An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

# Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)
## Final Report

| | |
|---|---|
| Setting name | Stepping Stones |
| Setting address | Stepping Stones<br>Ballymany Rd.<br>Newbridge<br>Kildare<br>W12W310 |
| TUSLA registration number | TU2015KE153 |
| DCEDIY number | 09KE0222 |
| Date of inspection | 26-10-2022 |
| Date of issue of report | 16-01-2023 |

# 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 | 26-10-2022 |
|---|---|
| **Inspection activities undertaken**<br>• Pre-Inspection meeting with the setting owner and manager<br>• Interaction with relevant early years educators<br>• Review of setting documentation and records of children's learning and development<br>• Review of the education resources and facilities<br>• Observations of interactions during a number of sessions<br>• Interaction with the children<br>• Feedback meeting with the setting owner and manager<br>• Feedback to the early years educators | |

## Context of setting

Stepping Stones is located in Newbridge, Co. Kildare. There was one main pre-school room in the building where care and education is provided to local children availing of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. The setting also offered wrap around care and full day care to some children attending the ECCE room. On the day of the inspection the owner, manager, two early years educators, an Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) support worker and twenty-one ECCE children were present in the setting. 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 good.
- A welcoming atmosphere was evident in the setting. Educators were kind and caring to the children.
- There was an open-door policy in place in the setting. Parents came into the ECCE room to drop off and collect their children. The educators interacted with the parents and shared information about their child's day.
- The daily routine offered the children an extended child-led free play period. Following this the children participated in circle time and outdoor play. On the day of the inspection, there was no small group planned activity.
- The transitions which occurred during the daily routine were instant and verbally notified to the children. This resulted in children not being fully prepared for change and not engaging in clean-up time.
- Snack time was offered as a free flow experience and most children chose to sit and eat during the child-led play period. Some children sat alone while eating their snack and the educators availed of brief opportunities to check the children were eating. There were no visual aids to support the recording of snack time.
- The children sang songs at circle time to welcome them into the group each day. Each child was identified and acknowledged within these songs.
- The setting had started to create a family wall and were organising funding raising events for Christmas time also.

### Actions advised

- The children would benefit from small group activities where a key worker takes children and prepares an activity that is age appropriate and develops concentration and attention.
- The children would benefit from being more prepared for the transitions that take place during the day. The educators can ensure these transitions are planned and prepared in conjunction with the children. Displays and visual aids will further enhance this work.
- The educators are advised to review snack time to ensure children have social engagement during snack time and they can sit with the children. A visual aid to support the awareness of who has eaten their snack is also required.

## 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 setting implemented a child-led, play-based curriculum. The educators incorporated general elements of an emergent curriculum into their short-term planning. The curriculum was informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework.*
- The educators organised their planning using a medium-term and short-term planning template. The short-term plans recorded group interests including music, dance and exploration of the weather. Medium-term plans were designed with support from management and focused on occasions and themes.
- The educators completed an individual learning journal for all children. Children did not have access to these journals. The evidence gathered in learning journals included anecdotal notes, photographs and template art activities. Learning journals were not yet shared with parents. There were no formal observations for the children in the group.
- Play was the main medium for learning. The children had opportunities for pretend play, outdoor play, and sensory play during the inspection process.
- The day-to-day interactions between the educators and the children were playful. During play, the educators asked some questions and repeated key words.
- All learning environments were organised with defined interest areas. There was a range of real-life and recycled resources and materials on shelves for the children to access.
- The educators and managers knew the children well and were aware of their varying needs. The setting had an AIM support worker based in the ECCE room to assist children with additional needs. At the time of the inspection, some children were awaiting support and resources from AIM. The educators were keen for advice and guidance regarding setting goals for the children with additional needs in the group.

### Actions advised

- It is advised that the children's individual learning journals be reviewed to ensure they represent the child's unique pre-school journey. Photographs, process art, records of the emergent interests and observations will support the recording of the child's individual learning journey. Records of children's voice and parental input is also advised.
- The educators are advised to formally observe the children on a monthly basis. These observations can be based on children's interests and identify developing skills and dispositions. All observations require a description, evaluation of learning and next steps to support development. The *Aistear* learner record will be useful in this regard.
- The setting is advised to access AIM support, level 4, mentoring and advice. This will support educators to set goals for children, understand their needs and have realistic expectations to support them to further develop and learn.

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

- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements was good.
- The children had access to an outdoor environment where they had fun developing their gross-motor skills. A large covered outdoor area offered the children a variety of interest areas including a tree house, shop area and home corner.
- The children explored play experiences in a secure learning environment. The educators organised art activities and sensory play activities during the child-led play period.
- The children's language development was progressed through songs, stories and conversation. Exploration of numeracy and mathematical topics were not optimised on the day of the inspection.
- Most children were developing their self-help skills including putting on coats and using the toilet independently.
- The children had access to an open art shelf with a large variety of equipment. The children enjoyed accessing paper, pencils, paint and glue during the morning routine.
- The children had access to sensory play including playdough and coloured beads. The children enjoyed these learning experiences.
- The children had opportunities to play alone, in pairs and in small groups during child-led play. Throughout the day the children struggled to share and take turns. The educators intervened to support the children and used a variety of different strategies. Some educators used breathing exercises while others used direct language including 'no and don't'.
- The educators have planned a career theme for the coming month. The ECCE group of children were very diverse. There were limited resources to extend and enhance the children's awareness of their own culture and diversity.
- The children enjoyed pretend play and role play activities. On the day of the inspection the children dressed up in Halloween costumes, as princesses and some pretended to be animals.

### Actions advised

- The educators are advised to focus on exploring literacy and numeracy through play experiences, hands-on and practical learning. This will enable the children to explore various concepts and child-led ideas.
- The children would benefit from further support and guidance when resolving conflicts and regulating their emotions. The use of timers to promote sharing and turn-taking is advised. Further exploration of their own feelings, thoughts and emotions during these periods will enhance the children's social skills and well-being.
- The educators are advised to introduce children to the concepts of culture and community awareness to support their identity and belonging. This can be implemented using visual aids, doing projects on local amenities and having local visitors or parents in to speak to the children.

## Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was good.
- All educators were professional throughout the inspection process.
- The educators were dedicated to the setting, the families and children. There was a mixture of long-term staff and new educators working in the setting. There was a good sense of teamwork in the ECCE room.
- The owner and manager delegated roles and responsibilities between them. They had individual roles in the setting which built on their strengths and interests. On the day of the inspection the manager visited the ECCE room on a number of occasions to assist in the movement of children around the setting. Supporting the wellbeing of the educators in the room was limited.

- Regular planning meetings, and support and supervision meetings took place for the educators; these focussed on curriculum implementation and other day-to-day practical issues in the setting.
- A few educators participated in training and continued professional development relevant to their work. The educators reported that they were interested in training and development around curriculum and special educational needs. This training has not taken place yet. A software application offered the educators a range of administrative and mandatory training courses to complete.
- The setting have previously engaged with Better Start, the National Quality Development Service were they worked on introducing a child-led curriculum and developed their learning environments. They were also introduced to the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide.*
- The educators met parents face-to-face on the day of the inspection. They also used email and telephone to communicate with parents.
- Parents had the opportunity to view the setting and support their children with the settle-in process.
- To support the transition to school the setting talked to the children and displayed a range of photographs of the local schools. The children brought their learning journals to their new school to share with their teacher. Relationships are not yet established with schools to share information regarding the transition to school.

### Actions advised

- The owner and manager are advised to support the educators' well-being through advice and mentoring in the room.
- The educators are advised to engage in training and professional development relevant to supporting additional needs, behaviour and observations.
- To guide further development in the practices which support the children's transition, the educators are advised to develop resources and build relationships with the teachers and principals in the local schools.

## 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 |
|---|---|
| **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.* |