An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)
Final Report

Setting name	Jolly Tots at the Meadows Limited
Setting address	4 Meadow Grove Milltown Road Tuam County Galway H54NW81
TUSLA registration number	TU2020GY003
DCEDIY number	21GY0580
Date of inspection	27-01-2023
Date of issue of report	12-09-2023

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	27-03-2023
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 a number of sessions • Interaction with the children • Feedback meeting with the setting owner/manager and early years educators	

Context of setting

Jolly Tots at the Meadows Limited is located in Tuam, Co. Galway, and was established in 2020. It provides a morning session of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme, as well as full day-care services for children, across two rooms. This inspection focused on the ECCE programme. There are two co-owners, and the children were supported by four educators. 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 very good.
- A caring ethos and a warm, affirming atmosphere were evident. The educators were knowledgeable about the children's personalities, and throughout the session they referred to the children's families.
- The children actively organised their own learning and development activities. On arrival, they chose from the available resources. They played with magnetic blocks and dinosaurs and they enjoyed manoeuvring cars along a road map mat.
- Transitions between activities were well signalled and the children cooperated well at these times. They managed their self-help skills very well: they helped to tidy up; they used and discarded tissues appropriately; they independently accessed their bag; and they put on and took off their coats. Snack time was a social occasion.
- Practices in the setting supported the children to develop relationships with each other, and with the educators.
- The children were developing an appreciation of themselves as individuals. They sang songs which featured their names, and their names were shown on coat hooks. There was a family tree and photographs of their pre-school experiences were displayed. Visitors to the setting included a local Garda, dentist, and personnel from the fire station. Parents and families were invited to a graduation celebration.
- In the area surrounding the pre-school, the children collected leaves, and in the summer time they used the green areas for picnics. There were minimal representations of the locality in the two ECCE rooms.

Action advised

- The educators are advised to display and refer to more visual images of the unique natural and built features of Tuam. This will further support the children's familiarity with their community and their emerging sense of belonging to a wider group.

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.
- Provision was informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the Montessori approach. The quality of the planning practices varied across the two rooms. Where good practice was noted, plans were generated, and the children's interests were taken into account alongside some predetermined themes.
- Some assessment practices were established. Through the key-person approach, observations of the children were documented and these were shared with parents periodically. Commendably, the *Aistear Learning Record Template* was used. Overall, there was potential to develop the setting's assessment practices.
- Provision for the children's learning and development was aligned to their interests and capabilities. Play was the central medium through which they learned and developed.
- The educators were attuned to the children and good quality interactions were noted. They sat and engaged with the children at their level, and posed some higher-order questions, prompting them to think critically for example: "Will it fit?", and "How could we make it fit?"
- The indoor environments included suitable play resources. Outside, a mud kitchen, swings, slides and balance bikes were available. The children enjoyed sensory experiences and they exercised their physical skills.
- The setting's displays and the practical hands-on experiences enhanced the children's early literacy skills and mathematical understanding.
- All of the children were supported to engage in the activities; the setting's approaches were inclusive.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to consistently generate long, medium and short-term plans, which take account of each child's interests, needs, dispositions and the next steps in their learning and development.
- The educators are advised to agree and implement a clear approach to documenting the children's interests, needs, strengths and dispositions. All assessment data needs to be dated, so that each child's progress over time can be determined. The information gathered needs to inform the planning process to a greater degree. Helpful advice is provided in the Planning and Assessing pillar of the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide*.

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

- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements was good.
- The children were engaged in their learning and they demonstrated a positive sense of wellbeing. They were self-assured and confident.
- The children demonstrated the capacity to make decisions together. They collaborated to solve problems and decide what would happen next in their play scenarios.
- The children experienced achievement through their learning activities. At circle time, they sat together and sang songs, and throughout the session they sang spontaneously. They counted their friends, and they selected the correct numbers to show the date. They freely chose books to browse through together. Their scrapbooks included many templates and records of formal letter-formation activities, matching activities, and colouring-in templates. These approaches needed to be discontinued.
- The children's social skills were well developed. They took turns and they resolved disagreements independently.
- The children communicated their experiences, thoughts and ideas in a variety of ways. Overall, there was potential to further nurture all of the children's language skills.

- The children made sense of their world by interacting with the environment. They learned about road safety during *Beep Beep* day, they discussed the weather and used weather symbols, and during *Tidy-Up* week, they helped to pick up litter.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to discontinue formal literacy and numeracy activities. Instead, the children need to experience and understand literacy and numeracy concepts through play and practical tasks. The use of colouring-in templates needs to be phased out and replaced with more free, process-oriented, artistic activities.
- The educators are advised to take more purposeful steps to develop the children's language skills. This could be achieved, for example, by modelling the use of a broader range of vocabulary as they interact with the children, and by enabling them to frequently recite longer and more challenging rhymes, including traditional rhymes, and songs.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was good.
- The co-owners were on site on a regular basis. They visited the two ECCE rooms to assist with activities; this enabled them to have an overview of the provision for the children.
- There was some evidence that the educators had used the materials of the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* as a basis for observations, and to guide aspects of their practice. A systematic approach to setting self-evaluation had yet to be established across the two rooms. Monthly staff meetings took place and some meetings with individual educators took place.
- The setting communicated with families through phone calls and social media. A parent handbook was made available. There was potential to proactively consult and involve parents to a greater extent in their child's learning and development.
- Two of the educators had completed the Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years (LINC) programme, and while the setting was closed during the Covid-19 pandemic, the staff engaged in online training. Since then, there had been limited opportunities for continuous professional development (CPD).
- The educators discussed the transition to primary school with the children, they responded to queries from schools and completed any documentation requested by the school. There was potential to extend these practices.

Actions advised

- The managers need to establish a formal, systematic approach to setting self-evaluation. On a cyclical basis, there is a need to identify areas for improvement, set out associated actions, and monitor the progress being made. Parents' views could be sought as part of this process. More focused use of the materials in the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* is recommended, and it would be worthwhile to access CPD related to the setting's priorities.
- The educators are advised to complete a *Mo Scéal* template for each child; the child's parents can then choose to share this with the primary school. Practical advice on additional transition strategies is available in the Transitions series of *Insights: Quality in Early Years Education*, an online resource prepared by the Department of Education.

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	Good
Quality of management and leadership for learning	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