An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)
Final Report

Setting name	Hazy Days Country Playschool
Setting address	Kilmacrade Breaffy Castlebar County Mayo F23TN23
TUSLA registration number	TU2015MO052
DCEDIY number	09MO0069
Date of inspection	24-11-2022
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	24-11-2022

Inspection activities undertaken

- Pre-inspection meeting with the setting owner/manager.
- 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 two sessions.
- Interaction with the children.
- Feedback meeting with the setting owner.

Context of setting

Hazy Days Country Playschool is a privately-owned setting located in Kilmacrade, Breaffy, Castlebar, County Mayo. It offers one morning session and one afternoon session for children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. On the day of the inspection, there were eighteen children and four educators present in the morning session with six children and two educators present in the afternoon session. The setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised in this report, the setting chose to accept the report without response.

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 excellent.
- The atmosphere in the setting was wonderfully welcoming and reassuring for the children and their parents who were greeted warmly at arrival and departure times.
- A well-developed key-person system ensured that secure, strong and positive relationships between the children, the parents and the educators were fostered.
- The educators actively promoted and supported the development of the children's independence. It was clear that the concept of the child underpinning all routines and interactions was that of an able individual with rights, agency, interests and preferences.
- There was a daily routine which was very well-structured and paced, allowing appropriate time and opportunity for the children to engage in freely chosen play and learning activities. A suitable balance of educator-guided and child-led activities was evident. The daily routine was flexible and adaptable to meet the emerging needs of the children.
- The educators were consistent in their use of visual and verbal cues that indicated impending changes in activity and upcoming choices for the children. The children had opportunities to express their preferences for transition activities, such as when one child choose to continue a creative mark-making activity instead of joining a group activity.
- Snack time was utilised very well as a social occasion and an opportunity to promote well-being and a healthy life style. Everybody sat, eat and chatted together in a very relaxed atmosphere.
- The children's sense of identity as individuals and as members of family and groups was nurtured consistently through the educators' interactions with them. Respect and a positive appreciation for diversity and difference also permeated practice and routines. A wide range of attractive displays and resources indicated that considerable attention was given to developing the children's awareness of their identity and belonging.

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 and emergent curriculum that was informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. At the time of inspection the manager and educators had yet to create a curriculum policy and set of procedures to guide a collective understanding of the agreed approach to curriculum implementation.
- The educators used a variety of assessment approaches to gather relevant information about the children's individual and collective learning journeys.
- Evidence of the children's learning and development was recorded in strength-based observation records, anecdotal notes, and in individual and group-learning journals.
- Play was central to all learning in this setting and provision for play was of a high quality. The educators were naturally playful and strategic in their interactions with the children; they stimulated and fostered imaginative thinking and enabled the children to engage in sustained shared thinking in joy-filled, playful contexts. The educators were very skilful in supporting the children to plan for play and also to reflect on their play. A suitable balance of individual, small-group and large-group playful activities was provided for the children that facilitated learning through discovery.
- The indoor learning environment was very thoughtfully designed to support the children's learning and development. It consisted of a wide and varied range of inviting play areas that were used purposefully. A two-storey wooden playhouse provided a home corner and raised platform for the children to explore. The environments were very well resourced with an extensive range of materials to support multi-sensory and creative expression.
- The children had daily access to the school's wonderful outdoor facilities which included a garden with a purpose built castle and village for the children to play in. This led down to hills, climbing frames and balancing equipment which were designed to create opportunities for the children to roll, jump and climb. At the end of this area sat a large meadow which housed a variety of hide-outs. A separate, outdoor covered area housed an activity room called 'Rumpus Bumpus' where a large, covered climbing frame with slides, an obstacle course and a variety of action games were enjoyed by all the children.
- The educators were keenly aware of the importance of promoting the children's awareness of early mathematical and scientific concepts in playful contexts; an example of this observed centred on a discussion around the number of children in attendance. The children were divided into groups with each child placing an object in a line to represent themselves. The length of the lines were then explored and the differences between them discussed. The educators modelled language very effectively for the children and used skilful repetition of key phrases.
- The educators were deeply committed to the provision of an inclusive, nurturing learning environment; they were conscious of the importance of reflecting on the use of resources and language that challenged stereotypical thinking.

Action advised

- The manager and the educators are advised to collectively design a curriculum policy. They are advised to include a set of procedures to guide the planning and assessment practices. They are also advised to share this policy with the parents. The resources available in the Curriculum Foundations section and the Planning and Assessing pillar of the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* will support this action.

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

- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements was excellent.
- The children were experiencing an impressive range of valuable, playful learning experiences. They were active in their learning and enjoyed ample opportunities to pursue their interests to make decisions and choices.
- The children demonstrated very high levels of engagement throughout the pre-school sessions observed. They displayed very positive learning dispositions, such as curiosity, perseverance and confidence in taking initiative. It was evident that the children experienced a strong sense of achievement and satisfaction during the course of their activities.
- A key strength of the children's learning experiences was the quality and regularity of their opportunities to explore and express their creativity; this included open-ended art activities, design and make activities, role-play, construction play and story-telling.
- The children exhibited great pride in talking about and sharing their learning experiences and outcomes.
- During the inspection, the children were observed to discuss spontaneously early mathematical concepts such as pattern, shape, number and size in playful, meaningful contexts. The children participated in singing and the recital of rhymes with great enthusiasm.
- The children demonstrated commendable social skills as they played and engaged with each other in a variety of contexts. They showed very good active listening and turn-taking skills.
- Very well-developed fine-motor skills and hand-eye co-ordination were evident as the children engaged in mark-making activities. They had ample opportunity to be physically mobile in their learning in the various learning environments.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was excellent.
- There was an admirable ethos of professionalism, teamwork, collaboration and partnership in the setting. The educators were fully engaged with and enthusiastic about their work; they had a clear vision for the provision of education and learning experiences for the children and consistently promoted high standards.
- There was a well-established culture of ongoing improvement with appropriate and responsive systems in place to support the smooth organisation of the setting and to provide a very high quality service for the children and their parents.
- The educators had engaged in a wide range of continuing professional development (CPD) and at the time of inspection were engaging in further CPD activities. They successfully embedded the learning from their engagement with various courses and professional agencies in practice.
- Effective, clear two-way channels of communication between the early years setting and the parents were established. Information was shared informally on a daily basis, as well as regularly through a messaging application, email, open-days, phone calls and one-to-one meetings. The children and their parents were proactively consulted during decision making processes which affected them.
- Transitions into and from the setting were managed sensitively. Care was taken to ensure continuity of experiences and progression in learning. All of the children had settled in very well.
- At the end of the pre-school year, the educators provided the parents with key information needed to support their child's transition to primary school. The manager/owner had strong links with the staff in the local schools and developed a setting transition support tool called *"Hi Ho Hi Ho it's off to school we go!"*. The educators also introduced uniforms and images from all local schools to support the children's transition to primary school.

Summary of overall inspection

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

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.*