An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)
Final Report

Setting name	Apres School Club
Setting address	Former Cluny Junior School Ballinclea Road Killiney County Dublin A96E422
TUSLA registration number	TU2015DR137
DCEDIY number	16DR0328
Date of inspection	23-05-2023
Date of issue of report	27-09-2023

What is an Early Years Education Inspection?

The Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI) model is used to provide evaluative information, advice and support in relation to education provision in a pre-school setting participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. These inspections affirm good practice and advise actions, where appropriate, to aid the further development of education provision in the setting.

How to read this report

During this inspection, the inspector(s) evaluated and reported under the following headings or areas of enquiry:

- Quality of the context to support children's learning and development
- Quality of processes to support children's learning and development
- Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements
- Quality of management and leadership for learning

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the setting's provision in each area.

Early Years Education Inspection

Dates of inspection	23-05-2023
Inspection activities undertaken • Pre-inspection meeting with the setting owner and manager • Review of setting documentation and records of children's learning and development • Review of the education resources and facilities • Observations of interactions during three sessions • Interaction with the children • Feedback meeting with the setting owner/manager and early years educators	

Context of setting

Après School Club is a private after school and sessional pre-school setting located in a former primary school building in County Dublin. The setting provides a morning pre-school session in three rooms for children availing of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. All three rooms were inspected. On the day of the inspection, fifty-three children and six educators, one of whom was the manager, were present. The setting owner was also present at the beginning of the inspection. The manager attended the post-inspection meeting. The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the report; a response for publication was not received from the setting.

Area 1: Quality of context to support children's learning and development

- The quality of the context to support the children's learning and development was very good.
- There was a very friendly and inviting atmosphere in the setting. On arrival, the educators interacted gently with the children and they engaged in informal conversations with their parents.
- A flexible daily routine was observed consisting of play and Montessori work time, outdoor play, circle time and snack time. The educators led optional planned activities alongside children's freely-chosen play.
- The children managed their self-help and personal hygiene needs successfully. They used the toilet and washed their hands independently and put on and off their coats with ease.
- Snack time was valued as a social occasion and educators sat and chatted to the children about their lives outside the setting. The children demonstrated enthusiasm for the interactions shared with educators during this time.
- In advance of transitions between activities, the educators provided verbal and visual prompting for children to prepare them as they moved from one part of the routine to the next. Some children had active roles in the process such as being a line leader or handing out lunch boxes.
- The interactions between the educators and the children were kind, responsive and respectful at all times. The educators moved to the children's level and listened with patience and interest as they spoke and asked questions.
- Recognition for the uniqueness of the child within the learning environment was nurtured through displays of the children's artwork, a birthday chart and a family wall of photographs.
- It was reported that there were some opportunities for parents to come into the setting, for example, to attend a Christmas event and a graduation ceremony at the end of the year.

Action advised

- The educators are advised to further nurture the children's sense of identity and belonging by representing the children, their families and the community in the learning programme and the physical environment. For example, creating a community wall using photographs of the surrounding neighbourhood and landmarks.

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 was very good.
- The educators implemented an effective, play-based curriculum with elements of the Montessori Method of Education, underpinned by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework.*
- The educators organised the curriculum into short-term, medium-term and long-term thematic plans. These plans were linked to the themes of *Aistear.*
- Assessment information relating to the children's learning progress was gathered by capturing photographs of the children's playful learning experiences. Written observations were recorded and shared with parents once every two months and added to children's individual learning journals.
- The educators used effective, warm and playful interactions with the children that were authentic, affirming and encouraging. They actively extended children's language through songs, stories and by providing opportunity for children to share their news during circle time.
- The educators had created indoor and outdoor environments which offered a broad range of play options that inspired curiosity and provided space for physical development. The equal time spent indoors and outdoors ensured that the children learned in a variety of contexts throughout the day.
- The very large outdoor space was well maintained and inviting. Children were observed engaged in planting, climbing, running and playing on swings, ride on bikes and engaging in sensory play.
- The indoor environment was organised into well-resourced interest areas including a construction area, a home corner, sensory trays and mark-marking materials.

Action advised

- The educators are advised to enhance their current assessment practices to include children's emerging interests, needs and dispositions and include next steps for learning. The children's individual learning journals can be used to document these interests and provide space to capture children's ideas and reflections on their learning journey.

Area 3: Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements

- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements was very good.
- The children demonstrated enjoyment and engagement in their self-selected activities and the educator planned activities. For example, during circle time children enthusiastically copied the educator's actions as they engaged in songs with movement.
- The children freely chose where, with what and with whom they wished to play. They displayed high levels of motivation and engagement in their learning experiences and confidently used the resources available to them.
- The children expressed themselves in many ways. They enjoyed the many opportunities to engage in singing and story-telling, mark-making and role play.

- A learning journal containing observations and examples of children's self-selected art work was compiled for each child by the educators. A large group learning book was also compiled and copybooks demonstrating children's progress in mark-making were available in one room.
- Children demonstrated developing personal and social skills. They played well together and were building relationships with many friendships forming.
- The children's' voice was valued and respected in their learning. For example, the children regularly voted to decide on what book should be read during circle time or what song should be selected.
- The children experienced many opportunities to effectively develop their awareness of the natural environment such as planting flowers, exploring and investigating planets and space and experiencing the life cycle of the butterfly.

Action advised

- To further support the children's creative and imaginative skills, the educators are advised to provide greater opportunity for children to participate in process focussed art experiences and reduce the use of product focused, template art. To this end, they are encouraged to make additional open-ended resources freely accessible to the children such as recyclable/junk materials.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was good.
- The owner, manager and educators presented as committed and professional in their approach to supporting the children's learning.
- The educators had defined roles and responsibilities which supported the smooth organisation of the sessions. The manager supported the team with hands-on leadership through her role as lead educator in one of the pre-school rooms.
- The educators demonstrated commitment to upskilling in their professional roles. Two of the educators had recently completed the Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) in Early Years Programme.
- The setting availed of support from external agencies for advice and training; they have established links with the local county childcare committee and Better Start under the Acess and Inclusion Model (AIM).
- Communications with parents is achieved through informal daily chats and daily telephone messaging. Formal meetings with educators was available upon request.
- Effective settling-in policies and procedures supported the children's transition into the setting. An open-door policy enabled parents to visit the learning environments and parents were encouraged to stay with children until they felt comfortable and settled.
- The educators prepared the children for primary school by incorporating discussions and planned activities into the curriculum. The *Mo Scéal* transition templates from the National Council for Curriculum Assessment (NCCA) were used to record and transfer strengths based information regarding the children's learning and development.

Actions advised

- The owner is advised to establish a formal approach to team and individual meetings with the educators. This practice provides opportunity for reflection on practice and supports educators with both cohesive curriculum planning and identifying their individual training and development goals.
- The educators are advised to use the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* systematically for curriculum planning and setting review with the goal of developing a system of continual self-evaluation that informs quality improvement initiatives.

Summary of overall inspection

Area	Quality level
Quality of context to support children's learning and development	Very good
Quality of processes to support children's learning and development	Very good
Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements	Very good
Quality of management and leadership for learning	Good

Language used in Early Years Education Inspection Reports

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the setting using the language which is shown below.

Level	Description
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.*

The following resources can be used by ELC settings in their quality improvement:

Aistear Siolta Practice Guide

Department of Education Insights – Quality in Early Years Education webinars