

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Whole-Service Evaluation
TRIAL
REPORT

Service Name	Cairdeas Community Childcare
Service Address	Killucan Road, Kinnegad. County Westmeath
DCYA number	09WH0031

Date of Evaluation: 27 November 2017



WHAT IS A WHOLE-SERVICE EVALUATION?

The Whole-Service Evaluation (WSE) model is used to provide whole-service evaluative information, advice and support in relation to education provision in a pre-school service 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 service.

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 service's provision in each area.

Whole-Service Evaluation

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Date of inspection	24 & 27 November 2017
Inspection activities undertaken: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with service manager and two supervisors who job share• Meeting with chairperson of the management body• Observation of activities and interactions during four pre-school sessions, indoors and outdoors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interaction with children• Review of relevant documents• Post-inspection feedback with the service manager, supervisor, lead practitioners in the four pre-school rooms and the chairperson of the management body.

CONTEXT OF SERVICE

Cairdeas Community Childcare also known as Kinnegad Community Childcare Ltd was established in 2005 as a community-based facility providing care and education for children with a range of full and part time services in a purpose- built centre. At the time of inspection, there were four pre-school rooms in operation as part of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. The service also provides full day care services and pre- and after-school programmes for children from the local community. The pilot inspection involved visiting each of the four pre-school rooms over a two-day period. Each room had one lead practitioner and one assistant practitioner who provide care and education for a total of fifty-six pre-school children. The service was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised in this report, the service 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 excellent.
- A warm, calm and caring atmosphere pervades in this service. The practitioners demonstrate commendable positivity and reassurance for the children. They consistently provide affirming and constructive feedback to children that recognises the children's specific strategies and achievements. Children are supported to recognise success in their own efforts and achievements and to be proactive in recognising the efforts and achievements of other children.
- Relationships between the children and the practitioners are responsive, kind and supportive. The practitioners know each child in their group well and respect their individuality and own unique personalities. A highly effective key person system is in place where each practitioner takes particular responsibility to build relationships with their group of key children and their families.
- Relationships and interactions between the children are very well supported by the practitioners. Consistent implementation of appropriate behavioural management strategies by the practitioners is evident and visual cues are provided to support the children featuring Tucker Turtle. Practitioners elicit the rationale from children about why certain behaviours are not desirable such as, why they do not run inside. It was noted during the inspection that all practitioners strive to support the children to be independent in resolving the incidental issues that arise for them during the session.
- There are daily routines in place in each pre-school room which allow sufficient time for children to pursue their interests and also to engage in a suitable variety of enriching activities in a range of indoor and outdoor contexts. The children are enabled to become independent and develop self-care skills such as, looking after their belongings and doing many things for themselves at snack time. They are supported in a very effective manner in this service to make decisions and choices in accordance with their varying needs. Transitions between activities are fluid and flexible and optimise the involvement of the children.

- Snack time is a relaxed time where the children's social skills and attitudes towards healthy eating are actively promoted.
- The children's developing sense of identity and belonging is very well nurtured through the practitioners' individualised conversations with children about themselves, their families and their local community. The children's various needs, dispositions and family backgrounds are known and respected. There are photographs of the children and their families displayed in the pre-school rooms. It is commendable that the service promotes projects and initiatives such as the 'Nana' project to promote the involvement of children's parents and grandparents. Many local visitors make a valuable contribution to the pre-school programme and the strong sense of community that is evident in this service.
- Visual displays and labelling is used effectively to celebrate the diversity of language and cultural backgrounds among the cohort of children who attend this service. The management and staff have planned to conduct an audit of the books and resources available in the service that can be used to enhance the children's understanding and appreciation of cultural and social diversity.

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 excellent.
- *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* is very well embedded in the planning practices and also in curricular implementation across the pre-school settings in this service. Planning and practice is child-centred and it is evident that children's emerging interests and varying strengths and needs are at the heart of provision in this service. The content, pace and style of learning activities are carefully and sensitively adapted to respond to children's needs and to progress their learning in an inclusive environment.
- The practitioners demonstrate very good pedagogical knowledge, understanding and skill as they monitor the children's engagement in learning activities along with their progression and development. They identify the critical aspects of learning for children and use a suitable variety of strategies to capture and record the child's voice. The staff in this service have recently engaged with the *Better Start Quality Development Service* and have been successful in optimising their assessment practices to make very effective use of children's learning stories to link planning and assessment and provision and learning.
- The practitioners ensure that their understanding of the child as an active learner with voice and agency permeates their provision of a broad and balanced pre-school programme that fosters positive learning dispositions, knowledge, understanding and skills among children.
- The quality of the practitioners' interactions with children is excellent. They use an appropriate blend of open-ended questions and constructive feedback to engage children in thought-provoking conversations and enable them to make meaning. The practitioners are successful in stimulating children's interest in exploring and one of the many interesting examples of this observed during the inspection, included the innovative use of a circle of ice which was discovered during outdoor play which lead to discussion and further exploration about scientific concepts of freezing and melting. The practitioners are attentive to the development of children's vocabulary and their expressive language skills during their playful interactions with them.
- Play is the central medium of learning in this service. Children are provided with provided with a wide range of equipment and resources to support a variety of play types in both indoor and outdoor environments. Children are encouraged to manipulate and move the resources to extend their play. They were observed creating new dens and learning contexts in both the indoor and outdoor environments. The resources available in each of the pre-school rooms facilitate rich multi-sensory play for children with ample provision for sand, water, construction, playdough and interactions with natural authentic materials.
- The service has extensive outdoor facilities which they have developed very purposefully to host a number of designated outdoor learning spaces which are large, easily accessible and used daily. These provide children with opportunities for climbing and running, for using trikes and wheeled toys, water and sand play along with opportunities for mark-making, reading and socio-dramatic play. The outdoors environment also has a 'buddy bench' reflecting the service's emphasis on supporting children to be proactive in making friendships and caring for each other. The practitioners plan to extend their approaches for creating indoor print and number rich

environments to the outdoor learning environments in order to further strengthen the children's awareness of numbers, patterns, letter and words in outdoor contexts.

- The practitioners use many effective strategies to support the development of the children's early language, literacy and numeracy as they interact with them during play. Regular modelling of mathematical language during role play in the shop and in the kitchen was very evident during the inspection. Children were encouraged to use keypads, calculators, measuring tapes and other resources to measure and count. The practitioners also plan small-group and large-group learning activities that are aligned to the children's developmental levels and learning priorities. Very effective use of song and rhymes was noted in all pre-school rooms. The service have recently identified the promotion of story-telling as an improvement priority and it was evident during the inspection that the practitioners were striving to embed a number of key strategies to enhance children's listening to stories and also their retelling of stories and parts of stories which they particularly enjoyed.
- A member of staff in the service has participated in the Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years (LINC) Programme. The management and staff of this service are purposeful in how they are applying the learning from this programme to enhance the provision for children with additional needs in this service. The co-ordinator of provision for children with additional needs liaises with children, their parents and practitioners to ensure a planned and cohesive approach is adopted to meeting the child's needs.

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is excellent.
- The children are very well-settled in the service. They demonstrate very high levels of enjoyment and involvement in their play and learning activities. They experience suitable breadth and balance in their learning. Children experience and celebrate their individual successes and achievements on a regular basis during the pre-school sessions. They enjoy many collaborative learning experiences and a strong sense of positive well-being and belonging was evident during the inspection.
- The children display very secure relationships with the practitioners. Appropriate and sensitive physical comfort and reassurance is offered to children when they request it. Fun and laughter were heard frequently as they children pursued their activities.
- The children are secure and confident to explore their indoor and outdoor learning environments. They enjoy regular opportunity to learn outdoors and demonstrate very good gross motor movement as they run and climb. They also demonstrate well-developed social skills as they play collaboratively and invite other children to join them. They also show a keen interest in nature and in the changing of the seasons and caring for wildlife and the environment.
- The children have ample opportunities to make choices and decisions about their play and learning activities during the indoor and outdoor play and activity time. They make decisions about what materials to use, how to use them and who to play and work with. Many children were observed to display dispositions of perseverance and concentration during their play and also during their transitions and tidy-up routines. Many children demonstrate very effective problem-solving approaches and good coping skills.
- All children in the pre-school settings of this service were observed to be enjoying regular opportunities to engage in mark-making and are at varying stages of development from making large free marks across blank pages to making more precise and controlled discrete marks. The children enjoy songs and rhymes and recall stories and characters from stories with confidence and enthusiasm.
- Children were observed to frequently articulate their thoughts and to make connections in their learning during the inspection. Many of them could articulate possible scenarios in their play and a significant number of children could engage in sustained conversations about possible consequences in response to 'what if' questions.
- Children have regular opportunities to reflect on their learning in the immediate aftermath of the activities. They also have daily access to their learning stories and regularly reflect on previous learning experiences and achievements.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is excellent.
- The management body, consisting of volunteer members, together with the manager and two supervisors recognise and fulfil their roles to a very high standard. They engage in regular and rigorous cycles of self-reflection and improvement to sustained high standards in the quality of provision for children's learning and development and also to facilitate ongoing improvement. They have established suitable routines and systems to ensure the very effective organisation of this service and the fostering of strong culture of learning among staff. The service previously engaged in the *Síolta Quality Assurance Programme in 2012* and was successfully validated.
- The staff demonstrate very high levels of motivation towards their work and a very strong commitment to the service, the children and the families that they work with. Most staff members have worked with the service for long periods of time. It is evident that the staff has a clear and shared understanding about the procedures and their roles within their pre-school room and within the service as a learning organisation. An ethos of professionalism and teamwork is evident among staff.
- The management body has promoted ongoing professional staff development and this is reflected in the financial investment which it makes in supporting staff to secure higher levels of qualification, with a very significant number of staff engaged in courses leading to degree qualification. Staff regularly avail of other training opportunities such as the recent training on 'Diversity and Inclusion'. Regular whole-staff meetings and training take place to support ongoing reflection and the successful implementation of improvement initiatives. The service has been proactive in securing supports from various agencies with a role to play in the development of practices that support high quality provision for children's learning and development.
- The staff is provided with opportunities for appraisal in order to affirm aspects of good practice and as a means of supporting ongoing professional development and improvement.
- Policy reviews are regularly undertaken in the service. Parents, staff and management are invited to contribute to these reviews with consideration also now given to garnering the voice of the children about their learning experiences.
- The staff have successfully established a variety of channels whereby information can be shared with parents about the service and their children's learning. Opportunities are provided for parents to share information about their children prior to enrolment and also throughout their children's time in the service. Information about the children's individual and group learning activities experiences are shared with parents through daily notices on the main door and displays outside each pre-school sessions. These notices include information about curricular priorities and plans and regular newsletters also invite parents to be actively involved in their children's learning journeys. Regular meetings also occur between practitioners and parents to support the sharing of relevant information regarding children's well-being and development.
- The children's transitions within the service are supported by the regular sharing of information among staff and parents to ensure children benefit from the balance of secure relationships and carefully supported new experiences with new people. The organisation of the service and the physical indoor and outdoor layout allow children many opportunities to share time and learning experiences with siblings.
- The service has developed very strong links with the local primary school to ensure that children are suitably supported as they transition from the pre-school.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the service to identify improvement priorities and implement action plans that support ongoing improvements is excellent.

Summary of Overall Inspection

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

Language used in Early-Years Education-focused 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.