An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)
Final Report

Setting name	Happy Feet Crèche
Setting address	Unit 6 Creagan Barna County Galway H91EW28
TUSLA registration number	TU2018GY507
DCEDIY number	18GY0501
Date of inspection	11-11-2022
Date of issue of report	21-02-2023

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 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	11-11-2022
Inspection activities undertaken • Pre-inspection meeting with the setting owner/manager • Review of setting documentation and records of children's learning and development • Review of the education resources and facilities • Observations of interactions during two sessions • Interaction with the children • Feedback meeting with the setting manager/owner and one lead early years educator	

Context of setting

Happy Feet is a private, full day-care setting located in Barna, County Galway. It offers two concurrent pre-school sessions to local children availing of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. It has been in operation since 2018. On the day of inspection, there were twenty-seven children, four early years educators and the manager present. 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 was good.
- The atmosphere in this setting was warm, calm and inviting. The educators engaged in friendly conversations with the parents and the children as they greeted them on arrival.
- A visual daily schedule was located in both rooms and offered the children a pictorial outline of their day. The daily routine observed afforded time for child-led play, snack, story, circle-time and time in the outdoors. In one room, adult-initiated activities were observed as a choice during child-led play. Transitions throughout the morning were mainly supported through verbal prompts.
- The educators provided good support for the development of the children's independence skills. The children were supported to put on their coats, use tissues autonomously and get a drink as they wished at the accessible hydration station. The children were also actively involved and fully engaged in the period of tidy-up observed. Innovatively, the children were supported to take care of pet animals in the setting.
- In both rooms, there were images of the children engaged in playful learning activities and some displays to nurture the children's sense of identity and belonging. The family wall in one room provided the children with a sense of security and familiarity. In the other room an attractive display showcased the children's handprints, their dates of birth and their favourite things.
- The children's positive social skills were supported through displayed class rules, positive mantras and visuals to develop the children's understanding of emotions.
- The educators and the children sometimes talk about the locality and the educators reported that they plan to do a project on this in the future.

Actions advised

- It is advised that all of the transitions are consistently signalled and that adequate warning time is provided to the children, to prepare them for upcoming changes across the daily routine in both rooms.
- It is advised that the resources and experiences to support the children's understanding of community, diversity and their identity and belonging are expanded in both pre-school rooms to include interactive social stories, visuals at child height and increased family photographs that the children can look at, as they wish throughout the session. This will ensure that the children have consistent, meaningful opportunities to develop an appreciation of themselves as members of their families, their locality and their culture during daily child-initiated play experiences.

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 good.
- The setting had created a long-term thematic plan for the entire academic year with identified projects and adult chosen topics of interest. These topics included settling-in, nature, colours, shapes and seasonal celebrations.
- Weekly curriculum plans were created and stored on a computer application which provided pre-programmed links to *Aistear*, *the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and *Síolta, the Quality Framework for Early Education.* The children's interests were sometimes captured in a notebook by the educators and these interests informed the ongoing curriculum. In some cases, there was a focus on supporting the children to learn through the use of flash-cards and templates for mark-making and creative expression.
- The sample of observations of learning which were reviewed in both rooms, both individual and whole-group, were developed and stored through a computer application. There were clear descriptions of learning experiences with the identification of the children's skills, dispositions and knowledge. Some extensions for learning were also outlined.
- The interactions between the educators and the children were generally sensitive, supportive and positive. There were times when there was a focus on children's participation and social skills for instance, during a large group activity where the children started to become disengaged.
- There was a range of materials available for the children to explore in both rooms including a home corner, construction toys, wheeled vehicles, social dramatic materials including dress-up items and some creative and sensorial materials like play-dough, water and sand along with some real items like telephones and computers. The consistency of provision in these areas varied across the two rooms.
- In both rooms, a relaxing and comfortable reading area was provided for the children. In this space, the children could unwind on the comfortable seating and on the beds, and enjoy the high quality literature on offer.
- The setting has in the past engaged with the *Access and Inclusion Model* to support the inclusion of all children.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the educators develop their current planning processes from a mainly thematic approach to an emergent one. Organising the educator's intentions into short, medium and long-term plans which regularly and consistently include the children's interests, learning dispositions and developmental goals will be very useful in this regard.

The *Planning and Assessing* pillar from the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* will be very supportive in the development of this action.

- It is advised the educators focus on purposefully extending the children's learning and development through the increased use of higher-order questioning, commentary and prompting during playful experiences.
- It is advised that the educators review their environment to ensure that resources such as sand, paint, and water are freely accessible to the children in both rooms and that more open-ended and exploratory resources be made available in the outdoors to support creative expression and building the children's knowledge of maths and science. The self-evaluation tools in the Learning Environment pillar from the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* will be very useful in supporting the development of this action.

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

- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements was good.
- The children were motivated and engaged during active free exploration. The children were mostly afforded choice in activities throughout the morning in both rooms and this was respected and supported. Some children showed strong concentration and engagement during adult-initiated activities such as circle-time and story.
- In one room, the children freely explored an arranged tuff tray which conveyed the natural habitat of a polar bear. It included sensorial items such as cotton wool, tinfoil, tissues and metallic shapes.
- The universal documentation of the children's group learning that is communicated to parents through a computer application expressed a range of different learning activities linked to topics of interests. For instance, to explore 'dinosaurs', the children took part in painting activities, dino-dough, frozen dinosaur eggs and ice melting. On the day of inspection, the children eagerly spoke about the size of dinosaurs, their varying speeds and physicality.
- The children were developing friendships and this was particularly evident in the outdoors and during child-initiated play.
- In the outdoors, the children had many opportunities to develop their gross-motor skills with a climbing wall, ride-on equipment, football goals, slides and see-saw available. The children could explore the outdoor kitchen that had real resources such as pots and pans. Despite consistent heavy rain on the day of inspection, the outdoor area was utilised by both rooms, which demonstrated the integral part the outdoors plays on a daily basis. The children wore full wet gear to make the most of the natural environment. The educators reported that during periods of nice weather the children can enjoy their food in the outdoors.
- There were some group-learning stories displayed on the walls so the children could review their past learning experiences. Some of the children's prior learning was also discussed with them through prompting questions such as; *'Do you remember when?'*

Actions advised

- It is advised that all of the children are supported to engage independently and purposefully with the daily activities through more visual supports such as choice boards, song-boards, first/then charts and an interactive, visual daily schedule. It is further advised that a balance is created between child-initiated and adult-initiated experiences and between active and seated activities.
- It is advised that the children become more actively involved in their own learning journeys through the development of holistic records of their learning that are consistently available to them. These records could include the observations of the children's learning, samples of

their creations and the children's comments and thoughts on their work. Reviewing these records with the children will really support them to recognise their own progression and celebrate their achievements.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was fair.
- The owner/manager demonstrated her knowledge of the routines and procedures in both rooms. She spent time in both environments with a view to supporting practice.
- The owner/manager reported that she has engaged in a process of periodic individual support and supervision meetings with staff members and the educators could meet with her as required.
- The educators and manager collaboratively chat and plan for provision informally. *Síolta: the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education* and the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* are not currently used to support the development of practice.
- The educators have welcomed the parents back into the setting following the Covid-19 pandemic. They have maintained regular two-way communication through informal chats at drop-off and pick up times. It was reported that the parents interact and respond to updates and correspondence through the computer application. A key-person system has not yet been implemented.
- The parents were given information on the setting through a parents' handbook to support the settling-in process. The children were also encouraged to attend on a gradual basis with parental support as required. On the day of inspection, one child arrived with a special toy which they kept with them for comfort and there was a positive and informative exchange of information between the educators and the parent.
- Most of the pre-school children will attend the local primary school and the school-age children and siblings have spoken to the pre-schoolers about moving on to school. There was no formal system in place to support the sharing of strengths-based information on each child's learning and development with the relevant schools.

Actions advised

- It is advised the educators and manager formally meet on a regular basis and document their discussions.
- It is advised that the manager and the educators utilise the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* to systematically and formally review practice and to create collaborative action plans for improvement.
- It is advised that a key-person system is put in place to support an effective two-way communication process with parents, to build secure attachments between the educators and the children and to get to know the children and their families as much as possible. Resources regarding the implementation of the key-person approach from the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* and the Key Person Approach: Positive Relationships in the Early Years from Barnardos will support the development of this action.
- It is advised that the educators build on their current transition practices to support a smooth transition for the children to primary school through appropriate resources, discussion and by transferring strengths-based information about each child's learning and development with the primary teachers. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment's *Mo Scéal* reporting templates will be very useful in this regard.

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	Good
Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements	Good
Quality of management and leadership for learning	Fair

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.*