An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna  
Department of Education and Skills  

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION  

REPORT  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>Maples@ Stradbrook</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>Stradbrook</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stradbally Road</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Portlaoise</td>
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<td></td>
<td>County Laois</td>
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<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>18LS0133</td>
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Date of Inspection: 11-02-2019
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 | 11-02-2019
---|---
Inspection activities undertaken | Interaction with children
- Pre-inspection meeting with ECCE practitioners
- Observation of interactions during the morning ECCE session
- Review of relevant documents
- Post-inspection feedback meeting ECCE practitioners

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Maples @ Stradbrook is in its first year of operation in Portlaoise, Co. Laois. The setting has other sister settings in the local area. There is one main pre-school room in the building 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, the ECCE room leader, practitioner and fourteen children were present. The setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised in this report, and the response submitted on behalf of the setting can 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 as parents and children are greeted with respect at arrival and departure times. Parents come into the setting and talk to practitioners about their children’s development and play.
- Practitioners have a good relationship with the children; they are responsive and respectful to their needs. The practitioners use a key-worker system to support the development of these relationships with parents and children.
- There is a planned routine in the setting which children enjoy participating in and are familiar with. The children interact with the display of the daily routine.
- Children have many opportunities during the daily routine to make independent decisions and choices. There is an effective, long free-play period during the morning routine where children choose their own activities and play partners.
- Practitioners use verbal prompts for transitions which take place during the daily routine. These prompts support children to prepare for tidy up and changes in activities. These preparation moments support the smooth transitions which take place during the day.
- Snack time is a social occasion and the practitioners sit with children during this period discussing healthy eating. Children are independent during snack time and have good self-help skills which are effectively supported.
- The children’s individual identity and belonging is nurtured and celebrated in a variety of ways. Photographs of the children are displayed throughout the environment, and children represent their families through art activities. The local community helpers and children’s own cultures are not extensively represented in the setting.

Action advised
- Building on the existing individual and group displays, the addition of resources and activities to support children’s community and cultural awareness is advised. This can include parental visits to the setting to discuss their culture and careers.
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 very 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.
- Curriculum plans are organised with a curriculum statement overview, medium-term plans focused on themes and festivals and two short-term planning sheets. Planning is linked to learning goals and aims. The practitioners verbally plan for some emergent interests.
- The practitioners complete observations on a monthly basis which they share with parents. The observations document the learning activity, link to *Aistear* and document the next steps in the children’s learning.
- Play is the main medium for learning with extensive time is given to children to allow them to pursue their interests both indoors and outdoors. The children have access to various types of play and can work in various social groups.
- The practitioners are good play partners and support children to develop and extend their play experiences. They ask a wide range of open-ended questions to prompt the children to deepen their analytical and problem-solving skills.
- The indoor environment is laid out with defined interest areas which support children to engage in various forms of play. The materials available to the children are predominantly plastic. A review of the equipment and resources available in the home corner and construction areas is merited.
- The setting provides an inclusive environment with a strong focus on supporting children with additional needs and cultural diversity. There is a written policy to support this practice. All children are encouraged to mix socially and have the opportunity to engage in all activities throughout the morning.

*Actions advised*
- It is advised that the practitioners develop one short-term planning sheet which will capture the emergent interests of the children. This planning sheet can provide for activities to support the children’s naturally occurring interests and developmental needs and annual festivals and events.
- The practitioners are advised to audit the construction area and home corner to include more natural, real-life equipment. The resources can be extended to include items which promote and extend the natural literacy and numeracy play in which the children engage.

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 happy and confident and come to the setting eager to learn.
- The children demonstrate intrinsic motivation as they complete tasks and activities during free-choice play. On the day of the inspection one child chose to complete jigsaws; when he completed the first one he smiled and said “I did it” then moved onto the next jigsaw with motivation and enthusiasm.
- The setting has an outdoor environment directly off the main pre-school room. There is a good range of wheeled items, planting, ball games and role play which promote children’s gross motor skills and imaginative play outdoors.
- On the day of the inspection the practitioner read a book which the children were familiar with. The children repeated the words and acted out the various scenes. This supported them to recall their previous learning. Practitioners could create more opportunities for children to self-reflect.
- Throughout the daily routine, songs and rhymes are used in a natural manner to support the children to learn and enjoy activities. During circle time the children participate in actions songs which they choose.
- The children have access to sensory exploration and messy play. There is opportunity for children to explore playdough, sand and various natural materials.
• The practitioners use templates and workbooks for the children's large group art activities. There are some examples of process, mark-making art during free-choice play; the children would benefit from a reduction in the use of templates.
• The practitioners promote children to understand and express their emotions and feelings. The children show affection to each other as they ask each other for a hug, handshake, high-five or fist bump as part of their toilet time routine. Children enjoy being kind to their friends and this promotes the caring atmosphere in the setting.

*Actions advised*
• It is advised that practitioners support the children to review and self-reflect on their own learning. This process could be documented and extended by sharing portfolios with parents and seeking parents’ feedback.
• The children would benefit from more access to process and open-ended creative art experiences. To achieve this practitioners need to reduce the use of templates as a basis for group activities.

**AREA 4**

**QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

• The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
• There is a professional working ethos evident in the setting.
• The practitioners are a new team and have been working together since the setting opened in September 2017. They have developed a strong team in this short time and they share roles and responsibilities seamlessly during the daily routine.
• The practitioners are still working on developing and refining aspects of the environment and curriculum. Currently they are focusing on developing and reviewing the home corner. They are aware of the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide*, however they do not use it to support developmental work.
• The ECCE practitioners participate in continued professional development relevant to their work and the needs of the children in their care. The room leader recently completed a Degree in Childcare and both practitioners attend local county childcare workshops and compulsory training as required.
• There are weekly staff meetings held where the curriculum is planned and any issues of concern are discussed. The owner updates practitioners on regulations and inspection processes at these meetings.
• The owner conducts review and support meetings with staff throughout the year.
• There is an extensive range of communication channels being developed with parents including a text group, a parent handbook, daily informal meetings and social media sites. The practitioners held an open morning and a Christmas concert this year and plan to establish these events as traditions in the setting.
• The practitioners have a good settle-in policy which supports parents and children to gradually settle into the setting in a natural and seamless manner.
• During the inspection, the practitioners discussed some plans for the transitions to school including promoting independence and a visit from a primary school teacher. They could explore this further with a view to developing an informative transitions policy.

*Actions advised*
• It is advised that the practitioners use the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* as a resource for supporting self-reflection. The practice guide will document evidence of changes and development in the setting also.
• Practitioners are advised to develop strategies and procedures to support children’s smooth transition to primary school. The *Aistear, Síolta 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 practitioners work well together and communicate well with each other. They are keen to develop a high-quality setting offering positive experiences to all families.
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>
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<td>Very 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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APPENDIX

SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT
SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection report

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

Activities are based around children’s interests- for example we noted a child’s interest in fire fighters; therefore, we were able to expand this further by discussing the resources in the community area.

As advised, we are using one planning sheet and the children’s interests now have a big part to play in our planning.

Our home corner has been expanded, and includes more dress up materials.

We have also introduced a new kitchen area with new materials for the children to use.

The children now bring their learning portfolios home to show their parents at the weekends.

We don’t use templates for our work anymore.

The Aistear and Siolta practice guide is now the basis of our practice for planning and reflection on learning in the setting.