EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>Realtin</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>Scoil Chartaigh Naofa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rahan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>County Offaly</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>18OY0118</td>
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Date of Inspection: 07-02-2019
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: 07-02-2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inspection activities undertaken</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meeting with setting owner/practitioner</td>
<td>Observation of interactions during session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting with practitioner</td>
<td>Interaction with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Review of relevant documents</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Feedback to setting owner/practitioner and a practitioner</td>
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**CONTEXT OF SETTING**

Realtin is a privately owned sessional setting. It is located on the grounds of a primary school. It provides a morning session of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, sixteen children were present with two practitioners, one of whom is the owner. The owner/practitioner and the practitioner attended the post-inspection feedback meeting. 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.
- There is a caring, warm and relaxed feeling in the setting; the children and parents are personally greeted upon arrival which creates a welcoming atmosphere. This relationship building is effectively supported through the key-person approach in operation.
- A well-balanced, child-centred daily schedule is in place, which the children are very familiar with.
- It is evident that the children are viewed as active agents in their own learning. They are afforded ample opportunities throughout the session to make decisions which are affirmed and encouraged by the practitioners.
- A rolling snack time is provided. The children understand the rules surrounding this social occasion and independently manage this routine. This activity affords the children the choice of when they eat while also providing opportunity for them to develop their problem-solving skills and independence. The snack time occasions are very social with children reminding one another of the rules of reserving their seats and the need to wash their hands and tidy the table when finished.
- The practitioners often provide guidance and encouragement towards positive behaviour through positive affirmation and guidance, such as ‘walking feet’. They foster respectful child-to-child relationships. The children independently use the sand-timer when negotiating with their peers.
- Transitions between activities over the course of the session are minimal and seamless. Effective and consistent use of the timer, bell and songs support children at these times.
- Recognition for the uniqueness of the child is promoted through various displays such as the family tree, classroom helpers, and the birthday chart. The name labels on each child’s storage cubby and the helper roles support the children in feeling part of the pre-school group. The setting has yet to explore cultural diversity.
- The setting makes some efforts to engage the community and families in its work. For example, the parents are invited into the setting to share their roles and family backgrounds, and some community helpers have visited the children, such as the fire brigade and guards.

**Actions advised**

- Building on the current supportive practices used to inform children about the pre-school the practitioners are advised that photographs of the practitioners and their allocated key children be displayed. This will ensure clarity for the children and their families around the key-person system in operation.
- It is advised that the practitioners plan and provide for resources, activities and interactions that will support the children to gain a deeper sense of identity and belonging as an individual and within the group, to explore cultural diversity and to make visible the links with the local community.
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 approach to planning is balanced in that it incorporates practitioners’ ideas while at the same time being responsive and emergent in light of the children’s evolving interests, needs and dispositions.
- The setting has developed a play-based approach to its curriculum which is aligned to the principles of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. The practitioners document short-term, medium-term and long-term goals. There is evidence that the practitioners are developing their understanding of an emergent curriculum, as identified in some of the documented short-term plans. Currently the majority of the plans are thematic and based on practitioners’ ideas.
- The individual learning journals capture the learning experiences and activities of the child and include annotations of the child’s voice. Through this strategy, the practitioners are beginning to capture a rich picture of the child as a learner. The individual learning journals contain *Aistear* learning record observations, photographs of various learning experiences and some of the children’s creative representations. There are some identified next steps in children’s learning documented. These could be used to inform the short-term plan to provide an emergent and responsive curriculum.
- The practitioners view the children as competent and capable learners. During the inspection, they frequently engaged as the children’s play partner, and they supported and scaffolded children’s thinking and reasoning. On some occasions the practitioners asked open-ended questions that challenged the children’s thinking and supported them to make predictions and comparisons. The practitioners skillfully moderated their interactions to suit the individual child, using alternative strategies such as modelling, replicating and re-stating children’s actions to support these interactions.
- The practitioners very effectively support the development of the children’s language, literacy and numeracy skills, through conversations, storytelling, music and movement activities, songs and rhymes; and through the use of books.
- The indoor environment is bright, inviting and presented in a very attractive manner. There are defined interest areas with all of the materials accessible to the children. These areas provide many opportunities for creative expression and promote various types of play such as socio-dramatic play, construction, mark-making, and play with manipulatives. Materials which promote multi-sensory experiences such as sand, playdough, and painting are available for the children.
- The outdoor area is used on a daily basis and provides some opportunities for the children to develop their gross motor physical skills.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to strengthen their emergent curriculum by optimising the use of their records of the developmental needs and interests of the individual child and the identified next steps in their learning to consistently and directly inform their planning processes. This will enable the curriculum to be customised in a way that is responsive to each individual child. Additional guidance is available in the ‘Planning and Assessing’ pillar in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide*.
- The practitioners are advised to audit the outdoor environment with a view to enhancing the opportunities for open-ended and explorative learning in the outdoor area and to provide children with the opportunity to engage with the natural environment. The ‘Learning environment’ pillar in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* is a useful resource in relation to this.
AREA 3
QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is very good.
- Children display eagerness and enjoyment on arrival and throughout the day. They have autonomy and agency, they make many decisions about their activities, the materials, their play partners and where they will play.
- The children are confident in expressing their thoughts and opinions. On review of the children's learning journals and the environment it is very evident that the children's opinions and thoughts are sought, valued and respected by the practitioners.
- The children are developing the ability to play co-operatively and are establishing friendships. This was apparent during the inspection, when they acknowledged friendships with their peers and also in their ability to take turns and problem-solve when minor conflict occurred.
- The children are developing a positive understanding of their own identity as competent learners. They are gaining an awareness of their changing abilities, for example during the inspection, many children reviewed their learning journals and discussed the changes that they recognised, such as ‘being older now’, ‘being taller’ and ‘having bigger handprints now’.
- The children demonstrate motivation, perseverance and initiative in their learning activities. This was observed as they solved problems about how to construct or deconstruct items, made challenging puzzles, and used a scissors.
- The children enjoy sharing similar experiences, interests, ideas and opinions with the practitioners and their peers. They engage in discussions about their creations and their free mark-making.
- On the day of the inspection the children engaged in some adult-led group activities that were based on the current well-being theme, such as the tooth cleaning exercise or the music and movement activity. The addition of small group activities would enhance the play provision.

Action advised
- To ensure a balanced approach to the play provision the practitioners are advised to provide opportunities for adult-initiated small group activities that are reflective of the child’s interests, needs and dispositions as identified in the observations.

AREA 4
QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- The team are newly formed since September 2018 and are committed to providing a high quality learning experience for children.
- The team have formal discussions on a monthly basis. These meetings are used to develop their curriculum, review individual child development needs and to reflect on their practice. There is some evidence of review documented in a journal.
- There is a professional ethos in the setting. There is clarity around the different roles and responsibilities. Effective teamwork and shared leadership are evident.
- The practitioners display great commitment in their roles. They clearly articulate their understanding of the importance of play in the provision of a quality learning experience for children.
- An emphasis is placed on developing strong connections with the families of each child. Parents are encouraged to engage with activities and to attend events, and they are provided with an information session prior to their child starting. The parent and child are encouraged to visit the setting prior to starting, and a parents’ handbook is provided during induction.
- The children’s progress is shared with parents informally each day at arrival and collection times and through a formal progress meeting. The learning journals are available in the room and can be taken home. Some journals contain commentary from parents on the child’s learning experiences. A termly newsletter and messaging service informs parents about recent learning activities and future events.
The children’s transition from pre-school to primary school is supported through the development of the relationship with the local school. The junior infant teacher from that school visits the setting to chat with the children. The children engage in some activities to familiarise themselves with the school. They for a walk up to the primary school, they attend the school’s sports day, visit the classrooms, develop a photographic display of the school and send personalised postcards to the junior infant teacher.

**Actions advised**

- The practitioners are advised to enhance their self-evaluative and reflective practices through engagement with the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide*. This will enrich the current review practices and will support the practitioners as they identify which improvements are required and set out plans for improvement.
- The practitioners are advised to formally share the children’s learning journals with parents at intervals throughout the year, and to consistently elicit parents’ comments and opinions on the materials shared.

**CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE**

The capacity of the setting to continue to implement the actions advised above is very 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>
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<td>Quality of processes to support children’s learning and development</td>
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</tr>
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### Language used in Early-Years Education-focused Inspection reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Level</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*
Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection report

Area 2

We are currently reviewing our documentation process. We will revise the layout of our large floor book which we use daily to document the learning that takes place. The revised layout will show clear visible links to what the children are interested in and then how we extend this interest through changes to the room, activities, story time, songs etc.

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 2

The owner has previously spoken to the principal of the National School about enhancing the outdoor area to include more explorative play opportunities. It was agreed we could add a mud kitchen and a climbing frame. Since the inspection, the county childcare committee have offered to help us with the audit of the outdoor area.