An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)

Final Report

Setting name	Muire Gan Smál Childcare
Setting address	Presentation Primary School Castleisland County Kerry V92P803
TUSLA registration number	TU2015KY085
DCEDIY number	09KY0044
Date of inspection	22-02-2024
Date of issue of report	23-05-2024

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	22-02-2024

Activities conducted during the Inspection

- Pre-inspection meeting with the deputy 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 two Early Childhood Care and Education Programme sessions
- Interaction with children
- Interaction with early years educators
- Feedback meeting with the management team

Context of setting

Muire gan Smál Childcare is a community childcare setting operating in Castleisland, County Kerry. It was established in 1994 and provides two concurrent morning sessions for children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, nineteen children, a manager/educator, a deputy manager/educator and two early years educators were in attendance across the two rooms. 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.
- An extremely warm, welcoming, nurturing and affirming atmosphere prevailed in the setting. The educators' practices were based around respectful engagement with the children and their families.
- The educators planned environments that were calm, relaxed and encouraged curiosity, creativity and playful exploration and learning. The children were active agents in choosing and organising their learning and development activities.
- Time and space were provided for all the children to explore the indoor and outdoor environments in the company of attentive and aware educators. The children from both rooms came together to explore the well-resourced outdoor environment.
- Warmth and affection were demonstrated physically and emotionally through relationships that were respectful, supportive and positive.
- The managers and the educators created and maintained conditions necessary for nurturing relationships with the children. They fostered caring and respectful child-to-child relationships.
- The educators supported the children to develop an appreciation of themselves as individuals and as members of their families and community. There were many photographic displays of the children partaking in activities, birthday and family displays, sign in and jobs displays, a community display and a map Ireland marked with 'we are here'. A map of the world included flags of Ireland, Poland and Australia with photographs of the children highlighting the countries associated with their families.
- The educators enabled the children and their families to come together with them in the setting. The children's grandparents came to the setting to celebrate 'grandparents' day'.

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.
- The educators developed a broad-based curriculum informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. This was documented and used to support the children's learning and development. Planning for curriculum implementation was organised on long, medium and short-term bases.

- The educators used strengths-based assessment approaches to gather information about the children's learning experiences and achievements. This information was used to support continuity and progression in their individual learning. The individual learning journals were similar in content.
- The educators set high but realistic expectations for all the children in the setting. They provided opportunities for the children to achieve fulfilment, success and mastery during learning activities.
- The educators used a range of appropriate interaction strategies and methodologies to facilitate a broad range of learning experiences. They engaged and motivated the children in their learning in a respectful and caring way.
- The indoor and outdoor environments were purposefully structured and organised to develop the children's curiosity, creativity, imagination and desire for exploration. The resources and experiences effectively stimulated, consolidated and extended the children's learning.
- Time for extended, open-ended play was promoted by the educators. Play was used as a medium for the children to interact with, explore and make sense of the world.
- The children regularly enjoyed and shared a variety of rhymes, jingles, poems and songs. They had access to high-quality books, linked to their interests and play areas. They frequently listened to and explored stories with the educators.
- The educators paid specific attention to the learning of the children with additional needs and to the children who spoke English as an additional language.

Action advised

- The educators are advised to develop the individual learning journals in collaboration with the children, to create more child-led, individual learning journeys. This journal needs to contain each child's individual artwork and activities relating to the child.

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

- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements was very good.
- The children were very effectively supported by the educators to build self-help skills, make choices and develop positive learning dispositions, such as resilience, resourcefulness and persistence.
- The children frequently had choices and made decisions about their play and learning during all aspects of their daily routine.
- The information documented about the children's learning reflected their achievements in a range of connected learning experiences appropriate to an early education context.
- The children were able to communicate their interests, opinions, family background and personal experiences. One child spoke about the new baby in their family.
- The children made connections with their peers, the educators, and in particular, their siblings and cousins in the adjoining school yard.
- The children were developing personal and social skills which enabled them to respond appropriately to different situations. These included turn-taking, co-operating, and building relationships.
- The children interacted with the other children and adults by listening, discussing and taking turns in conversations. They represented their ideas and feelings through various media and play activities. Template-based and adult-led art activities were used; these limited the children's scope for creativity and individuality. There was very little documentation of the children's interpretations of their artwork.
- The children were aware of the natural environment and its features, materials, animals and plants. Outdoors, they planted herbs and flowers. The children engaged, explored and experimented in their environment and used their developing physical skills to manipulate objects and diverse materials.

Action advised

- The educators are advised to discontinue the use of template-based and adult-led art activities, and to replace these with more open-ended process art. They are advised also to talk to the children about their creative mark-making and to record more extensively, their interpretations of their mark-making and other creative work.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was very good.
- The managers and educators regularly reflected on and reviewed their practice, policies and procedures in order to improve learning experiences and outcomes for the children.
- An ethos of professionalism, teamwork and partnership was evident. The educators were aware of relevant research, policy and practice developments that impact on the quality of their work with the children.
- The educators demonstrated thoughtfulness, self-awareness and reflection in aspects of practice. The managers were good role models for the educators. They promoted high standards and articulated a clear vision for the work of the setting.
- It was evident that practice was informed by evidence-based theory and that staff were knowledgeable about the children's learning and development.
- The parents and families were made aware of the policies, procedures and curriculum in operation within the setting.
- There were formal and informal opportunities for the two-way exchange of information with parents and families. These occurred at the door on a daily basis and formally by appointment on a one-to-one basis if an issue arose. Information about the children's learning was not frequently shared with the parents.
- Before a child transitioned into the setting, the educators gathered information from their parents about their prior experiences. This knowledge was used to help ensure continuity in the child's experiences and progression in learning.
- The educators established a good professional mutual relationship with the primary school. The principal and junior infant teacher visited the children in the pre-school and the children visited the primary school to participate in various activities.

Action advised

- The educators are advised to build on the informal communication with the children's parents by sharing more information about the children's learning in a spirit of openness, mutual respect and transparency. This could include more opportunities for discussions, and by sharing the outcomes of assessment and the children's journals more frequently.

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	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	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 happy with the content of the inspection report. Area one shows the team effort of the staff in the Setting to support children's learning and development. Areas two, three and four provide clear guidelines on the actions we need to take in the Setting to improve the quality of these areas.

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 moved the children's scrapbooks in the room so children have access to them and can see or add to them when they wish. We have now focused on adding individual artwork to the book.

We have discontinued the use of adult-led template based art activities and now focus on open-ended child led creative activities. Children have the opportunity to record their mark-making in their scrapbooks.

We have decided to introduce parent-teacher meetings as a way to share more information with parents. We will discuss observations and provide parents with an opportunity to discuss the children's learning journals.

We have changed how we plan curriculum and now focus on a more emergent curriculum stemming from our general monthly themes.