An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)
Final Report

Setting name	First Steps North Tipperary Development Company
Setting address	New Line Roscrea Co. Tipperary E53T680
TUSLA registration number	TU2020TY002SA
DCEDIY number	16TY0028
Date of inspection	16-05-2022
Date of issue of report	19-10-2022

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	16-05-2022
Inspection activities undertaken • Pre-inspection meeting with the setting manager • Introductory meeting with relevant early years educators • Review of setting documentation and records of children's learning and development • Review of the education resources and facilities • Observations of interactions during the morning session • Interaction with the children • Feedback meeting with the setting manager and early years leader	

Context of setting

First Steps is a community-based full-day, sessional pre-school and after-school setting in Roscrea. It is a sister setting of a larger full-day setting also based in Roscrea. It is managed by North Tipperary Development Company which provides a range of rural enterprise, social inclusion, and community development initiatives. It operates from a room in a primary school and shares the outdoor learning environment with the school. On the day of the inspection, the leader, two educators and seventeen children were present. The manager for both settings was also present in the setting for most of the morning. The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the report; a response was not received from the setting.

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

- The quality of the context to support the children's learning and development is very good.
- A warm and welcoming atmosphere is cultivated by the educators for the children and their parents.
- A key-person approach is well established. Each educator is responsible for observing and planning for a dedicated group of children's learning. They build secure relationships with the children and parents.
- The educators consistently engage with the children in a respectful manner. They provide children with meaningful comments that praise and recognise their learning.
- The daily routine is effectively structured to enable children to learn both indoors and outdoors for long periods of child-initiated and child-led play. A visual of the routine is not fully accessible to the children.
- The educators adapt the organisation of the routine to better meet the needs of the children. For example, the children spend the first part of the session in the outdoors engaging in vigorous exploration and physical play.
- Transitions, as children move from one part of the routine to the next, are signalled by the educators. On the day of the inspection, some children appeared not to notice the verbal prompts and the whole group experienced a short period of inactivity as they waited in a line to move from outside to inside.
- The approaches to nurturing the children's identity and belonging are commendable. The educators encourage parents to share information about their children's experiences and interests outside the setting. Photographs of the children and their families are prominently displayed throughout the environment. Words from their home languages are also on display.

- A community wall display includes key sites and buildings that are familiar to the children. Educators organise visits from community workers such as representatives from fire and rescue services.

Actions advised

- Educators are advised to further develop strategies to support children during transition times. There is a need to minimise waiting periods and to use auditory and visual prompts that engage all children. These strategies can be added to the policy and procedure document.
- The educators are advised to make the visual of the daily routine accessible to the children, so that they develop a sense of security and become more familiar the routine.

Area 2: Quality of processes to support children's learning and development

- The quality of the processes to support the children's learning and development is very good.
- A highly effective curriculum, informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* is documented and available for parents to view.
- The children's emergent interests inform medium-term and short-term plans. A suitable balance is evident in the planning; the majority of play experiences and activities are child-initiated with some adult-initiated. This ensures that provision for children's learning and development is closely aligned to their interests and developing capabilities.
- Assessment for learning approaches focus on the children's group and individual learning experiences. Educators capture a good level of detail about the children's learning in their books. There is scope to provide greater detail within the learning stories.
- The educators use effective interaction strategies to facilitate the children's learning. They join the children's play with interest and effectively extend their learning. On the day of the inspection, some children would have benefitted from additional adult support to engage in their learning.
- The indoor learning environment is a bright, spacious and inviting space. The materials and resources support children to engage in many play types. They are clearly labelled with words and photographs depicting the children playing in distinct areas.
- The large outdoor learning environment is commendably organised into stimulating areas which facilitate rich learning experiences. Here the children can explore natural materials such as stones, sand and water.
- Educators provide materials and experiences which greatly promote the children's early language, literacy and mathematical development. They purposefully introduce new vocabulary, including mathematical language.
- The educators recognise and value diversity. They foster partnerships with parents and work with them to facilitate the children's learning and development. To communicate with children who speak English as an additional language, a staff member uses the children's home language. The educators liaise with outside agencies and implement strategies which support children with additional educational needs.

Actions advised

- To further capture the children's rich learning journey, the educators are advised to refine assessment for learning approaches. Within the children's individual learning books, educators are encouraged to describe the children's learning with reference to their learning dispositions, skills, and understanding achieved.
- Educators are advised to further observe children in their self-initiated learning to assess if they need support to engage. To support children to initiate and join in playful learning, educators could talk with children about the play options on offer and encourage them to share their play intentions.

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

- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements is very good.
- The children appear very secure in their learning environment. Overall, they display high levels of engagement.
- The children are active learners. They make decisions about matters that affect them. They demonstrate enthusiasm as they learn through play, especially outdoors as they create role play scenarios and explore natural materials.
- The children frequently engage in enquiry-based learning. They test, experiment and use materials, thereby gaining an understanding of the world around them. At the time of the inspection, their emergent interest was in doctors; they used the real materials provided imaginatively to enhance their pretend play.
- At the time of the inspection, the children needed help from educators to access some art and creative materials.
- During the inspection, there were some missed opportunities for the children to demonstrate their independence and self-reliance for example, when tidying away materials.
- The children communicate likes, interests and ideas using non-verbal and verbal skills. They know a range of songs and rhymes. They enjoy listening to stories being read by the educators.
- The children use their developing social skills to collaborate with their peers in their play. The enjoy positive relationships with their peers and the educators.
- The children are aware of their local community and the roles of different people within the community.

Actions advised

- The setting needs to ensure that the children have greater access to art materials in the indoor environment. This can be achieved by allocating a larger area within the room for children to independently select and use materials to support their creativity.
- Educators are advised to further support and enable children to be self-reliant by enabling them to engage in everyday, practical tasks to care for the setting's learning environment.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- The educators demonstrate a positive sense of team and professionalism in their delivery of educational experiences and activities.
- Using the materials of the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* the educators regularly evaluate their practice and implement quality improvement initiatives. They inform parents about these processes. Planning for children's learning was evaluated; this resulted in a stronger focus on incorporating the children's emergent interests.
- The educators receive support and supervision sessions with the manager to promote professional development. The leader avails of networking opportunities to keep up to date with developments in the sector. Management is committed to providing ongoing training for staff.
- There is mostly informal communication with parents about their child's learning. Online applications are used to share photographs of the children's group and individual learning experiences. The children's learning books are not shared with parents until the end of the year. The notice boards in the hallway provide parents with rich information about the curriculum.
- The educators facilitate a three week settling-in period for new children. This very effectively supports continuity of experiences from home to pre-school, with parents sharing information about their child.

- All the children are invited to visit a local school each year for a play session. The educators meet with the infant teacher to share information, with parental permission. This information is not documented for parents.

Actions advised

- Educators are advised to offer parents formal opportunities to meet their child's key person and discuss their child's learning and development. The children's learning books need to be shared on a more regular basis with parents.
- To further support each child to transition from pre-school to primary school, educators are advised to use the *Mo Scéal* materials to provide parents and teachers with a strength-based summary about the child's learning.

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	Very 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.*