An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)

Final Report

Setting name	Northampton Preschool & Afterschool Services
Setting address	Northampton National School Kinvara County Galway H91F2A4
TUSLA registration number	TU2015GY200
DCEDIY number	15GY0414
Date of inspection	08-03-2024
Date of issue of report	16-05-2024

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

Date of inspection	08-03-2024

Activities conducted during the Inspection

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

Context of setting

Northampton Preschool and Afterschool is located in Northampton National School, Kinvara, County Galway. The setting provides a morning session for children enrolled on the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of inspection, there were twenty-one children, the owner/lead educator and three early years educators 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 excellent.
- The managers and the educators created a very warm, bright, and welcoming atmosphere.
- The daily routine was unhurried and provided an extended period for the children to engage in child-led play. A station had been set up so that the children could engage with a theme-based art activity as they wished. A visual outline of the daily schedule was displayed.
- The educators have purposefully decreased the number of transitions, where the children were required to move from activity to activity. This very positive approach was reinforced by a rolling snack time.
- A tablecloth was placed over a table and adorned with flowers. The children chose when they would like to eat and independently retrieved their food. They took their photo from a nearby wall display, before they sat with their peers and engaged in friendly conversations. The educators also joined in, in this very social dining experience.
- The few transitions that were observed were communicated effectively to the children. Additionally, an egg-timer was used as a visual guide during these times.
- The educators successfully developed a key person approach. This system assigned a group of children to a key educator. The educators observed and documented significant learning for each of their key children.
- The educators effectively nurtured the children's developing sense of identity and belonging in the learning environment. Attractive family photo displays and birthday charts were displayed. Individual personal boxes were available to the children. These provided each child with a special distinct place to store their artwork. In addition, Cody Teddy regularly visited the children's homes and the children shared stories from their adventures with their peers.
- To support the children's understanding of the local community, the setting had been visited by many community members including the local dentist, doctors, Garda, a beekeeper, a blacksmith, and the Galway Fire Brigade.
- The parents were welcomed to the setting for celebrations at Christmas and Graduation, as well as to support charity events, and to accompany the children on preschool outings.

- The children were supported to develop an understanding of diversity and the wider world. The educators engaged successfully with the parents to garner an understanding of their cultures. Parents have made ethnic food for the educators and the children. The setting had celebrated diverse cultural events. The educators also included relevant resources in the learning environment. A welcome display in a variety of languages was hung at the entrance to the preschool.

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 early years curriculum was eclectic in nature with a focus on play-based learning. The manager and the educators created a long-term vision, as well as short-term plans that were linked to the themes of *Aistear*, *the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. The short-term plans reviewed contained a range of proposed learning topics including seasonal, cultural and literacy inspired items.
- The manager and the educators completed formal observations of each child's learning and development which described the children's engagement in rich learning experiences. Next steps to progress the children's learning were not always clearly identified.
- The educators made anecdotal notes which captured additional key learning moments. Current interests included hairdressing, the farm, seaside, and princesses. Some of these interests were evident in the resources and activities on offer to the children.
- The educators had thoughtfully arranged the learning environment to maximise learning opportunities and the children's free exploration of resources. The children enjoyed many small world materials, socio-dramatic items and mark-making materials. There was also a variety of creative, real and open-ended materials available.
- A very special focus was placed on the quality of the reading materials that were available to the children. The children also enjoyed a wonderfully captivating large group story-time, as well as many more intimate story-telling experiences.
- All the educators remained actively involved, as play partners, during the children's child-led play. They used these opportunities to enquire with the children about their learning experiences.
- An inclusive learning environment had been created which ensured that all of the children had the opportunity to meaningfully participate, and where difference and diversity were valued. The setting had worked with the Access Inclusion Model (AIM) and relevant external professionals.

Action advised

- The educators are advised to develop their current short-term plans to ensure that the children's interests, and specific next steps in the children's individual learning, are incorporated into the formal planning processes. Additionally, medium-term plans could outline other broad topics that may arise and interest the children, as well as seasonal events/celebrations coming up in a particular month or term.

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

- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements was very good.
- The children navigated the learning environments with purpose. They autonomously chose where they would like to play and for how long. They appeared happy, motivated and very engaged.
- The children had formed friendships and played co-operatively. They took on a variety of roles during child-initiated play. The children's friendships and social skills were guided through the educators' positive affirmations and friendship displays, like the Friendship Flower.
- The children's developing positive dispositions for learning were clearly evident. The children became engaged in self-led learning experiences as soon as they arrived to the setting. They displayed very high levels of sustained engagement. This was particularly evident when the children engaged with creative resources and the small world materials.

- The children displayed very confident communication skills, as they eagerly conversed with their peers and the educators. It was clear that their opinions and ideas mattered.
- The children managed their self-help and self-care skills independently. This was effectively supported through a Helper System and included very enthusiastic co-operation during times of tidy-up. A station was set up where the children could access tissues, drinks and cutlery as required.
- There were many resources available to the children which supported their creative expression. These included paint, mark-making materials, dress-up materials and many socio-dramatic play items. The educators demonstrated the value they placed on the children's self-initiated art by asking the children to describe their creations and providing positive affirmations. The owner/lead educator reported that different sensory resources are introduced at different stages throughout the year. On the day of inspection, the children became very engaged with playdough and while painting.
- The children had access to a variety of outdoor learning environments. There was a playground, AstroTurf pitch, and a natural outdoor imaginative area. On the day of inspection, the children played in the AstroTurf area.
- The children had a number of opportunities to develop their gross-motor skills. This development was encouraged in the outdoors through games which supported their fundamental movement skills. Indoors, the children also enthusiastically engaged in whole group physical activities.
- A learning journal had been developed for each of the children. The journals contained the observations of the children's learning and development, many photographs of their learning experiences, some child-led art and a selection of their thematic based art activities. Many of these related to favourite books and stories, such as *The Three Little Pigs* and *Owl Babies*. Systematically documenting the children's thoughts and ideas on their own learning journeys could add great richness to the journal.

Actions advised

- The educators are encouraged to make a variety of sensory resources, such as sand and water, consistently available for the children to explore.
- The educators are advised to increasingly document the children's thoughts and ideas about their creations and their learning experiences. This should support their independent reflection on, and consolidation of, their own learning journeys. Increasing the examples of the child-led art in the journals could also be beneficial.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was very good.
- There was a strong sense of teamwork in this setting. There was a clear ethos of professionalism which ensured a collaborative approach to the development of provision.
- Staff meetings were held once a month. The owner/lead educator has explored both virtual and in-person meetings, to ascertain which ones were most effective. The agenda for these meetings was developed with input from all educators.
- As part of their funding agreement, the manager and the educators have committed to review *Aistear* as a whole-staff team.
- The educators engaged with continuing professional development activities including the Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) course, supporting positive behaviour course, and exploring the *Aistear Siolta* workshops as provided by the local County Childcare Committee. The owner/lead educator demonstrated a strong commitment to further upskilling through the completion of a post-graduate professional qualification in Play Therapy.
- The educators informally gathered information on the children from their parents through daily conversations at drop-off and pick-up times. They also strived to ensure two-way communication processes through messaging apps and newsletters. Curriculum updates were also shared through these means.
- The manager and the educators encouraged the families and the children to get know the setting through planned visits. The parents were also sent emails to communicate relevant policies and information.

- The preschool was located on the grounds of the primary school and so the children became familiar with the school building, classrooms, teachers, and principal. The preschool children visited the junior infant's classroom. The educators have sent relevant transitional information through the *Mo Scéal* Reporting Template.

Action advised

- The manager and the educators are advised to introduce formal self-reflection and self-evaluation practices. The resources, especially the self-evaluation tools, from the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* could be very useful in the development of this action. Information from these practices could support the development of collaborative action plans for improvement.

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

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

Thank you for inspecting our service and the very positive report. We welcome the advised actions given to help enhance the overall experience of our children.

Published May 2024/ Foilsithe Bealtaine 2024