An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)

Final Report

Setting name	Milford Community Playgroup
Setting address	Moyle Road Milford County Donegal F92RXW8
TUSLA registration number	TU2015DL080
DCEDIY number	09DL0046
Date of inspection	28-11-2024
Date of issue of report	07-02-2025

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	28-11-2024

Activities conducted during the Inspection

- Pre-inspection meeting with the setting manager/lead early years educator
- 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 one Early Childhood Care and Education Programme session
- Interaction with children
- Interaction with early years educators
- Feedback meeting with the setting manager/lead early years educator and one early years educator

Context of setting

Milford Community Playgroup is a community based early learning and care setting, located in Milford, County Donegal. The early learning and care setting is established for over forty years and offers one morning session each day for children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, one lead early years educator, three early years educators, and sixteen children were present. 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 good.
- An educator greeted the parents and children by name at the door of the setting upon arrival. The children were familiar with the routine and hung up their coats and bags naturally when they entered the room.
- The educators displayed a visual daily routine at the children's level to support their awareness of the sequence of activities each day.
- The educators sat with the children during snack time and engaged in conversation about lunches and some of the children's individual experiences. They promoted the children's self-help skills which supported the children's competency and confidence noted in one child's comment, 'I can do this all by myself.'
- The educators provided the children with verbal cues to prepare them for the upcoming transition. They encouraged the children to line up during transitions such as hand washing, toileting, and going outside. One educator demonstrated sensitivity and warmth when explaining to a child how the outside activity was being organised. A few children were not ready for, or fully aware of, some of the transitions during the session.
- The educators were caring towards the children and familiar with their personalities and temperaments. The manager had previously used a key person approach in the setting.
- The educators encouraged the children to play co-operatively and supported them during instances of minor conflict during the session. They affirmed the children for their acts of kindness towards their peers.
- The educators fostered the children's sense of belonging by creating photographic displays and displaying the children's arts and crafts. They engaged in warm and personable conversations with the children throughout the morning as they shared stories about their families and their individual play preferences.
- The manager, educators, and parents' committee had organised a special celebratory event marking forty years of the service in the community. This event provided opportunities for the children to meet members of the community and celebrate with their family.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the educators develop strategies that support the children to process upcoming transitions and to purposefully engage during transitions. Using the visual daily

routine as well as further visual and auditory strategies will enhance the children's awareness. Reducing the line-up time and replacing it with a purposeful activity will engage the children during routine transitions.
- The educators are advised to introduce a key person policy and approach to the setting. This will enhance their relationships with the children and their families, as well as having regular small-group activities to support and extend their learning.
- It is advised that the educators provide opportunities for the children to develop skills to resolve conflict independently. Engaging the children in problem solving and discussing feelings in the moment will enhance the children's confidence during instances of minor conflict. Developing a managing children's behaviour policy will enhance the educators' awareness of how to promote independent conflict resolution with the children.

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.
- The educators recorded plans on a medium and short-term basis. They used a topic approach to plan the activities. One educator wrote a daily list of activities in which the children participated. On the day of the inspection, the educators used the end-of-day circle-time to ask the children what they wanted to play with the next day.
- The educators recorded aspects of the children's learning in individual learning journals. These contained samples of the children's drawings, colouring-in, their footprints, and learning stories. The educators shared the journals with the parents at the end of the ECCE year.
- The educators sat with the children and engaged in conversation with them during play. At times, some educators asked open-ended questions to extend the children's thinking. The educators facilitated a large-group craft activity during the inspection.
- The educators had organised the indoor environment to include some defined areas of play. They provided the children with opportunities to engage in role play in the home corner and shop area. There was a construction area, a dolls house, and table-top play for the children to experience. Some of the areas had a few open-ended and authentic materials on offer. Water and sand were not available indoors.
- The outdoor environment was covered to promote play in all weather. There was a large climbing frame with a slide, wheeled vehicles, a kitchen area, and sand play. The planning and set up of the areas in the outdoor environment were limited on the day of the inspection.
- One of the educators used a wonderfully engaging puppet story to promote the children's language, literacy, and involvement. The educators had provided a bookshelf with high quality books on offer for the children.
- The manager had participated in the Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years (LINC) training to support inclusive practice. She obtained external support for children with additional needs through mentoring visits form the Access and Inclusion Model specialist.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to develop curriculum planning so that it is based on the children's observed learning needs and interests. Using evaluation to determine aspects such as the children's interests, levels of participation, challenges, and next steps, will enhance the activities planned for the children.
- It is advised that the educators use their interactions with the children to extend their language and thinking skills. Using open-ended questioning, expanded vocabulary and interaction strategies to extend the children's play ideas will motivate them during play.
- The educators are advised to evaluate and develop the indoor and outdoor environments to make the areas more inviting, authentic, and well-resourced to support the children's engagement. Providing materials such as water, junk art, real-life, sensorial, and open-ended resources each day, will support the children's independent and creative use in the indoor and outdoor environments.

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

- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements was good.
- The children enjoyed engaging with role play in the home corner, making models from playdough and constructing with the Duplo blocks.

- The majority of children were developing the ability to play co-operatively and liked to engage in play with their peers. The educators encouraged the children to develop self-help and self-care skills.
- The children had the opportunity to experience a sense of success when sharing their creations made from playdough and Duplo blocks. They described their 'police and bandit jail,' a 'dog trap' and a 'castle' made from the blocks.
- Most children demonstrated confidence in communicating their thoughts and ideas. The children looked at their journals and described what they had made, drawn, or participated in when viewing the photographs.
- The children's learning journals were stored in the room. The content of the journals was similar among the children and did not fully demonstrate each child's unique learning and progression.
- The children were supported to develop gross motor skills through parachute games, obstacle courses, and the outdoor climbing frame.
- The educators were responsive to the children's verbal and non-verbal cues and expressions. The children were engaged during an educator-facilitated puppet story. They liked to contribute their ideas and thoughts as the educator prompted them to think about aspects of the story.
- Some of the children's drawings included descriptions in the children's journals and some of their crafts were displayed on the wall. There was an over focus on product-based art and crafts, which did not support the children's expression, creativity, and imagination.
- The children were developing their awareness of animals and the natural environment through the planned themed activities on offer. They had opportunities, on occasions, to experience experiments with ice, snow, and milk.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to record information about the children's individual learning that represents their unique learning journey, achievements, interests, and cultural backgrounds. Including records of the children's comments as well as parent's comments about their child's ongoing learning and progression, will support this individualised approach.
- It is advised that the educators promote the children's creativity and expression by providing open-ended art opportunities. Creating a well-resourced junk art and creative area, and limiting whole-group crafts, will support the children's inner creativity and expressive communication.
- The educators are advised to use their knowledge of the children's unique and varied interests to support their growing knowledge and understanding of the world. Using factual books, videos, and project-based ideas will enhance the children's exploration and investigation.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was good.
- The manager met with the team, informally, on a daily basis, to discuss the resources or activities required for the subsequent day. She conducted a weekly-planning meeting to organise and plan for the activities each week.
- The team of educators was well established in the setting, and they worked collaboratively during the session. The manager provided frequent informal support to the educators. There was a support and supervision policy in place. This was not implemented at the time of the inspection.
- The parents were strongly involved in the community setting as members of the board of management and the fund-raising committee. The educators and parents engaged in informal conversations each day, at arrival and collection. The manager and educators organised an annual graduation for the children, which the parents were invited to attend.
- The manager supported the children's transition into the setting by organising a registration event for the parents and an open day for the children to attend. The parents received a handbook which provided general information about the setting and the key policies and procedures.
- The manager collaborated with the local primary schools to obtain photographs that would familiarise the children with the school they would transition to. The educators compiled reports that provided information about the children's skills and developmental milestones.

These were shared with the parents, and with their consent, shared with the primary school that their child would attend.

Actions advised

- The manager is advised to develop processes for self-evaluation in the setting. Using the staff meetings and having a formal agenda, which includes reflection on practice using the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide,* will support ongoing quality practices.
- It is advised that the manager implements the support and supervision policy in place in the setting. Conducting regular supervision meetings to support the educators in their role and to identify areas of professional development, will encourage regular engagement on training and quality pedagogical practices.
- The manger is advised to develop end-of-year records of learning for the children transitioning to year two of ECCE, and to primary school. This will support two-way communication with parents and the teachers of junior infants with regard to the children's learning needs, interests, and achievements. Completing the *Mo Scéal* report will support a holistic summary of learning.

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

APPENDIX

SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

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

We have taken your advice and we have change our policy as suggested. • we the educators have developed strategies that support the children to process upcoming transitions, each child is given time to understand what is happening during transitions. We use the visual daily routine as well as further visual and strategies will enhance the children's awareness. We have replacing the line up time with a purposeful activity such as engaging the children in discussion about what the activity is, what equipment we need and giving them responsibility to help in the setting up of the activities during routine transitions. • We have introduce a key person approach which will enable the staff develop their relationships with the children and their families. We are using the key person approach to having regular small-group activities. the children are supported and are extending their learning.

I have called staff meeting and have a staff appraisals since our inspection. Giving staff opportunities to discuss any issues they may have. Discovering about training needed with new staff. Moving forward I will keep records of these meeting with staff.

We will adopt the Mo Sceal report for the 2 year period the children attend. We had only given reports for children leaving.