An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)

Final Report

Setting name	Cazzy Cuddles Preschool
Setting address	Unit 57 Killegland Walk St Declan's Street Ashbourne County Meath A84ED36
TUSLA registration number	TU2015MH027
DCEDIY number	15MH0316
Date of inspection	12-03-2024
Date of issue of report	03-09-2024

What is an Early Years Education Inspection?

The Early Years Education Inspection model is used to provide evaluative information, advice and support in relation to the education of children aged birth to six years in early learning and care settings. The inspections will affirm good practice and provide advice to support internal quality development processes that optimise children's education experiences and outcomes.

How to read this report

During this inspection, the inspector 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	12-03-2024

Activities conducted during the Inspection

- Pre-inspection meeting with the setting owner
- Review of setting documentation and records relating to the children's learning and development
- Review of the education resources and facilities
- Observations of interactions during three Early Childhood Care and Education Programme sessions
- Interaction with the children
- Interaction with the early years educators
- Feedback meeting with the setting owner and early years educators

Context of setting

Cazzy Cuddles Pre-school is an early learning and care setting located in Ashbourne, County Meath. It provides three morning sessions and three afternoon sessions for children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. The inspection was conducted in three of the ECCE sessions. On the day of the inspection, twenty-nine children, five early years educators, one of whom was the owner, were present. The setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised in this report, and the response submitted on behalf of the setting can be found in the appendix of this report.

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

- The quality of the context to support the children's learning and development was good.
- There was a pleasant and friendly atmosphere in the setting. The educators greeted the children warmly on arrival.
- Relationships between the educators and the children were positive. During the sessions observed, the children included the educators in their play and learning experiences.
- The children had some opportunities to independently choose their learning experiences and direct their learning. For example, in two of the pre-school sessions, the educators offered the children choices in relation to the sequence of adult-initiated activities.
- In all learning rooms, the daily routine was organised predominantly to facilitate the children's learning in adult-initiated activities such as work time, circle time, activity time and snack time. There was a visual daily schedule on display in all pre-school rooms inspected.
- In one of the learning rooms, the educators used verbal cues to inform the children of changes in activities. Across all learning rooms, some transitions offered the children opportunities to engage in a meaningful way.
- There were many times, during the inspection, when the educators acknowledged the children for their efforts in activities.
- The educators used snack time effectively to promote a social occasion, the children's self-help skills and independence, and their awareness of healthy eating.
- The educators fostered the children's sense of identity and belonging in some ways. For example, in all pre-school rooms there were individualised photographs of the children on their coat hooks; the children's learning journals included mark-making representations of themselves as individuals and members of their families. In one of the pre-school rooms, the children had decorated individualised place mats.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to ensure that the daily routine is organised so that it is predictable and that there is an appropriate balance between adult-initiated and child-initiated activities.
- The educators are advised to use a wider range of strategies during transition times to support the children's active involvement, cooperation and learning.

- In all rooms, the educators are advised to further foster the children's sense of identity and belonging. Meaningful activites, family walls and displays of people and places in the community will support this action.

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 required improvement.
- The setting's documented curriculum statement included aims, which were aligned to the principles of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*.
- The learning programme was informed by medium-term and short-term plans. Across all pre-school sessions inspected, the planning documentation was similar. Predominantly it was informed by themes, the seasons and the educators' ideas. The children's emergent interests and individual learning needs were not used to inform short-term plans.
- The educators used a limited range of assessment methods to record the children's learning. These included termly strengths-based observation templates linked to the themes of *Aistear* and the children's individual learning journals. The educators recorded the children's comments on some of the enteries in their free mark-making copies. While in some instances, observation records included the next steps in the children's learning, they were not used to inform planning.
- During the inspection, the educators used some pedagogical interaction strategies to extend the children's learning, such as sitting alongside the children and acknowledging their efforts. In many instances, spontaneous interactions between the educators and the children were overlooked as natural opportunities to enhance individual children's learning and deepen their thinking.
- The learning rooms had a few interest areas such as a construction area, a library area and kitchen area. While all materials and resources were easily assessible to the children, there was a limited range of sensorial, open-ended and real materials to support the children in their exploratory child-initiated play and learning experiences. There was a shared outdoor area. From time-to-time, weather permitting, the educators provided opportunities for the children to engage in outdoor play.
- In all sessions, the educators provided some opportunities for the children to participate in child-initiated play. In some instances, the children did not experience effective playful interactions with the educators.
- On the day of the inspection, the educators used rhymes, songs and story-telling activities to promote the children's language and literacy skills. In all learning rooms, children were observed engaging in book play. The print-rich learning environment included written words and a range of appropriate storybooks, predominantly in English.
- The educators had accessed support through the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM). The provision of differentiated learning activities for children in year one and year two of the ECCE programme was not reflected in the learning programme.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to include additional detail in their short-term curriculum plans to ensure differentiation of learning experiences for the children in year one and year two of the ECCE programme. The educators' use of the findings from more regular observations, the children's play experiences and identification of their individual learning needs, will support the learning of all children.
- The educators are advised to tune into the children, be a play partner and converse with and prompt the children to think in a consistent manner. This will help to enrich and stimulate the children's learning and their play experiences.
- The educators are advised to review the indoor and outdoor learning environments to ensure that there is provision of an extensive range of real, open-ended, sociodramatic and sensory-rich materials. Regular opportunities for the children to engage in outdoor play will be central to this process.
- The educators are advised to provide additional playful activities to support the children's language and early literacy development and to increase the provision of print resources linked to the different interest areas, the children's interests and their home languages.

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

- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements was good.
- The children presented as well settled and secure. On arrival, they were happy to see their friends and start the day.
- Many children demonstrated interest in the adult-initiated organised activities. For example, they were eager to participate in the adult-initiated playdough activity and a small-group hairdresser play scenario activity. At times, a few children appeared to lose interest in the self-selected activity they were participating in and went straight on to the next activity, as suggested by the educators.
- At the time of the inspection, there was an inconsistency in the time allocated for the children to participate in child-initiated play across sessions.
- The children experienced success as they engaged in their exploration of the fine motor resources and as they built with the wooden shapes.
- Some children demonstrated positive learning dispositions such as persistence and imagination. For example, on arrival, one child persisted until he had successfully put on his slippers.
- It was clearly evident that the children were developing positive social skills. Many of the children had formed friendships. A few children required the educators' support to discuss their feelings and emotions and develop a problem-solving approach to resolving incidents of minor conflict.
- During the sessions, the children had opportunities to participate in playdough activities to promote their creativity. At the time of the inspection, there was an over-reliance throughout the setting on the use of templates to promote the children's individual creative skills.
- Many of the children, were developing the capabilities to be confident communicators. They displayed non-verbal and verbal skills such as using gestures to convey their emotions, taking turns in conversations, sharing news from home and asking questions, such as one posed by a child, 'How many minutes to snack time?'
- During all sessions, there were some occasions for the children to engage in activities to support their early mathematical understanding. For example, they were observed engaging in spontaneous meaningful counting, sorting and matching activities.

Actions advised

- To further motivate the children in their play and build on their play ideas, the educators are advised to provide more time for child-initiated play using additional strategies.
- The educators are advised to provide additional opportunities and a designated creative station in each pre-school room. A greater range of mark-making and free-process art resources,which are available in the setting will support this process. Displaying the children's work, with their comments alongside at eye level, will support this action advised.
- To help the children to discuss their feelings and emotions and develop a problem-solving approach to resolving incidents of minor conflict, the educators are advised to consistently use the strategies in the setting's policy on positive behaviour.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning required improvement.
- There was a sense of a positive work relationship between the owner and the educators. Whole-staff team meetings took place; the minutes of these brief meetings were recorded.
- On the day of the inspection, there were occasions when the educators were in a supervisory and monitoring role rather than engaging in meaningful interactions with the children to foster effective communication and high-quality learning experiences.
- Professional organisation systems, such as whole-team review and reflections practices and formal individual support and supervision meetings, had yet to be implemented in the setting by the owner.
- All the educators attended an online workshop on *Aistear* at the start of the current academic school year to support their professional development.
- The educators used a few strategies to share the children's learning with their parents. These included sending the children's art folders home once a month and their learning journals home at the end of the pre-school year. The owner used social media applications to share updates on the setting and photographs of learning activities from the pre-school rooms with parents.

- On the day of the inspection, the setting's system of children coming into and leaving the setting at arrival and at the end of the session did not promote the sharing of information between the educators and parents on their child.
- Before the children started in the setting, the children and their parents were invited to attend an open day to meet with the educators and other children.
- The owner had established links with the principals of some of the local primary schools. Towards the end of the pre-school year, the educators facilitated discussions with the children to raise their awareness of what happens in primary school.
- The educators completed a local primary school's bespoke transition template for the children who moved to that school. With parents' permission, the owner contacted principals of other primary schools to share information on the children as learners in the spirit of promoting continuity of the children's learning and development.

Actions advised

- The setting owner is advised to consider availing of external mentoring, training and advisory supports to assist the educators in their role and promote the provision of high-quality learning experiences for the children.
- The owner is advised to ensure staff meetings are structured so as to promote communication, collaboration, and decision making among the staff team. In addition, the owner is advised to introduce support and supervision meetings. During these meetings, the resources in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* could be used to identify and prioritise areas in need of improvement, and develop an agreed plan of action.
- The educators are advised to consider using further strategies to share verbal and documented information on the children's learning with their parents. Involving the children in contributing to and adding to their learner journals, and regularly sending them home for parents and children to review together, will support this action.
- The educators are advised to begin to explore using the *Mo Scéal* transition resources for all children who completed the ECCE programme and move to primary school.

Summary of overall inspection

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

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	Examples of descriptive terms
Excellent	**Provision that is excellent** is exemplary in meeting the needs of learners. This provision provides an example for other schools and settings of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Excellent; exemplary; outstanding; exceptionally high standard; with very significant strengths
Very good	**Provision that is very good** is very effective in meeting the needs of learners and is of a very high standard. There is potential to build on existing strengths to achieve an excellent standard.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful
Good	**Provision that is good** is effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to build on existing strengths in order to address the aspects to be developed and achieve a very good standard.	Good; of good quality; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; strengths outweigh the shortcomings; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist
Requires improvement to achieve a good standard	**Provision that requires improvement to achieve a good standard** is not sufficiently effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is good or better.	Fair; less than effective; less than sufficient; evident weaknesses that are impacting on learning; experiencing difficulty; shortcomings outweigh strengths; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard	**Provision that requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard** is not meeting the needs of learners. There is immediate need for significant action to address the areas of concern.	Weak; poor; ineffective; insufficient; unacceptable; experiencing significant difficulties; serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated; requiring significant change, development and improvement to be effective

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

APPENDIX

SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

Cazzy Cuddles Preschool has implemented the following steps with immediate affect since feedback session.

- A family wall in each classroom.
- Regular showings of words/art for parents to view in our outdoor play area.
- New Aistear observation templates now used with photographic image of child.
- More freestyle work instead of templates used.
- Free play + work time now as one in the daily class routine.
- Outdoor play takes place daily for a maximum of 30 minutes each class. Outdoor class times displayed in class corridoor.
- Staff meetings now take place before class e duration of 20 mins allocated.
- Staff appraisals will take place in December and the end of term year in June of each year.
- Staff will take part in workshops that are relevant to early years setting.
- Daily/weekly theme sheet was changed to detail both types of sessions a mixture of different activities done.
- Parent handbook was printed and made available to all parents in reception.
- Open day 2024 has already taken place and individual viewings are also available to parents in July e August.