prioritising areas in needs of further improvement.
- The practitioners are advised to review their setting's curriculum approach to ensure that it is consistent with their day-to-day practice. The use of the resources in the pillar 'Curriculum Foundations' in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* will assist in this regard.
- The practitioners are advised to develop formal strategies for the sharing information with primary schools to support continuity of experiences and progression in children's learning.

Summary of Overall Inspection

Area	Quality Level
Quality of context to support children's learning and development	Good
Quality of processes to support children's learning and development	Good
Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements	Good
Quality of management and leadership for learning	Good

Language used in Early-Years Education Inspection reports

Excellent	Provision that is excellent is exemplary in meeting the needs of children.
Very good	Provision that is very good is highly effective in meeting the needs of children.
Good	Provision that is good is effective in meeting the needs of children but with some aspects to be developed.
Fair	Provision that is fair requires practice to be improved to meet the needs of children.
Poor	Provision that is poor is inadequate and requires significant improvement to meet the needs of children.