An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)
Final Report

Setting name	Little Harvard Creche & Afterschool MN
Setting address	Little Harvard Creche & Afterschool MN Carton Wood Maynooth Kildare W23X8KK
TUSLA registration number	TU2020KE007
DCEDIY number	20KE0442
Date of inspection	15-03-2023
Date of issue of report	04-09-2023

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	15-03-2023
Inspection activities undertaken • Pre-inspection meeting with the setting manager • Review of setting documentation and records of children's learning and development • Review of the education resources and facilities • Observations of interactions during five morning sessions • Interaction with the children • Feedback meeting with the setting manager, three regional managers and the general manager of the Little Harvard group	

Context of setting

Little Harvard Creche and Afterschool is one of fifteen private settings under the Little Harvard group. It was established in 2000 and is located in a purpose built premises in the Carton Wood housing estate, Maynooth. It offers part-time, full-time, sessional, and afterschool services. There were five morning sessions providing the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, there were sixty-eight children and thirteen educators. The setting manager, three regional managers and the general manager of the Little Harvard group all attended the post-inspection feedback meeting. 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.
- A very warm and nurturing atmosphere was evident. Children were individually greeted on arrival and welcomed into the setting. They hung up their coats and immediately became involved in their play.
- The daily routines provided the children with great autonomy to make decisions about their learning. Visual routines were displayed in each of the sessions which supported the children in knowing what to expect throughout the morning.
- Meal times were relaxed occasions where children and educators sat together, enjoying their food and engaging in natural conversations.
- Times of transition, where children moved between areas and/or experiences, were effectively supported. Educators provided the children with prior notice and sang a song to prepare the children for changes that were about to happen.
- Relationships between children and educators were consistently respectful. Educators showed great warmth and affection towards the children. This supported how content and comfortable the children appeared in the presence of the educators.
- Children's sense of belonging was promoted in many effective ways. For example, many displays reflecting the children, their families and their creative achievements were featured throughout the various learning environments.
- A small number of educators promoted the use of the Irish language with the children in natural and playful ways.

- Effective efforts were made to recognise and celebrate the diverse community throughout the setting. For example, some displays, discussions with parents, and the celebration of cultural days had given some recognition to children's cultures.
- Links have been established between the setting and the local community. Community members visited the setting and members of the community, such as the local librarian, had visited and read stories with the children.

Action advised

- The educators are advised to further develop how they recognise and celebrate all children so that they have equal opportunities to engage with their home language, culture, traditions and beliefs.

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, with many links to *Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*, was in place.
- Planning provision focused on adult chosen pre-determined themes, cultural events and seasonal activities and experiences.
- Assessment approaches included photographs, monthly descriptions of children's engagement in their learning experiences and individual learning journals.
- Many effective interaction strategies were used by educators in their engagement with children. They were consistently attentive and responsive towards the children, their questions and queries. The educators displayed respect and humour in their interactions with the children while consistently offering support and guidance in their learning and development.
- The indoor environments consisted of many defined interest areas. These spaces were resourced with a large quantity and wide variety of resources and materials for the children to explore and investigate.
- The outdoor environment was a shared space where a roster was in place to accommodate all rooms. It included spaces that were both sheltered and open to accommodate all weathers. While none of the sessions engaged in the outdoor environment on the day of the inspection due to wet weather, it was reported that all sessions would normally explore the outdoors on a daily basis.
- Play was recognised and valued as the main medium through which the children learn and develop. Generous time was allocated to child-initiated uninterrupted play, thus supporting the children to engage in rich play experiences.
- The environment promoted opportunities to support the children's literacy and numeracy skills. The facilitation of some songs also supported the children in their language skills.
- The educators demonstrated many effective inclusive practices. They engaged and liaised with external agencies, including the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM), and developed inclusion plans for children with additional needs. An example of highly effective two-way communication between educators and parents included the regular use of a communication notebook. This involved the exchange of information between educators and parents with regards to individual child's learning and development.

Actions advised

- Educators are advised to build on their existing assessment approaches to include children's schemas, dispositions, values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding. Documenting this information will provide a rich picture of each individual child, their learning and development. The use of the *Aistear Learning Record* would assist in this regard.

- Educators are advised to prepare emergent short-term plans. Using the information gathered through their assessment of children's learning and development will assist in ensuring that curriculum plans are reflective of the children's varying interests, abilities, needs and previous learning experiences.
- Educators are advised, on occasions where children cannot or are not offered an opportunity to go outside, to provide alternative physical play and movement experiences in the indoor environment. This would support the promotion of all children's gross motor development.

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

- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements was very good.
- The children presented as being very content and happy. They displayed great interest in their playful learning experiences which they freely chose.
- The children demonstrated great motivation and concentration as they engaged with the various resources and experiences available.
- The children demonstrated great independence. This was regularly promoted by educators who actively encouraged the children to open their lunch boxes and put on their coats independently.
- Many of the children displayed a clear sense of achievement in their learning. They called on educators to share their achievements, had access to their individual learning journals and were in receipt of frequent positive and affirming language from educators.
- Children engaged in mostly large group experiences that explored broad thematic topics such painting shamrocks and learning about leprechauns. Tailored small group experiences were not provided.
- The children demonstrated their developing sense of identity. Their family portraits were on display in the learning environments and many children discussed family members and shared personal experiences.
- Children were developing their personal and social skills in accordance with their age and stage of development. They worked well together with many friendships developing.
- Children had some opportunities to communicate and express themselves through large group conversations, songs and rhymes. During the inspection, the introduction of a guitar proved particularly popular as the children made requests for their favourite songs.
- The children's voices were visible within their own creative achievements and throughout some of their individual learning journals.
- Children had many opportunities to develop an awareness of the natural environment and its features, materials, and plants. For example, the children recently had opportunities to grow chives, lettuce and potatoes. The use of recycled materials, in areas such as the construction area, also promoted children to think creatively as to how the materials could be repurposed.

Actions advised

- Educators are advised to intentionally provide opportunities that promote all children's language and communication skills. For example, facilitating small group discussions, circle time, and a time for children to reflect and recall on their learning would support this.
- Educators are advised to provide tailored small group experiences which meet and extend the needs, competencies and interests of the children. These opportunities could be planned, organised and facilitated by the children's key person to ensure that they positively support and further promote the children's learning and development.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

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

- Management and educators regularly reflected on and reviewed their practice, policies and procedures. Planning time was allocated each week to support educators to assess, plan and document children's learning and development.
- Individual teams demonstrated a clear sense of teamwork. They worked well together and ensured smooth organisation of the sessions. The setting manager offered regular support to the individual teams.
- Management and educators benefitted from mentoring through the Access and Inclusion Model. This supported and promoted inclusive practices throughout the setting.
- Educators engaged in their compulsory training which included First-Aid Responder (FAR) Course and manual handling training. The deputy manager participated in the Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) Programme. At the time of the inspection, there were no plans for educators to engage in professional learning opportunities with regards to quality provision.
- Many effective systems were in place to support educators in their role. These included appraisals and induction processes. Additional supports through the wider group included human resource and regular assistance from the regional manager.
- Management and educators used a variety of communication strategies to exchange information with parents. For example, a parent handbook, newsletters and regular sharing of children's learning journals. Due to the location of some of the sessions, some parents had the opportunity to enter the setting. Other parents were not in a position to enter and remained outside of the setting at all times.
- Settling-in procedures were in place to support children starting in the setting. A gradual settling-in period was offered where parents were welcomed to support and assist their child. Educators gathered information from parents during this time to assist them in getting to know their child, their likes and dislikes.
- Children's transition from the early learning and care setting to primary school were supported by educators. At the request of a local school, educators completed the *Mo Scéal* transition template and shared them with parents. The setting manager also regularly engaged with the local school principals. Children who availed of the full time service in the setting also had the opportunity to travel on the bus to collect the children attending afterschool and to become familiar with the local primary school setting.

Actions advised

- In addition to mandatory training, management and educators are advised to develop a strategic plan that identifies and priorities opportunities for all educators to engage in relevant and meaningful continuous professional development. It is important that these opportunities focus on quality provision and address areas of practice such as curriculum, assessment and planning. Regular engagement with the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* would also be beneficial.
- Management and educators are advised to further develop their partnership with parents. In doing so, management and educators could welcome all parents into the setting. Promoting greater involvement of parents in their child's learning would further assist in strengthening clear two-way channels of communication between parents and educators.

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.*