An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)

Final Report

Setting name	Sunny Meadow Pre-School
Setting address	Lus Leana Headford Road Galway City County Galway H91XK61
TUSLA registration number	TU2015GY252
DCEDIY number	09GY0122
Date of inspection	24-10-2024
Date of issue of report	13-01-2025

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	24-10-2024

Activities conducted during the Inspection

- Pre-inspection meeting with the an 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 two Early Childhood Care and Education Programme sessions
- Interaction with children
- Interaction with the early years educators
- Feedback meeting with the setting manager

Context of setting

Sunny Meadow Pre-school is a sessional pre-school setting located in Galway City. It provides a morning and an afternoon session of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. On the day of the inspection, the manager, three early years educators and thirty four children were in attendance. 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, nurturing, affirming atmosphere was evident. The educators showed a kind and caring approach as they interacted with the children and their families.
- A key-person approach was very effectively implemented by the educators. This approach promoted strong relationships between the educators, the children and their parents.
- Well-paced routines and procedures were consistently used by the educators to promote the children's development of core learning dispositions and skills.
- Times of transition in the setting supported positive learning experiences for children, were managed very effectively and promoted continuity in learning throughout the day. When moving from one activity to the next, the educators used a variety of engaging verbal, auditory and visual supports which very successfully prepared and involved all of the children.
- A rolling snack table very successfully supported children who wished to eat or drink at different times during the session. This was further supported by a formal lunch time where the educators sat and chatted with the children. This created a wonderfully relaxed social event.
- The educators' highly commendable practice of an anti-bias approach, was child-centred, respectful and culturally responsive. The children could see images of themselves and their families placed at child height along with samples of their art in the displays throughout the learning environment. Reading materials and books which depicted diverse cultural backgrounds were available to the children. There was room to enhance the representation of the local community.

Action advised

- To further strengthen the children's positive sense of identity and belonging in the setting, the manager and the educator are advised to increase the visibility of the local community in the learning environments.

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.
- A highly effective play-based curriculum, informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework,* was in place. The educators broad-based approach to planning incorporated short-term, medium-term and long-term plans. These plans, were influenced by thematic, seasonal topics and the emerging interests of the children.
- The assessment of the children's development and learning progress was reflected through various methods such as narrative observations, photographs, educator notes, and an online application. The manager and the educators had utilised a strengths-based assessment approach to collect information on the children's learning experiences and achievements. The assessment information had yet to be fully utilised by the educators to fully support planning the next steps for planning all the children's learning and development.
- The early years educators knew the children very well, they were attuned to and responded to their verbal and non-verbal cues, interests and individual learning needs sensitively and appropriately. They recognised the children as active agents in their learning and supported and encouraged them to learn with and alongside others.
- There was an appropriate balance between adult-initiated and child-initiated learning and development activities.
- The educators' interactions with the children were supportive, enabling, and playful. They aligned their interactions with the children's interests and developing capabilities. Open ended questions were used by the educators. These encouraged the children to think and talk about their learning.
- Indoor and outdoor learning environments were purposefully structured and organised to develop the children's curiosity, creativity, imagination and desire for exploration in support of psychological and physical wellbeing.
- The children had very effective opportunities to engage with activities, both indoors and outdoors that build early positive dispositions towards science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics (STEAM) through hands-on, active experiences.
- An inclusive ethos had been very successfully adopted by the educators. All of the children were valued as individuals with their own unique strengths. The educators worked closely with parents and outside professional to optimise the engagement of all children.

Action advised

- The educators are advised to enhance and expand on the detail recorded in the children's individual observations in order to clearly outline their plans for progressing the children's learning and development. These learning plans need to further inform and clearly link to the short-term curriculum plans. The available resources on assessment from the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* can support the educators with this action.

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

- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements was very good.
- The children displayed a sense of contentment and security in the setting. They demonstrated an understanding of and respect for the rights and views of others. They were developing the capacity to regulate themselves and resolve minor conflicts.
- The children displayed confidence, were motivated, interested and engaged in their learning experiences. It was evident that the children's voices, including verbal and non-verbal cues were heard, respected and acted upon.
- The children were supported and encouraged to be independent in managing their own needs. This was evident as children were mindfully washing their hands. These self-care rituals were unhurried, soothing and provided the children with a positive sense of achievement.
- Through physical play the children had opportunities to develop, practise and refine their body movements while gaining control over their gross and fine motor skills. The children enjoyed regular music and movement activities, including games.

- Groups of children were deeply engrossed in their play, busily transporting cardboard blocks between the indoor and outdoor learning environments to build intricate walls, winding roads, and secret hideouts. They stacked and counted the blocks with precision, cooperating and engaging in lively discussions about their imaginative creations. This type of high-quality play was very successful in enhancing their problem-solving skills, fostering teamwork, and stimulating creativity. The children's engagement in play was highly commendable, highlighting the benefits of collaborative and imaginative play.
- The children communicated using their pre-verbal, verbal and non-verbal skills. They showed an interest in books and regularly explored sound, pattern, rhythm and repetition through conversation and a wide range of songs and rhymes.
- The children displayed high levels of creativity. They enthusiastically accessed mark-making materials to, draw, print and paint. Throughout the session, the children were free to come and go from their art work.
- The children had some opportunities to reflect on their learning through the photographs of past experiences and displays of their artwork. There was scope to make the children's voices more visible in the setting through documentation of their comments on their artwork or in learning records.

Action advised

- The educators are advised to develop individual holistic records of each child's learning and development. These could include the observations of the children's learning and development, photographs, the children's artwork and their thoughts and ideas as written by the educators. This learning record needs to be made visible and accessible to the children on a continuous basis and shared throughout the year with the parents. A learning journal could provide the children with regular opportunities to reflect on and share their learning further enhancing their view of themselves as capable learners.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was very good.
- A highly commendable ethos of professionalism, teamwork, collaboration and partnership was evident. The manager and the educators were committed to delivering high-quality early learning provision. This was clearly guided by the child-centred vision and philosophy adopted by the setting.
- The setting was governed by a voluntary management committee, with an onsite manager responsible for the day to day running of the setting.
- Management provided oversight and had responsibility for the programme of learning and care, in line with best practice and research. They promoted high standards and had a clear vision for the work of the setting.
- The parents were proactively consulted as the primary educators of their children and involved as partners in their children's learning and development.
- There were formal and informal opportunities for the two-way exchange of information with parents and other professionals in the best interests of the children.
- The manager promoted reflective practices. These centred on the children's experiences and on developing the curriculum to meet the children's learning needs. A system for formal recorded self-evaluation had yet to be fully embedded in the setting.
- To promote the sensitive and supportive management of transitions into the setting, the educators gathered information from parents and external services on children's prior experiences.
- The setting had established a professional mutual relationship with the primary schools to which the children were transitioning to in order to share information that supports and promotes; curriculum continuity, recognition of children's experiences and achievements and progression in their learning.

Action advised

- Building on existing professional reflective practice, the manager and the educators are advised to establish and implement a more formal and cyclical approach to self-evaluation. Helpful materials are provided in the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* which could strengthen and formalise how the setting's management and the educators review and enhance practice.

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	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

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