An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)

Final Report

Setting name	Killeen Childcare Ltd.
Setting address	Killeen Community Centre Killeen Louisburgh County Mayo F28TX65
TUSLA registration number	TU2015MO062
DCEDIY number	09MO0047
Date of inspection	04-06-2024
Date of issue of report	17-10-2024

What is an Early Years Education Inspection?

The Early Years Education Inspection model is used to provide evaluative information, advice and support in relation to the education of children aged birth to six years in early learning and care settings. The inspections will affirm good practice and provide advice to support internal quality development processes that optimise children's education experiences and outcomes.

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	04-06-2024

Activities conducted during the Inspection

- Pre-inspection meeting with the setting manager
- Review of setting documentation and records relating to the children's learning and development
- Review of the education resources and facilities
- Observations of interactions during the Early Childhood Care and Education Programme session
- Interaction with the children
- Interaction with the early years educators
- Feedback meeting with the setting manager and an early years educator

Context of setting

Killeen Childcare Ltd. is a community-based setting located in Killeen, Louisburgh, County Mayo. It offers a morning Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme to participating children. On the day of inspection, there were eight children, the setting manager and two educators in attendance. The setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised in this report, and the response submitted on behalf of the setting can 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 excellent.
- A highly caring ethos and a wonderfully warm, nurturing and affirming atmosphere was evident.
- The manager and the educators demonstrated sustained respectful attention towards the parents and the children during times of arrival and departure. The educators used these times for engaging in open conversation and sharing relevant information. This approach reflected their commitment to fostering strong relationships and open communication.
- The educators provided ample time, space, and materials that enabled the children to be active agents to choose and organise their learning and development activities
- Each educator had the role of key person for a dedicated group of children. They acted as an important link between the families and the setting.
- The daily routine consistently promoted the children's physical, social, and emotional development, along with their overall wellbeing and learning. Extended periods of child-led play were balanced with adult-initiated activities. The children had the freedom to choose whether join activities introduced by the educators or continue to explore their own interests.
- Snack-time was a delightfully sociable occasion. The educators sat with the children and they engaged in lively conversations. The educators actively encouraged and supported the children to be independent.
- Transitions were minimal and announced in advance with vocal cues, a timer and singing. The children were very eagerly and actively involved in tidying up, sorting, pairing, matching, sequencing and organising play materials; these activities supported the children's early understanding of mathematics.
- The educators nurtured the children's sense of identity and belonging, respecting and recognizing each child's uniqueness. The setting had made strong connections with and was integrated into the local community.

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.
- A play-based curriculum, informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework,* was in place. A broad-based approach to planning was evident which incorporated short-term, medium-term and long-term plans. The plans, were influenced by thematic, seasonal topics and the emerging interests of the children.
- The assessment of the children's development and learning progress was reflected through various methods such as narrative observations, photographs, educator notes, and learning journals. The manager and the educators had utilised a strengths-based assessment approach to collect data on the children's learning experiences and achievements. There was room for further enhancement by developing a more comprehensive approach to assessment to support the next steps in the children's learning and development.
- The educators recognised and championed each child's right to play. Therefore, play was central to all activities, with the quality of play provision being outstanding. Child-initiated, active and interactive play was recognised, promoted, and utilised as the primary way through which the children were learning and developing.
- High-quality interactions with the children were facilitated. The educators were very skilled in using appropriate interaction strategies such as active listening, prompting and asking open-ended questions to stimulate the children's own thought process. The educators placed a strong focus on promoting shared, sustained thinking to advance the children's learning and development.
- Both indoor and outdoor learning spaces were very well-structured and equipped. They offered a wide variety of play options including creative, language, physical, imaginative, exploratory, and construction play.
- The children's developing language, literacy and numeracy skills were nurtured very effectively. They had access to a broad range of high-quality books. The educators maintained an appropriate balance between listening and speaking. They very effectively enabled the children to recall and reflect and to make connections between their existing knowledge and new learning opportunities.
- The educators acknowledged and accommodate diversity in the style, pace and focus of each child's learning and development and their individual temperament. They had established connections with external agencies, where appropriate and possible, to maximise support for all children.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to enhance and expand on the detail recorded in the children's individual observations in order to clearly outline their plans for progressing the children's learning and development. These learning plans should further inform and clearly link to the short-term curriculum plans. The available resources on assessment from the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* can support the educators with 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 demonstrated contentment, satisfaction and a sense of achievement through their voluntary, and spontaneous play. They were developing physically, emotionally, and socially. Their play effortlessly combined thought and action in rich, continuous play scenarios. They displayed positive learning traits such as confidence, competence, resilience, resourcefulness and persistence.
- The children were free to move between the indoor and outdoor learning environments. They utilised the many opportunities available to them throughout the session to express their thoughts, interests and creativity. They blended paints and transformed their blank pages into vibrant displays. They mixed colours to create "aquamarine" as they discussed the seascape at the rear of the setting.

- The children confidently demonstrated the ability to plan and lead their own learning. As they playfully engaged and participated in activities, they displayed high levels of curiosity and imagination. One child's finger danced in circles above their "whirlpool" painting as they whispered "around and around". Another child used sweeping brush strokes to depict "the sea's stormy waves", each stroke accompanied by a "swooshing" sound of a pretend "crash". These imaginative ventures not only enhanced the children's artistic skills but also supported their cognitive and emotional development, fostered creativity, spatial awareness, and self-expression.
- In the outdoor learning environment the children demonstrated a developing capacity to make decisions and use judgment. They quickly and skilfully maneuvered their ride-on toys. Recognising a learning opportunity one of the educators introduced a stop/start system. Through this engaging activity, the children learned to pause and patiently wait for directions to proceed. This shared joy-filled experience fostered the children's ability to follow instructions, self-control, listening, and turn-taking. In addition, the children were being introduced to basic road safety rules.
- Throughout the session the children used language to give and receive information, interpret experiences, ask questions, make requests, negotiate, solve problems, imagine and recreate roles and to clarify and recap on their thinking, ideas and feelings.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was very good.
- An ethos of teamwork, collaboration and partnership was evident. The manager and the educators demonstrated a professional approach. They were committed to delivering high-quality early learning provision. This was clearly guided by the child-centred philosophy and vision adopted by the setting.
- At times, the educators engaged in internal evaluation reviews and implemented quality improvement plans accordingly. There was potential to enhance these practices by adopting a more formal and systematic approach.
- Parents and families were consulted as the primary educators of their children and involved as partners in their children's learning and development. 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 were supported to settle into the setting in a very sensitive manner. The families and the children were invited to visit the setting to familiarise themselves with the educators and the environments. An enrolment form was used to gather personal information. The parents were encouraged to stay in the setting to ensure their child felt supported during the settling-in period.
- The transition from the pre-school to primary school was very effectively supported. The educators included resources in the learning environments to support the children's awareness of their move to primary school. They had established a professional mutual relationship with the local primary school. They worked in collaboration with the parents in order to share information with the primary school that supported and promoted curriculum continuity and recognition of their child's prior learning experiences and achievements.

Action advised

- Expanding on existing reflective practices, the manager and the educators are advised to implement a more formal, recurring approach to internal evaluation. They are advised to document and share the outcomes of evaluation with parents and relevant stakeholders. The full suite of self-evaluation tools in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* could support this action.

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	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	Examples of descriptive terms
Excellent	**Provision that is excellent** is exemplary in meeting the needs of learners. This provision provides an example for other schools and settings of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Excellent; exemplary; outstanding; exceptionally high standard; with very significant strengths
Very good	**Provision that is very good** is very effective in meeting the needs of learners and is of a very high standard. There is potential to build on existing strengths to achieve an excellent standard.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful
Good	**Provision that is good** is effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to build on existing strengths in order to address the aspects to be developed and achieve a very good standard.	Good; of good quality; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; strengths outweigh the shortcomings; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist
Requires improvement to achieve a good standard	**Provision that requires improvement to achieve a good standard** is not sufficiently effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is good or better.	Fair; less than effective; less than sufficient; evident weaknesses that are impacting on learning; experiencing difficulty; shortcomings outweigh strengths; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard	**Provision that requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard** is not meeting the needs of learners. There is immediate need for significant action to address the areas of concern.	Weak; poor; ineffective; insufficient; unacceptable; experiencing significant difficulties; serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated; requiring significant change, development and improvement to be effective

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

Overall, we were delighted with the Inspection Report. It was beneficial to see that our efforts on focusing on a child centred practice and listening to the child's voice along with developing a strong relationship with parents were acknowledged. We look forward to taking on board the recommendations and advice and incorporating them into our practice within our setting.

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

The actions the manager and educator are planning to incorporate into their practice, through utilising the beneficial feedback received from the inspection report is as follows:

The actions advised to us in relation to **Area 2** was:

The educators are advised to enhance and expand on the detail recorded in the children's individual observations in order to clearly outline their plans for progressing the children's learning and development.
These learning plans should further inform and clearly link to the short-term curriculum plans. The available resources on assessment from the Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide can support the educators with this action.

The manager and educator are planning to incorporate and enhance their child observation documentation of their learning journals by adding a 'Learning record template' section in their learning journals, from the Aistear Siolta practice guide. This will clearly document and record each child's learning by use of a picture and adding the information required about the observation being made. They feel that this will further enhance their learning journal books, that are in use to record our observations. It also assists them with planning how to further develop, each child's learning from that observation. They will also invite parents to take the learning journals home throughout the year at the end of each term, to see how their children are progressing within the preschool environment.

The actions advised to us in relation to **Area 4 was:**

Expanding on existing reflective practices, the manager and the educators are advised to implement a more formal, recurring approach to internal evaluation. They are advised to document and share the outcomes of evaluation with parents and relevant stakeholders. The full suite of self-evaluation tools in the Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide could support this action.

The manager and educator are planning to evaluate and reflect on their practice throughout the year by utilising the 6 self-evaluation tools recommended from the Aistear and Siolta practice guide. These include: **1. Planning and Assessing using Aistear Themes 2. Nurturing and extending interactions 3. Supporting transitions. 4. Building relationships with parents. 5. Creating and using the learning environment 6. Learning through play.**

The manager and educator will complete all 6 stages of the Aistear Siolta self-evaluation tool throughout the year. They also plan to have a staff meeting on the last Friday of each month to go through the self-evaluation tools to develop quality practice. They are planning to implement parent teacher meetings during the year to discuss the children's progress and our self-evaluation paperwork will be available for parents to view.