EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>Graceland Crèche and Montessori</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>165 The Hermitage</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Portlaoise</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>County Laois</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>09LS0034</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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inspection activities undertaken</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meeting with setting manager</td>
<td>Review of relevant documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation of interactions during the two morning ECCE sessions</td>
<td>Post-inspection feedback meeting with setting manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction with children</td>
<td>Post-inspection feedback with two ECCE practitioners in the room</td>
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CONTEXT OF SETTING

Graceland Crèche and Montessori has been in operation in Portlaoise, Co. Laois for thirteen years. There are two pre-school rooms 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 owner was on annual leave and the manager facilitated the inspection process. There were three practitioners and eight children present in the ECCE rooms; some ECCE children were on mid-term break. The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the report; a response was not received from the setting.

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.
- A welcoming atmosphere is evident at arrival and departure times. Parents come into the setting; they settle-in their children and converse with practitioners.
- Practitioners have a good relationship with parents and children; there is open conversation and family stories are shared. A key-worker system is in place and the children are allocated to different pre-school rooms according to their age and stage of development. The practitioners are kind and caring to the children.
- There is a planned routine in the setting which children participate in. There is a short, free-choice play period during the daily routine. Transitions between activities are instant and accordingly, play periods are concluded abruptly; therefore it takes time for the children to process the change.
- The practitioners sit and eat with the children during snack time. They discuss healthy eating and children take care of their own lunch bags. Their self-help skills could be further developed.
- There are some displays and resources which support individual identity within the ECCE rooms. The rooms display family walls, children’s handprints and some art is on display for parents to view. Visual resources to support the development of children’s awareness of cultural diversity and of their local community are not yet included in the environment. On the day of inspection the children celebrated one child’s birthday; there was a party, a birthday cake and the children sang songs.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the practitioners use displays and props to support the children’s awareness of transitions and the daily routine. This will support preparation for transitions and offer more prolonged play periods which the children can conclude in a more gradual and phased manner.
- The practitioners need to afford the children more opportunities to assume further roles and responsibilities within the daily routine. They could create a jobs board/ helper display to support this practice.
- It is advised that practitioner emphasise the identity of the local community and culture within the pre-school setting. To promote identify and belonging further, it would be beneficial to enable the children to reflect on the surrounding community and extended communities with which they associate.
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 fair.
- The curriculum in place is based on the Montessori Method, with a blend of play-based learning also. The curriculum is informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*.
- There is a curriculum policy in place and long-term plans are focused around themes. The themes are broken down on a monthly and weekly basis into activities and template work. Planning is linked to *Aistear*. The setting currently does not implement an emergent curriculum.
- The practitioners record the holistic development of the children on a monthly basis. These notes do not evidence future plans or links to *Aistear*. There is scope to develop the observation process further.
- The children enjoy learning through play. There is a short free-play period where they have some choice regarding the materials they play with. They enjoy some free-choice play in the outdoor area also. On the day of the inspection some children enjoyed making smoothies and drinks for their practitioners and friends to taste.
- The indoor environment is organised into well-defined interest areas, it offers a range of resources, and incorporates Montessori materials. The children would benefit from further use of resources to naturally and playfully support literacy and numeracy.
- Interactions between practitioners and children are predominately adult-led. The practitioners lead the children through the daily routine; they focus on formal learning opportunities.
- The setting has an inclusion policy. The manager is aware of the supports available to children with additional needs. To date, no practitioner has completed the Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) in the Early Years course.

**Actions advised**
- It is advised that the practitioners develop their short-term planning template so that it supports them to gather the emergent interests of the children on a weekly basis. A journal can be developed as a record of the setting’s emergent curriculum.
- Practitioners are advised to use the *Aistear Learner Record* as their method of observation. This will support the setting to document observations about the children’s learning, to use photographs as a source of information about the child, and to share information with parents. The practitioners should ensure they date the observations and link them to *Aistear* also.
- Additional resources to support language, literacy and numeracy need to be made available to the children. Items could include real-life kitchen materials, constructions resources and recycled materials.
- It is advised that the manager identify a member of staff to participate in the Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) in the Early Years course. This will support the setting to develop their inclusive practice.

AREA 3
QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is fair.
- The children are safe and secure within their environment.
- The practitioners focus on asking testing questions and closed questions during all activities. This form of interaction limits the extent to which the children’s speaking skills and vocabulary can be developed.
- There is access to sensory play in some of the ECCE rooms. The practitioners vary the materials in the sensory boxes to include sand, pasta and other dry materials. On the day of the inspection the children enjoyed playing in the home corner and using their imagination. Another group of children enjoyed completing jigsaws.
- The children enjoy participating in outdoor play. There is a range of equipment available to the children including balls, a climbing frame and a mud kitchen. On the day of the inspection some of
the children played football outside, while other children played alone and in pairs with the other materials.

- Many template-based activities are used to support learning. These types of activities are limited in scope and are not appropriately aligned with the children’s interests and learning needs.
- The practitioners display some art work on the walls in the room and in the corridors. The children have individual folders in which they store their artwork. The practitioners could revise this method of documenting the children’s experiences and extend it to ensure that the children can reflect to a greater extent on their learning and can develop a positive understanding of their own identity as competent learners.

**Actions advised**

- Practitioners are advised to use 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 a reduction in the use of templates as a basis for activities. Practitioners are advised to focus on natural free-play learning and to follow the children’s lead during these interactions and experiences.
- The children would benefit from having individual journals which will record their art and photographs of learning. They need to have opportunities to view these journals freely. It would be beneficial also to enable them to add their individual comments and pictures; and to share the journals with parents throughout the year for feedback.

**AREA 4**

**QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- There is a professional working ethos evident in the setting. The practitioners are welcoming to other professional visitors.
- There is a new team in place including new ECCE practitioners and a new setting manager. An experienced member of staff offers mentoring to new practitioners and was in place in one ECCE room on the day of the inspection. The ECCE practitioners report that they enjoy sharing ideas and working together.
- There are occasional staff meetings held where the curriculum is planned and any issues of concern are discussed. The manager needs to hold regular staff meetings and key decisions made need to be recorded.
- Recently the setting participated in Better Start, the National Quality Development Service. During this time they reviewed and developed the environmental layout and resources using the Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide. The setting will benefit from further support from Better Start.
- The setting receives sector updates from various childcare agencies.
- There is a range of communication channels established with parents including a parent handbook and daily informal meetings. There is a good settle-in policy where parents are shown around, the manager answers questions and the children benefit from a gradual settle-in period.
- The setting does not currently have a transition to primary school policy or procedure. There is potential to create and implement this.

**Actions advised**

- The practitioners and manager are advised to record the minutes of their meetings documenting key decisions and changes which take place. This will provide a record of the quality work practitioners engage in throughout the year.
- It is advised that the setting re-engage with Better Start, to support quality improvements. The practitioners would also benefit from accessing the National Síolta Aistear Initiative, and continuous professional development opportunities relating to Aistear and play. This will support the setting to make improvements in a sustained and continuous manner.
- It is advised that the manager and practitioners engage with the Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide. The practitioners are advised to begin using the pillar of practice ‘Supporting Transitions’ to develop strategies and procedures to support children’s smooth transition to primary school.
## 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>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of processes to support children’s learning and development</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
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<td>Good</td>
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</tbody>
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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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