An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)
Final Report

Setting name	Joanna's Preschool and Afterschool
Setting address	Bonniconlon Ballina County Mayo F26PK26
TUSLA registration number	TU2022MO003
DCEDIY number	22MO0265
Date of inspection	20-09-2023
Date of issue of report	18-12-2023

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

Date of inspection	20-09-2023
Inspection activities undertaken • Pre-inspection meeting with the setting owner • 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 a number of sessions • Interaction with the children • Feedback meeting with the setting owner	

Context of setting

Joanna's Preschool and Afterschool is a privately-owned, early years setting, located on the site of Bonniconlon National School, in the village of Bonniconlon, County Mayo. The setting offers two morning preschool sessions for children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. On the day of inspection, there were thirty-two children present, along with the owner and five educators. 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 very good
- There was a very warm and caring atmosphere in the setting. The children and the educators enjoyed positive relationships.
- The parents and family members were greeted and welcomed individually at arrival and home times. The educators used these times to converse with the families and to share information.
- The educators displayed a very positive regard for the children. They knew the children very well, affirmed them regularly and offered support and encouragement when needed.
- There was a daily routine in place that allocated time for child-selected play and learning. There were good periods of sustained child-led play and a very good balance between child-led and educator-led activities.
- Transition times, as the children moved from one part of the routine to the next, were managed through the use of vocal prompts. Songs were also used to support the children with tidy-up routines.
- Snack time was a valued social occasion where the educators and the children sat and ate together.
- The setting had made connections with and was integrated into the local community. Visual representation of some of the children and their families were on display in the setting.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to continue to develop ways of including images of all the children, their families, and the local community, throughout the learning environments. This should further support the exploration of the local community, along with celebrating the cultural heritage of the children attending the setting, and their families. The Insights –

Quality in Early Years Education webinar on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion developed by the Department of Education should help to support this process.

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's practices were underpinned by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and by the HighScope approach to early education. The curriculum was organised on a long-term, medium-term and short-term basis and, at times, supported the children's emerging interests during the session.
- The early years educators observed, recorded and assessed the children's learning and development using a variety of methods. These included photographs, narrative observations, and samples of the children's work, that were compiled in learner journals.
- Play was valued as the central medium for learning. The children were given the time and space to become involved in imaginative play. The educators used effective strategies, such as reflective responses, and listening, to support the children's creative thinking and imagination.
- Emergent language was fostered through the children's exposure to songs and storytelling, and also during the daily circle-time experience. Numeracy was promoted informally on an ongoing basis with lots of informal counting, reference to shape and time, and a variety of displays in the environment.
- The indoor environment had some areas of defined play, such as a book area, table top activities, construction and mark-making materials. There were many resources which supported the children's creativity. During the inspection, the layout and arrangement of some of the interest areas and play resources limited the children's full engagement.
- An inclusive approach was adopted to ensure the engagement of all of the children in the setting. The educators made links with external agencies to optimise support for children with additional needs.

Actions advised

- The early years educators are advised to review their short-term planning to ensure documentation of the implementation the curriculum, including the next steps of learning from the children's observations, is evident. Naming the skills and learning dispositions in the planning records should further enhance this practice.
- The educators are advised to extend the use of the children's individual learning journals to include reflections from the children and their parents. Including the children's and parents' comments on their creative achievements, should help the educators to motivate the children in their learning and promote a positive understanding of themselves as competent learners.
- It is advised that the educators review the indoor environments so that similar interest areas are located together. The Learning Environment self-evaluation tool from the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* should further support the review and development of the indoor areas.

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

- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements was very good.
- The children showed engagement and enjoyment in their learning, along with a positive sense of wellbeing. They displayed positive learning dispositions, such as curiosity, resilience, resourcefulness and perseverance.
- The children were developing and refining their personal and social skills, such as self-regulation, reflection, negotiation and collaboration, very well throughout the day. The many child-led play scenarios skilfully facilitated this.

- The children were encouraged to take responsibility for a small number of tasks; for example to independently wash their hands and change their clothing to go outdoors. These opportunities had very positive benefits for the children's independence and wellbeing.
- The children experienced achievement, and a sense of confidence as learners, through discussions, for example when they recapped on their previous learning experiences.
- The children made sense of their world, as they played inside and outside, by interacting with other people and with their environment through inquiry and asking questions. The children were very comfortable conversing and sharing their views.
- Most of the children could count, identify colours, and sing a range of songs. They talked about their emotions confidently and displayed a very good capacity to play together, while sharing various resources.

Actions advised

- In order to build on the children's developing independence, the educators are advised to provide further opportunities for the children to complete a variety of small tasks, during the session.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was very good.
- To plan for curriculum implementation, informal meetings between the owner and the educators were held on a regular basis. The owner and the educators were aware of the resources from the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* to reflect on and plan for improvements in practice.
- There was a strong ethos of professionalism and teamwork evident in the setting. The team was well established and the educators were aware of their roles and responsibilities. Their dedication to the children and the families was clearly evident.
- The manager and the educators were committed to engaging in regular training and continuing professional development opportunities. This has developed their knowledge and understanding of early years education.
- The children's transition into the setting was managed effectively. There was a phased-in approach to settling the children into the setting.
- The parents and families were made aware of the setting's policies, procedures and curriculum. The owner and the educators also exchanged information with the parents informally at the door each day and formally through a messaging application, when needed.
- The setting had established a professional mutual relationship with the local primary school. The children had the opportunity to visit the school before they started there. The educators talked to the children and the parents about the move to primary school which helped to prepare them for this transition.

Actions advised

- Building on existing professional reflective practice, the owner and the educators are advised to further develop and document processes for structured self-evaluation and reflection. Regular engagement with the self-reflection materials in the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* should further strengthen and formalise how management and the educators review and enhance practice.
- To further support the transition to school for each child, the educators, in collaboration with the children and their parents, are encouraged to use the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) *Mo Scéal* transition materials to share the children's progress with the relevant primary school.

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	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.*

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