An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)
Final Report

Setting name	Kilkenny Road Community Childcare & Family Centre
Setting address	Kilkenny Road Co. Carlow Carlow R93FX65
TUSLA registration number	TU2015CW049
DCEDIY number	14CW0067
Date of inspection	28-04-2023
Date of issue of report	05-09-2023

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(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	28-04-2023
Inspection activities undertaken • Pre-inspection meeting with the setting manager and deputy 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 manager and deputy manager	

Context of setting

Kilkenny Road Community Childcare & Family Centre was established in 2014. It is one of two settings operated by St. Catherine's Community Services. Located in Carlow town, the purpose -built setting, provides full-time, part-time and sessional care and education to children from the local and surrounding areas. On the morning of the inspection, five educators and sixteen children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme were present in the two pre-school rooms inspected. The manager and assistant manager attended the post-feedback meeting. The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the report, and the response of the setting will be found in the appendix of this report.

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.
- The educators have created a child-friendly and nurturing atmosphere. The children and their parents were welcomed in a friendly manner. Conversations between parents and educators at arrival and collection times encouraged the two-way sharing of information.
- The manager and educators knew the children and their families well and were sensitive to their needs. Although the setting advocates the use of a key person approach, all educators have developed strong bonds with the children in their learning room.
- The daily routine was highly effective in supporting the children's active engagement. The balance between child-initiated and adult-initiated activities provided ample time for the children to organise their learning and follow their interests.
- A focus on healthy eating and positive social interaction was evident during snack. The children chose where to sit in a designated dining room and openly chatted with their peers, educators and kitchen staff. Food prepared by a cook was served and non-plastic cutlery and delph was used.
- Children in the setting came from a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Their identity and belonging was strengthened through the value the educators placed on promoting diversity and inclusiveness within the setting.
- The children's uniqueness was represented through photographs, country flags, name displays, birthday charts, a family wall, and displayed samples of artwork. The educators spoke with children about activities they did at home and they celebrated each child's birthday.

- The educators successfully encouraged parental involvement and developed strong links with the local community. Parents were invited to attend yearly events, share information on their cultures and read books in their home language to the children. Along with members of the local community, they shared information on their professional experiences with the children. Visitors to the setting included, a scientist, pizza maker, engineer, farmer, postman, and *An Garda*.

Actions advised

- To support the children's predictability of daily events, the educators are advised to visually display the routine in picture format at the children's height.
- To further enhance the children's mealtime experiences and self-help skills, the educators are advised to sit with the children and encourage them to serve their own food and pour their own drink.

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.
- An emergent play-based curriculum informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* was in operation in the setting.
- The educators undertook thematic long-term, medium-term and short-term planning to support children's learning and development. They reported that the children's interests were occasionally used to inform plans.
- The children's progression in learning and development was recorded in a small number of observations. Learner journals, memory books and floor books were used to document learning.
- Praise and encouragement were regular features of the educator's interactions with the children. The educators sat at the children's physical level and offered ongoing support as they spontaneously followed the children's emergent interests and play ideas.
- The educators viewed play as central to children's learning and development. During the free-play time, the children successfully planned and led play activities, for example they became beauticians and barbers, and chose to paint and play with playdough.
- The educators purposefully engaged in the children's pretend-play activities. On a few occasions, they used open-ended questioning and sustained shared thinking to scaffold and extend the children's learning.
- The learning environment was well-planned and comprised of two learning rooms and an outdoor area. The indoor environments were divided into clearly defined interest areas and included provision for sensory, creative, table-top, mark-making, construction, and socio-dramatic play and activities. Resources were plentiful; with a good range of open-ended, real and natural materials freely available to support children's curiosity, creativity and imaginary development.
- The children had daily access to several outdoor spaces. These offered opportunities to explore, take risks, freely run, cycle, and climb and engage in pretend play and sensory activities. During the inspection, the children chose to play indoors or outside. While playing outdoors, some children had the opportunity to mix with children of different ages.
- The educators provided a variety of resources and approaches to support children's early literacy and numeracy skills. These included a print-rich environment, high-quality books and mark-making equipment and the effective use of songs, stories and rhymes throughout the day. They also modelled language when they described children's involvement in activities.

- Supported by the 'Inclusive officer', the educators promoted an inclusive environment; recognition and accommodation of diversity were highly effective. The educators linked closely with parents and with external agencies to support children with additional needs and developed a multi-sensory room to help children self-regulate and manage their emotional and sensory difficulties. Support under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) was availed of and some educators have participated in the Leadership for INClusion (LINC) training.

- To support, communicate and share information with parents for whom English is not a first language, the educators used digital media to translate information. Where available, they used library resources in different languages to share information as they linked parents into wider services within the community centre.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to record more regular observations noting the children's interests, dispositions and the next steps in learning. It is also advised that information gathered be used to inform short-term plans and that this is made evident in planning documents.
- To further scaffold the children's learning and to support their higher level of thinking during free play, the educators are advised to engage in more sustained shared thinking conversations with the children and to use more open-ended questions during discussions.

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

- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements was very good.
- The children displayed a positive sense of well-being and were at ease in their surroundings.
- Throughout the inspection, the children exhibited high levels of enjoyment. There were many observations of the children laughing as they playfully engaged in self-chosen and adult-led activities.
- The children joined in many play activities in pairs and small groups. Most children displayed highly effective self-regulation and turn-taking skills as they engaged with children of similar and mixed ages. During the inspection, the educators used a timer to support some children to share equipment.
- The children demonstrated appropriate social skills and a good awareness of themselves and others. For example, they shared news from home and referred to family members. They actively sought out other children to play with; many good friendships were evident.
- During the inspection, several children demonstrated a very good awareness of rules and boundaries. On occasion, a very small number of children found it a little difficult to express their emotions and feelings when responding to minor social conflicts.
- The children displayed natural curiosity and an eagerness to learn, explore and experiment. They expressed themselves through creative, mark-making and role-playing activities. For example, some children were highly engaged as they learned to syringe water from one bottle to another. As they developed the skill they referred to the water squirting from the syringe as 'Lava'. Their enthusiasm and animation, when they mastered the task, encouraged other children to become involved.
- The children displayed confidence in their fine and gross motor abilities. These were most notable when they confidently cut pieces of paper to glue, engaged in mark-making activities, ran, climbed, crawled, jumped and learned to cycle bikes.
- The children's communication skills were age appropriate and developing well. During the inspection, many children comfortably chatted with adults and their peers. They expressed themselves non-verbally through creative, role-playing and music activities. Some children were happy to share their immediate learning experiences and successes with others.

Actions advised

- To support the children to reflect on and share learning, the educators are advised to provide the them with opportunities to plan and share learning with their peers and their key person in small groups.
- The educators are advised to name children's emotions and use problem solving strategies to support the children's understanding of their emotions and to develop problem solving skills.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was very good.

- There was a very professional ethos in this setting. The managers and educators were committed to providing a quality learning experience for children.
- A strong sense of teamwork and cooperation between the managers, educators and support staff was evident. Responsibilities for leading learning were appropriately shared between the educators. The assistant manager worked alongside staff in one of the learning rooms. The setting also supported staff members on the Community Employment (CE) scheme to gain qualifications to become early years educators.
- Quarterly team meetings and daily chats were used to plan, share information, discuss policies, issues and concerns and set goals. The manager provided regular supervision to all staff members to affirm good practice, set goals and support their ongoing development.
- Reflections on practice were often carried out; occasionally the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* was used to support the process.
- The pedagogical approach was evident in practice. The written policies and procedures provided a clear vision for the direction of the work of the setting. There was clarity around the roles and responsibilities of the educators.
- The board of management, with support from the manager and educators, regularly reviewed policies and procedures. The policies and procedures were shared with parents through the parent's handbook.
- The setting availed of external support for training and advice from the local county childcare committee, Early Childhood Ireland, Better Start, and private early years consultants. Continuous professional development (CPD) was valued and promoted within the setting.
- There was evidence of effective communication between the educators and the parents. This included informal daily chats, the sharing of information through a computer application, phone calls, text and emails and written correspondence through leaflets, letters and notes.
- Typically, children attending pre-school begin their journey in the setting as babies. A carefully planned move between learning rooms was supported by the children's key persons. A highly effective settling-in policy supported children's transition into the setting. Visits to the setting and 'All About Me' information on each child was sought from parents before their children started. A phased settling-in approach led by children was implemented.
- The setting has established positive relationships with the local primary school. Every year the home-school liaison teacher visited children. School uniforms and photographs of local schools and teachers, along with planned activities and discussions were used to support children to explore their expectations and thoughts. The National Council for Curriculum Assessment (NCCA) *Mo Scéal* resources are used to share information.

Actions advised

- The management team are advised to introduce more regular team meetings with the educators to plan, discuss and review the curriculum. It is advised that the educators be more consistent in their use of the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* as a resource to carry out self-reviews.
- To build on the links already established with parents, the educators are advised to conduct formal parent meetings to support the sharing of information on children's learning and development.

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.*

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

APPENDIX

SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT
SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

- Kilkenny Road Community Childcare and Family Services are happy to accept the report. We have taken on board the advice of the Inpsector and have implemented the following practices

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

- Visual timeslines of the day are on display in all classrooms
- We have returned to our pre-covid practice of allowing children to serve their own food at meal time. We would note that staff do sit with children at meal times. This may not be possible at times when there are flight risk children in attendance.
- The number of staff meetings per year has been increased.
- Staff reflections are recorded in the room learning journals and discussed at team meetings.
- Kilkenny Road childcare offers an open door policy to parents at all times. We welcome input from them through daily conversations, communications via little Vista and end of year evaluations.