A Guide to Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)

Department of Education Inspectorate 2022
1. Introduction

1.1 Inspections and this guide

The Inspectorate of the Department of Education (the Department) works to improve the quality of learning for children and young people in Irish schools, centres for education and early education settings providing State funded early learning and care for children aged from birth until they enrol in primary school and other learning settings. The inspections are designed to evaluate key aspects of education provision and to promote improvement in the education setting under review. The Inspectorate of the Department is also responsible for the provision of advice to the education system, to the Minister and to policy makers. Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI) is carried out in accordance with section 13(3)(b) of the Education Act 1998 and supports evaluation of early learning pedagogy in a diverse range of early education settings. In line with a Memorandum of Understanding between the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DECDIY), the Minister for Education and the Inspectorate of the Department of Education, EYEI is carried out in early education settings, funded by DCEDIY to deliver services for children aged birth to six years including the universal free preschool in early childhood care and education (ECCE) programme.

First 5: A whole of Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families contains a specific commitment “to develop, enhance and implement standards and reform regulation and inspection systems” (page 11). As part of this set of actions, the Inspectorate of the Department undertakes inspections in a variety of settings which provide experiences relating to the early learning, well-being and care of babies, toddlers and young children aged from birth to six years. This EYEI inspection framework builds on previous EYEI frameworks (2016, 2018) across a number of key areas. Those areas are underpinned by four key messages:

- The child at the centre
- The child as an active learner
- Building strong connections to support children’s learning
- Laying the foundations for children’s learning

This guide outlines how the Inspectorate of the Department conducts early years education inspections and is effective from 2022. It replaces the previous Guide to Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI) (2018). It was developed in light of the DE Inspectorate’s experience of inspecting preschools in early education settings since April 2016 and following consultation with stakeholders and partners involved in the development and delivery of high quality early learning and care in Ireland. The EYEI birth to six model operates in line with the Code of Practice for the Inspectorate, available at www.gov.ie.

2. What are EYEIs designed to do?

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI) evaluates the nature, range and appropriateness of the early educational experiences of children in state-funded early education settings including early learning

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1 Department of Education and Skills (2015), Code of Practice for the Inspectorate. Dublin: DES
and care (ELC) settings. The EYEI model of inspection is based on a quality framework informed by the principles of Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework\(^2\), and Síolta: the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education\(^3\) as well as national and international research related to early learning and care, and inspection.

Among the principles underpinning the quality framework are the following:

- Early childhood is a significant and distinct time which must be nurtured, respected, valued and supported in its own right
- High quality early learning and care experiences in early childhood contribute significantly to life-long learning success
- Care and education are inextricably linked in the lives of children and require a holistic approach to the provision and practice of high quality early learning experiences
- Children’s wellbeing and holistic educational development should be supported in early childhood in accordance with their needs
- The role of the practitioner in early education settings is central\(^4\)
- Children should be active agents in their learning and development and enabled to develop and achieve their potential as competent, confident learners, through high-quality interactions with their environment and with early years practitioners
- Children’s strengths, needs, opinions, interests and wellbeing are integral to the early learning and care provided for them
- Play is central to the learning and development of children
- Each child has his/her own set of experiences and a unique life story. The child’s identity as an individual and as a member of a family and wider community is recognised
- The role of parents as children’s primary educators is recognised and supported

Early years education inspection takes cognisance of context factors related to the early education setting including size, philosophy, staffing, governance and socio-economic circumstances.

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In Ireland, a range of role titles is used to refer to the adult working directly with children in early education settings to support and promote their learning, well-being and development. These include pre-school leader, pre-school teacher, teacher, early years educator, early years professional and early years practitioner. For the purposes of this document the term early years practitioner is used.
EYEI is premised upon a universal design approach to the provision and practice of early education. This means that all children present in the early education setting should be accommodated to benefit from all activities, environments and pedagogy in a manner that is respectful and attuned to their individual interests, needs, strengths and age and stage of learning and development.

The EYEI is designed to:

- Highlight the importance of high-quality early education and care in nurturing the foundations for lifelong learning and in helping children develop to their full potential now and into the future
- Identify and affirm effective practice in support of children’s early learning, development and wellbeing
- Support the ongoing development of quality in early education settings through the provision of support and advice to practitioners about how children’s learning experiences and achievements can be enriched and enhanced
- Complement other national measures to support continuing improvement in early education provision and practice, for example, mentoring and training resources to support early education settings provided by Better Start and the Aistear/Síolta Practice Guide
- Support self-evaluation and review processes in early education settings
- Quality assure early education provision experienced by children in early education settings
- Provide information to the public, including parents, on the quality of early education in state funded early years provision through the publication of written inspection reports.

2.1 External inspection of early education provision and practice

External inspections facilitate improvement and change in early education settings. They provide an external perspective on the work of the setting to complement, challenge and validate internal self-evaluation processes. Inspection reports provide objective, evidence-based judgements about the quality of early education provision and affirm the aspects of practice that are working well. The outcomes of inspection also inform the judgements of staff about the strengths and priorities for improvement in the early learning pedagogy in the setting. The actions advised by inspectors in the written inspection reports provide important direction for the professional staff in the early education setting to assist with the ongoing development and implementation of plans for quality improvement.

All of the inspection models of the Inspectorate focus on the quality of pedagogy, the opportunities for learning and the education experiences and achievements of children and young people. Attention is paid to the broad range of learner experiences in the education setting understanding that care and education are inextricably linked and that wellbeing is fundamental to optimal learning. EYEIs may also focus on the quality of support for children, the quality of action planning for improvement and the quality of pedagogical leadership and management, including how the setting interacts with parents and families.

The EYEI is used to provide evaluative information, advice and support regarding the quality of early education with reference to the content of the following four areas of practice:

- The quality of the context to support children’s learning and development
- The quality of the processes to support children’s learning and development
- The quality of children’s experiences and achievements, and
- The quality of management and leadership for learning
These four areas of practice are further elaborated in the *Quality Framework for Early Years Education* as detailed on page 15 of this Guide.

The EYEI is a collaborative process involving the inspection team and staff in the education setting, including the early-years practitioner(s), leaders and management (e.g. owner/manager and/or members of the board of management). In the context of early education settings, the EYEI model also complements the monitoring and regulatory processes of other agencies for example, the Tusla Early Years Inspectorate. The evidence base of an EYEI in a particular setting may include, where available, relevant evaluative information on early learning and care provision in the setting gathered through other inspection activity. The EYEI model takes account of the progress a setting has made in respect of the actions advised in previous early years education inspection report. Where information is shared, the parameters governing such sharing are clearly outlined in Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with the agencies concerned.

Inspections support professional engagement between staff in early education settings and the inspector. Most of the inspector’s time during inspection is given to direct observation of pedagogy and children’s experiences of the programme of learning and care in the various learning contexts/learning environments provided by the setting. The purpose of the inspection is to assess the quality of provision, affirm the work of professional staff, engage with children and support quality improvement. The inspector’s feedback, informed by evaluation activities during inspection, should enhance professional reflection and self-evaluation and ultimately improve experiences and outcomes for all children in the setting.

Inspections aim to support the pedagogical leadership role of leaders and managers of the early education setting by providing the opportunity for professional dialogue between inspectors and professional staff on matters of particular interest to the continuing improvement in the quality of learner experiences in the setting.

Typically, EYEIs result in the publication of an inspection report. This report and the oral feedback provided at the conclusion of the inspection can support staff in early education settings to identify strengths in pedagogy and provision and facilitate professional reflection on aspects requiring further development.

The Inspectorate acknowledges that young children and their parents are key stakeholders in the early education setting’s community. To support this position, all Department inspection models make provision for representation of the voice and experience of learners in evaluation activities. Provision for parents to have an opportunity to provide their perspectives on the quality of provision for their children’s education is also facilitated by the DE Inspectorate through a range of inspection and non-inspection activities.

**Early Years Education Inspection models**

The Department Inspectorate currently has two distinct inspection models. These are the EYEI and Follow-through Inspection (FT). The Follow-through Inspection model enables an inspector to evaluate the extent to which settings have implemented the actions advised in previous early years education inspection reports.

The application of each inspection model takes into account the particular context of the education setting. Factors such as size, location, philosophy or curriculum, socio-economic factors affecting the population of learners and their community, children’s special educational needs and the support
they require, may impact on the provision and pedagogy of the setting. Inspectors recognise that
education settings work within a very specific context and take these factors into consideration
during evaluations.

2.2 Key principles that inform inspection

The Inspectorate of the Department is focused on ensuring that the learners in a wide range of
education settings receive the best possible education in the light of their potential and their learning
needs. The Inspectorate’s aim is to promote high standards in pedagogy and in the learning outcomes
and experiences of learners and strive to enable those learning organisations to improve the quality
of the education and care they provide.

The work of the Inspectorate of the Department is underpinned by four key principles:

- A focus on learners
- Development and improvement
- Respectful engagement, and
- Responsibility and accountability

The four key principles, described in detail in the Code of Practice for the Inspectorate (available on
the website of the Department of Education, www.gov.ie), provide the standards that inform and
guide all aspects of inspection work. These principles govern the full range of inspectors’ evaluation
and advisory work in all settings, including early education settings, schools, centres for education and
a range of other settings. Inspectors also take due account of data protection legislation in conducting
early years education inspection work.

The Inspectorate of the Department of Education is committed to carrying out inspection in ways that
provide real opportunities to affirm good practice and to provide practical advice to educators, leaders
and managers and boards of management, with the ultimate aim of improving learning experiences
and outcomes for all children.

This means that:

1. We are open and transparent about the way we collect and collate the evidence on which
our evaluative judgements are based:
   - We adhere to the content of our published guides as they relate to inspection activity
   - We apply evaluation criteria consistently, drawing on the Early Years Education Inspection
     Quality Framework (2022) (See page 15 and Appendix 1)

2. Our evaluative judgements are based on the collection of objective, dependable, high
quality data having taken the context of the education setting into consideration:
   - As part of our evidence-gathering, we engage in dialogue with children, practitioners,
     managers and leaders; and we meet with other relevant staff and boards of management
     where possible and appropriate
   - We use the evidence we gather to support our findings and our actions advised in a manner
     which is fair to all concerned
   - We rely on a range of evidence from a number of different sources
   - We conduct post-inspection meetings to clarify, inform and confirm findings
We provide opportunities for the staff in an early education setting to engage in professional dialogue with us during our inspection activity.

We provide opportunity for the early education setting to respond to the relevant main findings of the inspection through publication of a setting response where provided.

3. **We respect the right of individuals to privacy, as far as possible, and consistent with our duty to report on quality and standards**
   - We are sensitive towards the individual persons with whom we engage and we are committed to courtesy, respect and fairness in all interactions with individuals and groups.
   - Every effort is made to preserve the positive relationships which exist between those involved in managing and leading the early education setting, staff, parents and learners.
   - In certain circumstances, we may receive other information in a manner in which the person providing that information has a reasonable expectation that the information is given in confidence. While we will respect confidences, we cannot guarantee the absolute confidentiality of the information provided or the anonymity of the individual person or persons providing the information. However, having due regard to statutory provisions, we will seek to protect the anonymity of the person, if we believe that he or she had the understanding that it was being given in a confidential manner and that to release the information to others would prejudice the receipt of such information in the future.

4. **We report objectively and fairly on the quality of early learning and care provision:**
   - We set out clearly and unambiguously the main findings and actions advised arising from the inspection so as to enhance the motivation and overall capacity of the education community to achieve its goals and to bring about improvement in outcomes for learners.
   - We promote fair and balanced reporting of findings, particularly where conflicting evidence is presented.
   - We recognise and acknowledge effective work, progress and achievement.
   - We provide advice in a supportive and constructive manner and we present actions advised designed to support early education settings to engage with our Quality Framework. In this way, we enable setting leaders and practitioners to set and achieve their own goals for high quality provision and practice.
   - We provide accessible information for parents and the public about the quality of the early education setting’s work and we also provide an assurance of quality for the public.

3. **How inspections are carried out**

   The process of conducting an early years education inspection is divided into three stages.

   **3.1 Before the inspection visit**

   **Scheduling of inspections**

   In advance of scheduling an EYEI, the Inspectorate of the Department liaises with the TUSLA Early Years Inspectorate in order to avoid, as far as is practicable, overlapping inspections or the scheduling of different types of inspections in an early education setting within an unduly short timeframe.
Notice

Normally, an early education setting will receive prior notice of an EYEI. Typically, two working days’ notice will be given. An inspector conducting the inspection (the reporting inspector) provides notice of the EYEI to the manager or lead practitioner of the setting. This is usually by telephone and/or email.

When providing the official notification of the inspection, the reporting inspector outlines the format and structure of the inspection, discusses arrangements for any meetings to be held with the manager and/or practitioner(s) on the inspection day and clarifies any specific issues, including, for example, existing information on the daily routine. The reporting inspector has overall responsibility for the EYEI including the allocation of team roles, the arrangement of meetings and the compilation of the final inspection report.

The Inspectorate of the Department reserves the right to conduct early years education inspections without prior notice in a proportion of cases and where an inspection without notification is deemed necessary by the Inspectorate.

Documents

External inspection focuses primarily on the work of the early education setting and the interactions and processes which take place in the course of the normal day in the setting. There is a limited emphasis on documentation. This means that inspectors may request to see and examine documents, which the education settings can reasonably be expected to have available, to support the normal operation of the setting and the delivery of the programme of learning and care. These can include the parent handbook or other information document(s) for parents, a curriculum statement, planning documents, records of children’s progress and an outline of the daily routine.

Depending on the size and scale of provision in the setting, the inspector may request the setting manager to complete a Setting Information Form. The information provided in this form will assist in the planning of inspection activity.

Meetings

An integral element of the EYEI process is the engagement between the inspector and the staff and management/leadership of the education setting. Typically a pre-inspection meeting is held with the manager/leader of the setting before the inspection commences. The reporting inspector, in consultation with the manager/leader, also arranges to hold meetings with representatives of the board of management or management committee, where relevant, and with the staff in the setting. Generally these meetings are part of the evaluation and evidence gathering processes. A post-inspection meeting is also arranged where the findings of the inspection are shared and discussed.

3.2 During the inspection visit

The inspection visit is conducted by one or more inspectors. The inspection model (whether an EYEI or a Follow-through inspection) and the size of the setting determine the length of time the inspection takes and the activities undertaken in the course of the evaluation. Typically, between one and three days is set aside for core inspection activities depending on the number of learning environments in
the setting. Inspection activities include observation of practice, meetings with the manager/leader and staff, the review of documentation and the provision of feedback.

On the basis of information provided by the setting, the lead (reporting) inspector plans the inspection activities, in consultation with the manager and staff, to minimise disruption to the normal operation of the setting.

**Pre-inspection meeting**

Typically the pre-inspection and post-inspection meetings take place on-site. However, in some instances, it may be possible to conduct these meetings remotely via telephone or online platform.

On arrival, the inspector(s) will present official identification to the manager/leader in the setting. The inspector(s) will hold a short meeting with the manager in order to:

- Outline the inspection process
- Agree the format of the pre-inspection meeting and post-inspection meeting
- Agree the schedule of visits to the various learning and care environments and the times for the inspectors to hold meetings and collate inspection findings
- Discuss any practical issues that may affect the inspection
- Finalise arrangements for the post-inspection meeting with the manager/leader and/or relevant practitioner(s) after the inspection
- Request available planning documents, daily routine and records of children’s learning achievements for review during the inspection
- Gather evidence in relation to management and leadership for learning in the setting
- Discuss self-evaluation practices and improvement priorities of the setting

While the inspection team makes every effort to work within the agreed timeframe for the EYEI, unforeseen events may occasionally extend or alter this timeframe. Where possible, any changes will be discussed with the manager/leader in advance.

**Visits to learning environments**

The main activity of the inspection is the observation of the processes and practices relating to children’s learning in one or more learning environments in the setting. The scheduling of inspection visits is at the discretion of the reporting inspector who will indicate to the manager/leader or practitioner which learning environment(s) will be visited during the inspection.

Inspectors are sensitive to the potential impact of the presence of another adult on children. At times, the inspector may deem it fit to withdraw from the learning environment and return at a later stage to conclude his/her observations.

An inspection visit generally takes place during the normal operational hours of the education setting. Visits to individual learning environments in the setting can vary in duration depending on the nature of the activities taking place. The EYEI model provides the opportunity to gather a range of evidence relating to leadership for learning and the quality of learning outcomes for children. This facilitates the triangulation of evidence in order to provide rigorous and robust findings and draw conclusions that contribute towards improvement.
The visits typically include:

- Observation of learning activities
- Review of learning environments (both indoors and outdoors)
- Interaction with children and staff
- Review and discussion of available documentation.

Pedagogy and practice in support of children’s early learning in any learning environment in the setting may be observed in the course of the evaluation. This may include the work of temporary staff and support staff who are working in the setting at the time of the inspection visit. In larger settings, this can involve inspection visits to a range of learning environments. It may also include the work of external personnel who are employed by the setting to provide additional tuition or support to children as a regular feature of the programme of learning. The inspector, using the EYEI Quality Framework, considers the preparation for the programme of learning being offered in the setting, the effectiveness of the pedagogical approaches utilised, the interactions and atmosphere and how children are supported during learning and care activities.

The inspector evaluates the level to which children’s knowledge, skills and dispositions are supported and developed and the extent to which they are engaged appropriately in their learning. Planning and assessment practices and the progress made by children are also reviewed. The inspector(s) may also interact with children and review samples of their work.

Subsequent to a visit to a learning environment, the inspector will provide each early years practitioner(s) with feedback. Feedback may be provided directly after the observation visit, or at a time agreed by the inspector and the early years practitioner(s). Observed good practice is acknowledged and affirmed and, where relevant, advice is given in relation to how provision can be improved or developed further.

**On-site meetings**

During the course of an EYEI, it may be necessary to hold meetings to gather additional evidence to inform the preparation of the draft report for the setting. Scheduling of such meetings will be discussed, where possible, in advance of the inspection. However, it may be necessary to arrange a meeting during the course of the inspection. In the event that more than one inspector is involved in the EYEI, a meeting will be convened between the inspectors to enable them to discuss their findings and to arrive at an agreed judgement about each of the four areas outlined in the Quality Framework.

**Documents**

The main focus of an EYEI is on the quality of the interactions and processes that facilitate children’s learning in the setting. Notice of an EYEI does not require the creation of new records or documents. Inspectors review the available planning documentation, including the daily routine used by practitioners to support the normal everyday practices in the setting. This information helps inspectors to evaluate the breadth, balance and developmental nature of the curriculum and the learning experiences that are provided for the children. Inspectors also review the records of children’s learning experiences and achievements that are available in the setting, in order to develop an understanding of the children’s learning progress. Opportunities are provided for the early years practitioner(s) to discuss relevant documentation with the inspector(s).
Evaluating professional practice

While EYEI evaluations involve review of the professional practice of practitioners and the quality of early learning provision in the setting inspected, the inspection process is not a professional competence inspection. However, where an inspector has serious concerns about the quality of provision in a learning environment, those concerns will be shared with the manager and the relevant practitioner(s) as part of the feedback provided. Where concerns relate to management and/or leadership in the setting, they are shared by the inspector(s) with the person/body named on the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) registration documentation as the owner or responsible body.

Adhering to the Department’s Child Safeguarding Statement during Inspections

The Department’s Child Safeguarding Statement identifies potential of harm to a child by a member of Inspectorate when conducting inspection/advisory work. In order to mitigate against this risk the Human Resources section (HR) of the Department ensures that all inspectors are vetted on appointment and are subject to periodic re-vetting.

In the course of their work in early education settings, schools and centres for education, inspectors avoid situations where they are alone with an individual child. This refers to situations where an inspector and a child are alone in a learning setting or in an otherwise empty area in the setting / school / centre. It does not refer to situations where an inspector is the only adult present in a playground or assembly area during routine daily activities such as break-time or assembly where more than one child is present. It does not either preclude an inspector from engaging briefly with an individual child on arrival/departure at, or in transit within, a setting / school / centre.

There may be circumstances where a child approaches an inspector in the course of his/her work in order to report a child protection concern. In these situations, the inspector should inform the manager / school principal / centre director that he/she requires a room for the purpose of engaging on a one-to-one basis with a child. The inspector should then adhere to the procedures outlined in section 3.3 of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools entitled: Dealing with disclosures from children.

As part of certain inspection models inspectors conduct focus group discussions with a small group of children. In such inspections, where there are two or more inspectors on the inspection team, two inspectors will be present for the focus group meeting. For inspections where there is only one inspector on the inspection team, the inspector will conduct the focus group in line with the following guidance:

- Where possible the meeting should take place in a room in which the inspector is visible (e.g. glass in door). In the absence of same, the door should be left ajar
- The school principal /setting leader/manager should be requested to have another adult easily accessible and available while the inspector is working with the focus group
- The inspector should have a mobile telephone available for use during a focus group meeting if needed
- The inspector should check regularly with the children regarding their willingness to continue in the focus group (ongoing consent)
• The inspector should report any unusual occurrences during a focus group meeting to the principal immediately after the meeting and to his/her line manager before the end of the day
• The inspector should keep a note of the occurrence on the inspection file

In order to deal with other potentials of harm identified in the Statement inspectors must ensure that:

• All inspections are carried out in accordance with the procedures set out in the published guides
• Inspectors complete the mandatory Child Protection and Safeguarding training provided for all inspectors through our annual CPD programme
• Inspectors are familiar with *Procedures for responding to child protection concerns which come to the attention of staff employed by the Department (January 2021)*
• Inspectors have a copy of the Child Protection Concern Form (CPCF) when they visit a setting / school / centre

If deficiencies in respect of an early education setting’s compliance with National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 come to the attention of an inspector in the course of an early years education inspection, the inspector will, in the spirit of that guidance, alert the management of the early education setting to the deficiencies noted and will report the matter to Tusla, Child and Family Agency.

Where a child protection concern is brought to the attention of the inspector(s) during an education inspection in an early education setting, the inspector(s) will follow Departmental procedures for reporting on child protection matters. This procedure is set out in the *Procedures for Responding to Child Protection Concerns brought to the Attention of Staff Employed by the Department of Education and Skills (Updated February 2017)*.

### 3.3 Following the inspection visit

#### Post-inspection feedback meeting

At the conclusion of the inspection, the inspector(s) will communicate the draft findings to the manager/leader of the early education setting and, where available, to the practitioner(s) in the learning environments inspected and to members of the management board or committee. This feedback meeting is an important part of the inspection process. It allows for communication of the main draft findings of the inspection and provides further opportunities for clarification of any information and for discussion about how the setting can develop through implementing the actions advised in the inspection feedback.

During this meeting, the inspector(s) seek to:

• Acknowledge and affirm effective practice
• Provide an evaluation of learning provision in the environments inspected with reference to the quality continuum (Section 6 - Table 1)
• Identify areas for development and improvement and advise, as relevant, on the actions advised to bring about improvement
• Provide an opportunity for the manager and other practitioner(s) present to discuss and respond to the findings
• Outline the process leading to the publication of the report

The inspection report

A draft inspection report is finalised following the completion of the feedback meeting. The report presents the main findings and actions advised of the evaluation. It is processed through the normal quality assurance procedures of the Inspectorate and is issued to the setting for factual verification and later for setting response, as prescribed in Publication of School Inspection Reports: Guidelines (Department of Education and Skills, 2015).

When the EYEI report is issued for factual verification, the manager and chairperson of the management board, where appropriate, have the opportunity to draw the attention of the Inspectorate to any statements in the draft report with they believe to be errors of fact. Subsequently, the reporting inspector makes any necessary amendments to the report and it is issued to the early education setting for Setting Response (SR). The management of the early education setting has an opportunity to submit a written response to the report, outlining what it will do to address the actions advised in the report. The finalised report and the setting’s response are published on the website of the Department of Education (www.gov.ie).

Publication of the inspection report

The finalised report and the response of the setting are published on www.gov.ie. To access an EYEI or a Follow-through (FT) report on any service the steps below should be followed:

• Insert www.gov.ie into the web browser toolbar
• Scroll down the page to the light blue box on the left hand side of the web page titled ‘Popular Topics’. Click on the School Inspection Reports link
• Under ‘Forms of Inspection’ click on the link for either Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI) or

Follow-Through (FT) Inspection

• Insert the DCEDIY number into the School Roll Number box in the search field or, alternatively, insert the Early Years setting name and address into the relevant fields and click on search.

(See Appendix 3 for a step-by-step guide to the processing of EYEI Reports for publication.)

4. Acting on the inspection report

The manager/lead practitioner of the education setting should, as part of the agenda for continuing improvement in the setting, carefully consider the findings and actions advised in the EYEI report (as a staff team) and should plan for the implementation of those actions. The EYEI report along with other types of information gathered by the early education setting can also be used to inform self-evaluation processes in the setting and planning for improvement and development.

Responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the actions advised and improvements in an EYEI report rests mainly with the leadership and management of the setting. In some cases, early education
settings may wish to access the assistance available from mentoring/support services and other sources of advice when planning and implementing improvements. The degree to which progress has been made on the implementation of the actions advised in an EYEI report may be evaluated at a later date in Follow-through inspections by the Inspectorate of the Department (See Appendix 2 for further details).

5. The Early Years Education Inspection Quality Framework

Early years education inspections are based on a quality framework that is informed by the principles of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and *Síolta: the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education* as well as national and international research related to early learning and care, and inspection. The Quality Framework incorporates the key elements of best practice in early education and categorises provision under four broad areas:

In table 1 below, twenty key outcomes are identified, under four broad areas, which describe aspects of best practice in early childhood education.

| Table 1: Overview of the Early Years Education Inspection Quality Framework |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Area                            | Outcome |
| Area 1 - Quality of context to support children’s learning and development | 1. The atmosphere and organisation of the setting nurture children’s learning and development and support the inclusion of all children |
|                                 | 2. Relationships are warm, responsive, respectful and reciprocal |
|                                 | 3. Children’s sense of identity and belonging is nurtured |
| Area 2 – Quality of processes to support children’s learning and development | 4. Provision is informed by *Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* |
|                                 | 5. Information about the children’s development informs next steps in learning |
|                                 | 6. High quality interactions with children are facilitated |
|                                 | 7. The environment and resources support children’s learning and development |
|                                 | 8. Play is central to children’s learning and development |
|                                 | 9. Emergent language, literacy and numeracy skills are fostered |
|                                 | 10. Provision for children’s learning and development is closely aligned to their interests and developing capabilities |
|                                 | 11. Children learn in an inclusive environment |
| Area 3 – Quality of children’s learning experiences and achievements | 12. Children demonstrate engagement and enjoyment in their learning and a positive sense of wellbeing |
|                                 | 13. Children experience achievement and are developing through their learning experiences |
|                                 | 14. Children are developing a sense of identity and belonging and personal and social skills to support their learning and development |
|                                 | 15. Children communicate their experiences, thoughts, ideas and feelings with others in a variety of ways |
16. Children make sense of their world by interacting with others and the environment through playing, investigating and questioning

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<th>Area 4 - Quality of management and leadership for learning</th>
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<td>17. Planning, review and evaluation are informed by Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education</td>
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<td>18. Management in the setting provides for a high quality learning and development experience for children</td>
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<td>19. Clear two-way channels of communication are fostered between the early years setting, parents, families and children</td>
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<td>20. Transitions into, from and within the setting are managed effectively to support children’s learning and development</td>
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To ensure optimum transparency for early years practitioners about the focus of the inspections, each outcome has been further described through the use of a number of possible signposts for practice (Appendix 1). The signposts for practice are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive. It is acknowledged that there are different approaches among early years practitioners and setting providers; and that staff are at different stages in the development of their practice. It is not expected that all signposts will be evident in a given setting.

Inspectors engage in professional dialogue with practitioners about a selection of outcomes and signposts for practice during the inspection visit. Inspectors’ judgements about the quality of provision in each of the four areas are informed by their observation of activities organised and facilitated by the practitioner(s) on the day of the inspection.

6. The Quality Continuum

In analysing and reporting on their findings in respect of each of the four broad areas, inspectors use a quality continuum with five quality bands as illustrated at Table 1 below. Table 1: The quality continuum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Review of inspections

A practitioner or manager of an education setting affected by an inspection may seek a review of the inspection in accordance with the procedures outlined in Procedures for Review of Inspections on Schools and Teachers under Section 13(9) of the Education Act (1998) (Revised 2015) (www.education.ie).
8. Publication and revision of this guide

This Guide has been prepared following consultation with early-years practitioners, academics, parents, organisations that provide support to early education settings, and other stakeholders with an interest in early-years education, in accordance with Section 13(8) of the Education Act, 1998.

The Inspectorate is committed to improving the ways in which it carries out its evaluation and advisory work in education settings and the provisions of this Guide will be reviewed periodically.
9. Appendices

Appendix 1: Early Years Education Inspection Quality Framework - Signposts for Practice

Area 1 - Quality of context to support children’s learning and development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Signposts for Practice: Consider the extent to which...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. The atmosphere and organisation of the setting nurtures children’s learning and development and supports the inclusion of all children | • A caring ethos and a warm, nurturing, affirming atmosphere are evident.  
• Practices are in place that support children to develop strong emotional bonds and special relationships and attachments with their key person  
• Practitioners are knowledgeable about children’s personalities, temperaments, needs and individual preferences  
• Practices in the setting are based around respectful engagement with the child and his/her family.  
• Routines and procedures are consistently used to promote the development of core learning dispositions and skills  
• Children are active agents in choosing and organising their learning and development activities  
• Snack/meal time is seen as a social occasion and an opportunity to promote relationships, well-being and a healthy lifestyle.  
• Practitioners plan environments for children that are calm, relaxed and encourage curiosity, creativity and playful exploration and learning.  
• Children are supported to become confident and independent in managing their own self-help and self-care needs in a meaningful and respectful way  
• Time and space is provided for all children, irrespective of age or stage of development to freely explore the indoor and outdoor environment, in the company of attuned and present practitioners  
• Times of transition within the setting support positive learning experiences for children, are managed effectively and promote continuity in learning throughout the day  
• Children and families are consulted and supported in the transitions between early learning environments, during their time in the setting. Transitions are carefully planned for, with the needs of the individual child in mind |

| 2. Relationships are responsive, respectful and reciprocal | • Practitioners show affection, sensitivity, warmth and positive regard for children and their families  
• Children experience physical and emotional warmth that is supportive of the development of positive learning dispositions.  
• The key person approach supports the development of consistency and security in children’s relationships in the setting  
• Practitioners foster caring and respectful child-child relationships |

These signposts have been informed by *Aistear* and *Síolta*. The lists are neither exhaustive nor prescriptive.
### Outcome | Signposts for Practice: Consider the extent to which...
---|---
- The key person acts as an important link between families and the setting  
- Parents are aware and have meaningful and regular opportunities to build strong positive relationships with their child’s key person.  
- The practitioner has insight into the child’s family, culture and interests  
- Parents and families are actively included in planning for their child’s early learning experiences  
- Parents and families participate in the daily life of the setting.  
- Practitioners model and provide guidance and encouragement towards positive behaviour  
- Practitioners support children to regulate their emotions and feelings. Recognition, affirmative feedback and encouragement are a regular feature of the responses to children

3. Children’s sense of identity and belonging is nurtured  
- Respect for and recognition of the uniqueness of each child is evident. Practice is child-centred, respectful and culturally appropriate  
- Opportunities are provided for children to develop an appreciation of themselves as individuals and as members of groups  
- Children have opportunities to make positive social connections with other children and with practitioners throughout the day  
- Opportunities are provided which bring together children, families and practitioners in the setting  
- Diversity is recognised, valued and affirmed within an inclusive learning environment  
- The setting has made connections with the local community and is integrated with the local community  
- Children have opportunities to get to know people and places within their community

### Area 2 – Quality of processes to support children’s learning and development

#### Outcome | Signposts for Practice: Consider the extent to which...
---|---
4. Provision is informed by Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework  
- A broad-based curriculum, informed by Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework has been documented and is being used to support children’s learning and development  
- Practitioners in the setting have been involved in the development of an emergent, enquiry-based curriculum and demonstrate knowledge, understanding and confidence about putting these plans into practice  
- Planning takes account of children’s varying interests, cultural backgrounds, strengths, abilities, needs and previous learning experiences. There is a planned approach to developing children’s schemas, dispositions, values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding.  
- Decisions around planning for children’s learning are informed by relevant research on learning and development.  
- Practitioners develop individual care and learning plans for children in collaboration with their families
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Signposts for Practice: Consider the extent to which...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Plans are flexible enough to allow for response to children’s emergent interests</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Planning supports the provision of a connected, holistic learning experience for children using assessment for learning methods to promote the progression of their next steps in learning</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Planning for curriculum implementation is organised on long-term, medium-term and short-term bases</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• The implementation of the curriculum is monitored and reviewed on a regular basis</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

5. Information about the children’s development informs next steps in learning

|         | A variety of meaningful, strengths-based assessment approaches is used to gather information about children’s learning experiences and achievements and ensure continuity and progression in their learning  |
|         | • Practitioners document significant learning experiences to share with the children’s families  |
|         | • Children are regularly provided with appropriate support and formative feedback to extend their learning and development  |
|         | • Parents are consulted regularly and informed about their child’s learning and development  |

6. High quality interactions with children are facilitated

|         | Children are viewed as competent and confident learners.  |
|         | • The child is recognised as an active agent in his/her learning  |
|         | • Children are supported and encouraged to learn with and alongside others  |
|         | • There is an appropriate balance between adult-initiated and child-initiated learning and development activities  |
|         | • The practitioner knows the child well and responds to his/her verbal and non-verbal cues, interests and individual learning needs sensitively and appropriately  |
|         | • Practitioners regularly engage in shared attention activities (joint attention) with children. Practitioners maintain a balance between listening and talking  |
|         | • Practitioners actively extend children’s communication skills, thinking and language learning during play (sustained shared thinking)  |
|         | • Practitioners engage and motivate the child in his/her learning and development in a respectful and caring way  |
|         | • Practitioners use a range of appropriate interaction strategies and methodologies to facilitate a broad range of learning experiences  |
|         | • Practitioners promote peer interactions in pairs and small groups to nurture supportive relationships  |

7. The environment and resources support children’s wellbeing, learning and development

<p>|         | Indoor and outdoor environments are well maintained, safe and inviting  |
|         | • Indoor and outdoor environments are purposefully structured and organised to develop children’s curiosity, creativity, imagination and desire for exploration  |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Signposts for Practice: Consider the extent to which...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Environments are used to promote movement for children at all stages of development</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Indoor and outdoor environments and resources are used effectively to stimulate, support, consolidate and extend children’s learning</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Children have frequent access to outdoor learning environments. Resources are accessible, developmentally appropriate, and provide for multi-sensory learning experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The setting has a variety of appropriate literacy and numeracy/mathematical resources which are used regularly and purposefully</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Children’s ideas and achievements are creatively displayed and accessible to children and parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Children make choices around their engagement with environments, resources and activities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• The environment encourages children to build the capacity for self-regulation and resilience through the provision of opportunities for appropriate risk taking</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• The environment is structured to ensure children learn in a variety of contexts throughout the day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Play is central to children’s learning and development</td>
<td>• Play is the central medium through which children learn and develop within the setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Children have access to a range of interesting experiences that stimulate their learning and development, for example, treasure baskets and heuristic play</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Practitioners remain in close physical proximity to children, where appropriate</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Time for extended, open-ended play is allowed for within the setting</td>
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<td>• There are regular opportunities for children to plan for, talk about and think about their play experiences</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Opportunities are provided for a range of play experiences, including creative play, language play, physical play, imaginative play, socio-dramatic play and construction play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Play opportunities are freely available, accessible, appropriate and well-resourced to sustain purposeful learning and active exploration. The importance of spontaneous play and movement is recognised. Play is used as a medium for children to interact with, explore and make sense of the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Children have opportunities to engage in play activities alone, with peers and/or with practitioners</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The practitioner effectively facilitates play, and joins in as a play partner, where appropriate, in order to support children’s learning and development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Play enables purposeful learning, creative expression and development for all children in accordance with their needs and interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Emergent language,</td>
<td>• Practitioners model appropriate language, including mathematical language, and encourage an expanded use of vocabulary through the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>Signposts for Practice: Consider the extent to which...</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>literacy and numeracy skills are fostered</td>
<td>use of open-ended questioning and language enrichment during interactions • Practitioners support children to engage in two-way, reciprocal communication throughout the day • Practitioners recognise the importance of language in supporting emotional development • Practitioners ensure there is a suitable balance between speaking and listening during interactions • Children are encouraged and supported to express their views, emotions and thinking in a range of ways • Children’s home language(s) is/are valued and affirmed and are visible within a print-rich environment • Children regularly enjoy and share a variety of rhymes, jingles, poems and songs • Children have access to high-quality books, linked to their interests and play areas. • Children are provided with regular opportunities to listen to and explore stories in the company of an affectionate and attuned practitioner • Opportunities are provided for children to engage in mark-making • Mathematical thinking and learning is promoted through the use of open-ended resources and games, linked to the everyday lives of children • Children have opportunities to engage with activities that build early positive dispositions towards science, technology engineering, the arts and mathematics (STEAM) through hands-on, /active experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Provision for children’s learning and development is closely aligned to their interests and developing capabilities</td>
<td>• Planning for children’s learning and development builds on the cues, interests, previous experiences and achievements of children • Practitioners set high but realistic expectations for all children in the setting • Children are challenged and learn strategies for active exploration, thinking and reasoning • Opportunities are provided for children to achieve fulfilment, success and mastery during learning activities. • Children are enabled and supported to make connections in their learning and to transfer their knowledge and skills to new learning situations • Children are encouraged and supported to respond creatively as they engage in learning • Children discover different ways to express their creativity and individuality • Learning activities provide progressively more complex, varied and challenging experiences for children in accordance with their individual needs and abilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>Signposts for Practice: Consider the extent to which...</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 11. Children learn in an inclusive environment | • There are equitable opportunities to engage all children in learning irrespective of gender, ability, age, ethnicity or background.  
• An inclusive approach is adopted to ensure the engagement of all children within the setting  
• Children experience the stories, songs, rhymes and symbols of their own and other cultures  
• Practitioners recognise and accommodate diversity in the style, pace and focus of children’s learning and development and their individual temperament  
• Specific attention is paid to the learning of children with additional needs, children who have English as an additional language, minority groups, and those affected by educational disadvantage  
• The learning and development of children is fostered in partnership with parents  
• The setting has made links with external agencies, where appropriate and possible, with a view to optimising support for children with additional needs |

Area 3 – Quality of children’s learning experiences and achievements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Signposts for Practice: Consider the extent to which...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 12. Children demonstrate engagement and enjoyment in their learning and a positive sense of wellbeing | • Children demonstrate enjoyment in their learning  
• Children are motivated, interested and engaged in their learning activities  
• It is evident that children’s voices, including verbal and non-verbal cues are heard, respected and acted upon  
• Children demonstrate contentment and are secure and at ease within the setting  
• Children display initiative, self-reliance, positive self-esteem and self-confidence and demonstrate positive learning dispositions such as resilience, resourcefulness and persistence  
• Children frequently have choice and make decisions about their learning during all aspects of their daily routine  
• Children are aware of and can name their feelings experienced during learning activities.  
• Children are affirmed, comforted and supported to manage their feelings and emotions in a way that enhances their well-being  
• Children demonstrate creativity and a sense of wonder and natural curiosity  
• Children demonstrate a developing capacity to reflect, use judgements and make decisions  
• Children are developing the ability to play cooperatively, in pairs or small groups |
<p>| 13. Children experience | • Children experience success during learning activities |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Signposts for Practice: Consider the extent to which...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| achievement and are developing through their learning experiences       | • Children regularly discuss or share aspects of their learning achievements with others and are supported to recognise their own learning and achievements  
• Children demonstrate an awareness of their changing and developing abilities and can make connections to the past, the present and the future  
• Information documented about children’s learning reflects their achievements in a range of connected learning experiences appropriate to an early education context  
• Information documented about children’s learning reflects their development with due regard for their individual interests, needs, approaches and cultural backgrounds  
• Children show increasing confidence and coordination in relation to their gross and fine motor skills  
• Children demonstrate a growing capacity to make healthy choices about nutrition, exercise and personal routines |
| 14. Children are developing a sense of identity and belonging and personal and social skills to support their learning and development | • Children show an awareness and appreciation of their own uniqueness and have a sense of who they are  
• Children are able to communicate their interests, opinions, feelings, family background and personal experiences  
• Children are developing a positive understanding of their own identity as competent learners  
• Children are developing a positive understanding of their identity as members of families and groups  
• Children have opportunities to make connections with others in the context of the setting, including peers and siblings  
• Children have an awareness of their local community and the roles of different people within that community  
• Children show an understanding of and regard for the identity, rights and views of others  
• Children understand the rules and boundaries of acceptable behaviour and demonstrate an evolving capacity for self-regulation and conflict resolution  
• Children are developing personal and social skills which enable them to respond appropriately to different situations such as e.g. turn-taking, cooperating, negotiating, taking responsibility, building relationships |
| 15. Children communicate their experiences, thoughts, ideas and feelings with others in a variety of ways | • Practitioners are responsive to the broad range of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies used by children; for example crying, cooing, babbling, eye contact, gestures, body language and listening  
• Children use language to give and receive information, interpret experiences, ask questions, make requests, refuse, negotiate, solve problems, imagine and recreate roles and to clarify their thinking, ideas and feelings  
• Children interact with other children and adults by listening, discussing, questioning and taking turns in conversations |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Signposts for Practice: Consider the extent to which...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Children appreciate their home language and understand how different languages can be used with different people and in different situations  
• Children express their feelings, thoughts, ideas and creativity through storytelling, messy play, sensory play, making art, mark making, moving to music, role playing and problem solving  
• Children regularly explore sound, pattern, rhythm and repetition and language through conversation, songs, rhymes and jingles throughout the day  
• Children represent their ideas and feelings through various media and play activities  
• Children’s voices are visible within the setting; e.g. documentation of their comments on their artwork or in their learning records  
• Children demonstrate an awareness and emergent understanding of the meaning and uses of symbols, pictures, print and numbers as a means of communication  
• Children have a growing understanding of the meaning and use of mathematical language  
• Children whose home language is not that predominantly used within the setting have opportunities to communicate and express themselves |

| 16. Children make sense of their world by interacting with other sand their environment, through playing, investigating and questioning | • Children are inquisitive and confident in exploring and thinking about their learning experiences  
• Children are aware of the natural environment and its features, materials, animals and plants.  
• Children have plentiful opportunities to engage in sensory rich experiences, both indoors and outdoors  
• Children engage, explore and experiment in their environment and use their developing physical skills to manipulate objects and diverse materials  
• Children use books and ICT for fun, to gain information and to broaden their understanding of the world  
• Children collaborate with others to share interests and ideas and to solve problems  
• Children make connections and associations between new learning and what they already know and have opportunities to reinforce this learning  
• Children display the capacity to respond to a variety of ‘I wonder why...’ questions |

**Area 4 - Quality of management and leadership for learning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Signposts for Practice: Consider the extent to which...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17. Planning, review and evaluation are informed by</td>
<td>• Management and staff regularly reflect on and review their practice, policies and procedures in order to improve learning experiences and outcomes for children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>Signposts for Practice: Consider the extent to which...</td>
</tr>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education** | - Self-evaluation and reflection are regularly promoted through the use of *Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education* and the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide*  
- Reflective practices are adopted to support professional learning in the setting and to inform planning, review and improvement practices  
- The *Aistear/Síolta Practice Guide* is used systematically in the context of self-evaluation  
- An ethos of professionalism, teamwork, collaboration and partnership is evident  
- The views of staff, parents, management and children are regularly sought during self-review processes and are used to inform plans for quality improvement  
- Practitioners avail of mentoring and other external advisory supports, where available  
- It is evident that staff in the setting are aware of relevant research, policy and practice developments that impact on the quality of their work with young children  
- Outcomes of self-review are documented, shared and acted upon to improve children’s learning experiences and achievements |
| **18. Management within the setting provides for a high quality learning and development experience for children** | - Appropriate systems are in place for the smooth organisation of educational experiences and activities in the setting  
- The stated philosophy and vision of the setting is evident in the practice of all staff  
- There is clarity around the roles and responsibilities of practitioners with regard to educational activities  
- The leader/manager of the setting uses the varied skill sets of staff effectively  
- Staff demonstrate thoughtfulness and reflection in all aspects of their practice  
- Leaders provide a good role model for the staff, promote high standards and articulate a clear vision and direction for the work of the setting  
- Opportunities are provided for regular support and supervision of all staff  
- Opportunity is provided to each practitioner in the setting to take a leadership role in promoting good quality learning  
- It is evident that practice is informed by evidence-based theory and that staff are knowledgeable about children’s learning and development  
- Practitioners are knowledgeable about the roles and functions of external professionals and support services  
- Effective strategies are in place for professional reflection and for the mentoring, support and continuous professional development of all staff in the setting |
| **19. Clear two-way channels of communication are fostered**           | - Parents and families are proactively consulted as the primary educators of their child and involved as partners in their child’s learning and development |

26
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Signposts for Practice: Consider the extent to which...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>between the early-years setting, parents, families and children</td>
<td>• Parents and families are made aware of the policies, procedures and curriculum in operation within the setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The setting regularly shares verbal and documented information on children’s learning and achievements with parents and families in a spirit of openness, mutual respect and transparency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• There are formal and informal opportunities to exchange information with parents and families and other professionals in the best interests of the child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The voice of the child and his/her family, is respected and included during decision making processes that affect the child and his/her family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Practitioners have put strategies in place to communicate with parents and families for whom English is an additional language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Transitions into, from and within the setting are managed effectively to support children’s learning and development</td>
<td>• Information is gathered from parents, families, other practitioners in the setting and from external services and professionals on children’s prior experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• This knowledge is used to ensure continuity of experiences and progression in learning for children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Information is shared between staff in the early education setting to ensure continuity of experiences and progression in children’s learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Information is shared between the early education setting and the primary school to ensure continuity of experiences and progression in children’s learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Policies, procedures and practice have been developed to promote the sensitive management of transitions into, within and between settings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Appendix 2: Follow-through Inspection Model

Introduction

The purpose of a follow-through inspection is to evaluate the progress an early education setting has made in implementing the actions advised from an earlier inspection where a written report has been published or issued to a setting. This is facilitated through a consultative, co-professional engagement between the inspector and relevant setting management and staff. Inspectors also advise the setting on strategies and actions to enable them to fully address the actions advised. Any early years setting that has had an inspection may be scheduled for a follow-through inspection.

Follow-through inspections provide an opportunity for the early education setting to show the progress it has made in improving practice in areas where actions were advised in previous inspection reports. Inspectors discuss the improvements with individual practitioners and with groups of practitioners and others where appropriate.

At the conclusion of a follow-through inspection, inspectors discuss their overall findings with the manager/staff, and where relevant, with a representative of a board of management/management committee. They acknowledge the progress made and provide advice on further actions required to ensure the full implementation of each action advised in the original inspection report. The findings from a follow-through inspection add to the early education setting’s own information as they engage in self-evaluation and quality improvement initiatives.

Inspection focus

Follow-through inspections focus on the level of progress made by the early education setting in implementing specific actions advised outlined in a previous inspection report, rather than the overall educational provision that the early education setting makes. The following continuum indicates the language used when reporting on progress made:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No progress</th>
<th>Partial progress</th>
<th>Good progress</th>
<th>Very good progress</th>
</tr>
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</table>

Where the original EYEI was published on the website of the Department of Education, the finalised report and the response of the early education setting are also published on the Department’s website (www.gov.ie). Where the original EYEI was issued to the setting but not published, the Follow-through inspection report will issue to the setting but will not be published.

Acting on the Follow-Through Report

To access an EYEI inspection report or a Follow-through report on any setting the following steps should be followed:

- Insert www.education.ie into the web browser toolbar.
- Scroll down the page to the light blue box on the left hand side of the web page titled ‘Popular Topics’. Click on the School Inspection Reports link
- Under ‘Forms of Inspection’ click on the link for either Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI) or Follow-Through (FT) Inspection
• Insert the DCYA reference number into the School Roll Number box in the search field or alternatively insert the Early Years setting name and address into the relevant fields and click on search.

Overview of inspection activities: Follow-through Inspection

| Before inspection visit | Inspectorate activity | The inspector contacts the manager two days in advance of the inspection. The inspector will seek relevant information which will guide the inspection process. A Setting Information Form will be provided to the manager via email and a deadline date for return will be agreed.

Arrangements are made for any meeting which may be required and for any documentation which the inspector may wish to view. |
| Setting activity | The manager prepares any documents and arranges meetings that may be required

The manager returns the Setting Information Form to the reporting inspector within the agreed timeframe

The manager sends the link with the parent questionnaire to parents |
| During inspection visit | Inspectorate activity | Typically one day

Among the activities that may take place in the course of a follow-through inspection are:

- Meeting with manager and/or representative of the board/management committee
- Meeting with relevant practitioners/members of staff
- Observation of pedagogy and learning and other relevant activities
- Interaction with children
- Review of setting documentation, records and children’s learning
- Review of resources and facilities
- Post-evaluation meeting with manager |
| Setting activity | Draft report is issued to the manager/other designated person for factual verification (five working days) and for setting response (ten working days) |
| After inspection visit | Inspectorate activity | Publication of the follow-through inspection report on the website of the Department of Education |
Appendix 3: Step-by-step guide to the publication of inspection reports

Step 1 - Preparation of the Inspection Report

The inspection report is prepared following completion of the evaluation work in an early education setting. Normally, the evaluation work concludes with oral feedback on the findings and actions advised arising from the inspection. This feedback may be provided to staff in the setting, and/or to the manager, and/or to representatives of a management board/committee.

The Inspectorate then completes the draft inspection report. The draft report is subjected to the Inspectorate’s normal quality assurance mechanisms.

Step 2 - Draft inspection report issued for Factual Verification (FV)

The Inspectorate Secretariat sends a copy of the draft report, accompanied by a factual verification (FV) form (see below) to the email address of the designated contact person, as agreed with the early education setting during the inspection.

The designated contact person is invited to draw the attention of the Inspectorate to any errors of fact in the inspection report, using the factual verification form. The form is returned to the Inspectorate Secretariat by the designated contact person within five working days of the date of issue of the report.

The factual verification form, when returned to the Inspectorate Secretariat by the designated contact person, is referred to the reporting inspector and the appropriate assistant chief inspector. If any errors of fact are drawn to the attention of the Inspectorate, the report may be amended, as necessary, normally within five working days.

If no response is received in respect of factual verification within five working days of the issue of the report, it is assumed that the setting is satisfied that the report is accurate. The report is then prepared for issue to the setting for setting response (SR).

Step 3 - Finalised inspection report issued to the early education setting

The Inspectorate Secretariat sends a copy of the finalised report, via email, to the designated contact person. On receiving the inspection report, it is advised that a copy of the report is shared with all staff and management in the setting who participated in and/or were otherwise involved in the inspection:

Step 4 - Setting Response (SR)

The purpose of the setting response is

- to allow the management/staff of the setting to respond to, and make observations on, the contents of the inspection report
- to allow management/staff of the setting to set out the actions that the setting has taken or plans to take to address each of the actions advised in the report in the context of their plans for self-evaluation, planning, and improvement in the quality of their provision and practice.
Where the setting chooses to provide a setting response to the Inspectorate, the response is completed by using the pro-forma Inspection Report Setting Response Form (see page 33).

**Setting Response: Options available**

Any of the following actions may be taken when the finalised report is issued to the designated contact person for setting response:

**OPTION A**

The early education setting may accept the report without comment and record this intention by returning the proforma inspection report response form to the Inspectorate within ten working days of the date of issue of the inspection report.

**OPTION B**

The early education setting may respond formally to the findings and actions advised of the report by using the proforma inspection report response form. This must be done within ten working days of the date of issue of the inspection report. Normally, if the management board or committee exercises this option, the setting response is included as an appendix to the published report.

**OPTION C**

The early education setting may request a formal review of the inspection under the Procedure for Review of Inspections on Schools and Teachers under Section 13 (9) of the Education Act, 1998.

As a suggested guide, the total length of the setting response is approximately 500 words. Restrictions governing the content of the inspection report will also apply to the setting response. For example, individuals such as practitioners, children, members of the board of management and inspectors may not be named in the setting response. The setting response is an opportunity for the setting to comment on the contents of the report and to highlight the follow-up actions which it proposes to take (or has already taken) following the inspection. Comments on the inspection process may not be included in the setting response. (If the management or staff of the setting has concerns about the way in which the inspection was conducted, the Procedure for Review, should be used to bring their concern to the attention of the Inspectorate).

Other than in exceptional circumstances, the setting response will be published in its entirety, with the exception of the signature of the owner/manager, at the same time and in the same format as the inspection report. If, for any exceptional reason, the Department decides not to publish the setting response, the Inspectorate will inform the setting of this decision and the reason or reasons for it.

**Step 5 - Publication**

If the setting has exercised option A or option B as described above, the Inspectorate will publish the inspection report. Usually, publication takes place within ten working days of the receipt of the completed Inspection Report Setting Response Form from the setting.

If the setting has sought a review of the inspection or the inspection report (or both), the Inspectorate adheres to the Procedure for Review of Inspections on Schools and Teachers under Section 13 (9) of
the Education Act, 1998. The inspection report will not be published until the review has been completed and, if appropriate, any recommendations arising from the review have been addressed. On the completion of this process the publication of the final inspection report proceeds in accordance with option A or B above.

The Inspectorate publishes the inspection report and the setting response (if relevant) on www.gov.ie. Where the initial inspection report was not subject to publication the FT Report is issued to the setting but is not published.

No response received

If a response is not received from the designated contact person(s) of the setting, and if option C has not been availed of within the time limit (ten working days from the date of issue of the report to the setting), a null response is assumed and the report is published by the Inspectorate within a further five working days.

**Inspection Report Factual Verification Form (FV)**

| Setting name |  |
| Setting address |  |
| Setting Tusla Registration Number/ DCEDIY ID number |  |
| Setting email address |  |
| Type of inspection | Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI) or Follow-through Inspection |
| Date of issue of Inspection Report |  |

For office use

**Factual inaccuracies in the report**

Please use the space below to draw the attention of the Inspectorate to any factual inaccuracy that you believe is included in the draft inspection report issued to your setting. Alternatively, please supply details on an attached sheet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Inaccuracies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

This form must be signed and returned to eyeireports@education.gov.ie within five working days of the date of issue of the draft report to the early years setting (i.e. insert date here).

| Signature |  |
| Print name: |  |
| Signature: |  |
| Role in the Early education Setting: |  |
| Date: |  |

Return address:

Completed forms can be scanned and sent to:
Inspection Report Setting Response Form (SR)

Setting Name: 
Setting address: 
Setting Tusla registration number /DCEDIY ID number: 
Type of Inspection: 
Date of issue of report for SR: 

For Office Use

Please choose option A, or B, or C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPTION A</th>
<th>I/We accept the report as the final inspection report and do not wish to respond formally to the report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OPTION B</td>
<td>I/We accept the report as the final inspection report and wish to respond formally to the report. I/We agree that the response submitted will be included as an appendix to the report. The response is submitted below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPTION C</td>
<td>I/We do not accept the report as the final inspection report and request a review of the inspection in accordance with the published procedures of the Department of Education for the review of Inspections. I/We will submit/have submitted a written request for c: review to the Office of the Chief Inspector</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Setting response: Part A

Please comment on the content of the inspection report (approximately 100-150 words) and note that comments on the inspection process may not be included in the setting response -see Step 4, Appendix 3.

[100-150 words approx.]

Setting Response: Part B

Please indicate the actions that the early-years setting has taken or plans to take to address each of the actions advised in the report (approximately 350 - 400 words)

[350-400 words approx.]
This form must be signed and returned to eyeireports@education.gov.ie within ten working days of the date of issue of the final report to the early years setting (i.e. insert date here). Return address:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Print name:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signature:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role in the Early Years Education Setting:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Completed forms can be scanned and sent to: eyeireports@education.gov.ie

Or posted to:

EYEI Reports, Department of Education, Marlborough St, Dublin 1 D01 RC96