An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)

Final Report

Setting name	Knockmore Rathduff Butterflies Community Playschool
Setting address	Knockmore Rathduff Resource Centre Ballina Co. Mayo F26E5D0
TUSLA registration number	TU2015MO065
DCEDIY number	09MO0057
Date of inspection	30-01-2024
Date of issue of report	29-04-2024

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

Date of inspection	30-01-2024

Activities conducted during the Inspection

- Pre-inspection meeting with the 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 an Early Childhood Care and Education Programme
- Interaction with children
- Interaction with early years educators
- Feedback meeting with the setting manager and early years educators

Context of setting

Knockmore Rathduff Butterflies Playschool is a community-based setting located in the village of Knockmore, County Mayo. It offers a morning Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme to participating children. On the day of inspection, there were fifteen 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, 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 good.
- There was a welcoming and friendly atmosphere in the setting. The educators were attentive and showed a positive regard for the children and their families.
- The key-person approach was used to generate links with the families, and to help support planning and assessment processes.
- The educators knew the children well, affirmed them regularly and offered support and encouragement when needed.
- The daily routine consisted of both adult-initiated and child-initiated play. The children had the opportunity to make independent decisions about their preferred choice of activities and the educators acknowledged and supported these decisions.
- Transition times, where 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. During the inspection some of the children experienced a lengthy waiting period before going outside.
- Snack time was a relaxed and social experience where the children engaged in conversations with their peers and the educators.
- The educators created a small number of opportunities to develop the children's sense of identity and belonging. For example, some of the children's photographs and artwork were displayed. Visual representations of the local community and of the children's diverse backgrounds and cultures had yet to be developed.

Actions advised

- The manager and the educators are advised to further develop the key-person approach. This could provide greater opportunities to organise the transition to outdoor play in order to reduce waiting times. The tip sheet Using a Key-Person Approach from the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* could assist with this action.
- The educators are advised to further strengthen the representation of the local community and the children's diverse backgrounds and cultures throughout the learning environments. The Insights – Quality in Early Years Education webinar on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion developed by the Department of Education could support this action.

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.
- 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, primarily thematic in nature had yet to be purposefully organised to promote the progression of the next steps in the children's learning and development.
- A small number of observations were used to assess the children's development and learning progress. A more comprehensive approach to assessment to support the next steps in the children's learning had yet to be established.
- The educators engaged in informal discussion with the parents on a regular basis to inform them about their child's learning and development.
- Play was valued as the central medium through which the children learned and developed. The children were given the time and space to engage in a variety of play, including construction play, physical play and table-top activities. The educators used effective strategies, such as reflective responses, and listening, to support the children's thinking and imagination.
- The spacious outdoor environment was inviting and provided the children with challenge and choice over their learning activities. Planting boxes were evident where daffodils and snowdrops were beginning to bloom. There was a covered area with benches and tables, with space for mark-making activities. The children confidently cycled around the playground. On the day of the inspection the children were unable to access the covered sand pit.
- The indoor learning environments were bright and spacious with some areas of defined play. These included a home corner, construction area, table-top activities, a small amount of mark-making materials, and a book area. The layout and arrangement of the interest areas and play resources in some areas of the setting would benefit from a review.
- Links had been made with external agencies to gain support for children with additional needs. The use of communication diaries to share home and setting strategies, to further support all of the children, had yet to be established.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to ensure that the planned activities are informed by the children's emergent interests to a greater extent, with clear learning outcomes, linked with *Aistear*. The templates and advice on Planning and Assessing in the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* could support this process.
- The educators are advised to review the full potential of the key-person approach. The resources related to the key-person approach, which have been developed by Barnardo's, and the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide,* could be used to further support the communication with parents.
- The manager and the educators are advised to consider a free-flow system between the indoor and outdoor environments. They are also advised to provide the children with daily access to water and the outdoor sand pit.

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

- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements was good.
- The children displayed enjoyment and a positive sense of wellbeing. They were motivated in their learning and engaged well in free-play and sharing opportunities in pairs and small groups.
- The educators were responsive to the children's verbal and non-verbal cues and communication. They supported the children to confidently make choices and decisions.
- The children were developing some self-care skills and they took responsibility for a small number of tasks during the session. They put on and took off their coats and washed their hands independently.
- The children showed the capacity to be creative and express their thoughts and ideas. Some of their learning experiences were too formal; for example, there was an over-reliance on template-based art activities.
- The children were developing an appreciation of cultural diversity through planned activities, and through resources in the indoor learning environment. Some of the children came from backgrounds where English was a second language in their home. There was scope to explore and further support all of the children's home languages during the pre-school session.

- The children engaged in fun activities which increased their confidence and coordination. In relation to their gross-motor and fine-motor skills; they played large group games outside which required them to run and stop quickly, jump and balance and move in a variety of ways.

Actions advised

- The manager and the educators are advised to reduce the use of templates and work sheets. This should lessen prescriptive learning and could provide greater opportunity for the children to express their own interpretations and foster more creativity.
- The educators are advised to provide opportunities for the children to participate in planned activities to enrich their language development and to encourage an appreciation of their home languages.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was good.
- An ethos of teamwork and partnership was evident. The educators were encouraged to take ownership of their practice and informal team meetings were held. A formal, systematic approach to setting self-evaluation had yet to be established.
- The educators were knowledgeable about the children's learning and development. Recently, they had undertaken continuing professional development and engaged with the Better Start Quality Development Service.
- Two-way channels of communication were fostered with the families. The educators shared information about the children's learning and achievements with the parents and families through informal conversations, and use of a messaging app.
- The educators supported the children's transition into the setting by gathering relevant information about each child on a setting enrolment form. Visits to the setting were arranged for the children and their parents to support the settling-in process. The parents were also given a handbook which provided an overview of the general practices in the setting.
- To support the transition to primary school, the children visited the local schools and the educators had informal discussions with the parents and the children. There was potential to extend these practices.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to use the resources from the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* to review provision and to promote a culture of self-reflection. The online webinar series of Insights – Quality in Early Years Education, developed by the Department of Education Inspectorate, could further support this action.
- The educators are advised to introduce the *Mo Scéal* reporting templates from the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) to support the children's transition to primary school. This should share strengths-based information from the setting to the school regarding each child's learning and development.

Summary of overall inspection

Area	Quality level
Quality of context to support children's learning and development	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	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

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