An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)

Final Report

Setting name	The Nest Santry
Setting address	Unit 10C Santry Hall Industrial Estate Santry Dublin 9 D09CK15
TUSLA registration number	TU2019DY006
DCEDIY number	19DY0786
Date of inspection	04-02-2025
Date of issue of report	02-04-2025

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 inspectors 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	04-02-2025

Activities conducted during the Inspection

- Pre-inspection meeting with the setting manager and team leader
- Review of setting documentation and records relating to the children's learning and development
- Review of the education resources and facilities
- Observations of interactions in all learning rooms
- Interaction with babies and young children
- Interaction with early years educators
- Feedback meeting with the human resource manager from head office, the setting manager, the setting assistant manager, the setting team leader and lead early years educators

Context of setting

The Nest Santry is one of a privately owned group of five early learning and care settings in the Dublin region. It is located in an industrial estate in Santry and provides full day care, part-time, and sessional care. At the time of the inspection, the setting employed thirteen early years educators and had thirty-five children enrolled. 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 required improvement.
- There was a warm and welcoming atmosphere in the setting and the children were greeted by name by the educators at arrival. There was a daily routine in each learning room and the children were familiar with aspects of these routines. There were some instances of educators promoting children's independence, such as distributing snack and hanging up their own coat in the hallway.
- The setting had a healthy eating policy and healthy meals were prepared on site. At mealtimes, the children sat together, and a few educators sat for short periods with the children.
- At times, transitions were announced verbally by the educators. In the pre-school and toddler rooms, many transitions were overly long, and children were not actively engaged in them and became unfocused.
- Relationships between educators and children were positive. The children knew the educators. There was no consistent key person approach in the setting, particularly in relation to intimate care routines. Some approaches and practices were very respectful and affirming of children's independence and bodily integrity, others were less so and did not align with the practices outlined in the setting policies. The educators did respond to the children's emotional needs, at times these responses were not appropriate or supportive and were inconsistent.
- There were birthday displays with the children's photographs, family photograph displays, and a small amount of the children's arts and crafts displayed in some learning rooms. There was a rich diversity of cultural backgrounds among the children and educators. The educators engaged in conversations with the children about their families. There was a positive recognition of children's efforts and achievements, the educators used praise and comments such as 'well done'. The children had opportunities to make positive social connections with children from other learning rooms throughout the day, particularly during outdoor play.

Actions advised

- To support secure and healthy attachment and promote the children's social and emotional development, the manager is advised to implement a key person approach in all learning

rooms. It is also advised that consideration be given to the key person in the baby room moving with their key group of children as they transition into the tweenie room.

- To support the children's language and social development, is advised that the educators in all rooms make mealtimes a homely and social occasion where educators sit, eat and converse with the children.
- To further support children's developing independence and self-care skills, the educators are advised to support and allow time for the children to learn to do things for themselves.
- It is advised that the educators plan for times of transition to be active learning experiences where the children are occupied and engaged.

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 required improvement.
- The setting had a play-based curriculum aligned to the principles of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. The setting had developed a curriculum policy, and educators in some learning rooms had developed a broad general curriculum statement. The educators were in the early stages of beginning to develop their understanding and knowledge of an emergent curriculum. There were effective aspects of a slow relational pedagogy in some of the practices observed in the baby and tweenie rooms.
- At the time of the inspection, the educators in each learning room had just begun to document their long and medium-term planning. There was no systematic short-term curriculum planning to foster the children's development and promote the next steps in their learning, as whole-room groups or as individuals.
- The educators recorded some information on the children's emerging interests in general comment notes, stating their current likes and activities. These were displayed beside the children's photographs. This information was not yet used to inform short-term planning for the children's learning and development. In most learning rooms, a learner journal was compiled for each child. These journals captured some aspects of the children's learning, and they contained photographs and comments on learning achievements. There was a lack of consistent practice across the journals in the frequency of entries and the amount of detail recorded.
- There were some opportunities for children to achieve fulfilment, success and mastery during learning activities: the children in the pre-school room selected Montessori equipment and activities from the accessible shelves and engaged with them in creative ways; the toddlers challenged themselves to balance and walk on low structures outside; the tweenie and pre-school children engaged in free painting; and a baby sat on a soft blanket outside and observed the other children playing.
- The educators were usually attuned to the children's non-verbal cues and communications. They were present and often available and responded to the children's requests. In the tweenie room and pre-school room, children's requests for a book to be read was met. At times, some educators engaged with the children as play partners, successfully supporting their play activities. There were periods of time where many educators were standing and observing the children's activities or cleaning and maintaining the room.
- The baby learning room was aesthetically attractive and pleasing and offered the babies a good range of exploration and play resources. In the other three learning rooms, some areas had been thoughtfully planned and were well-resourced, such as the Montessori shelves in the pre-school room, the small world, vehicle, and animal play area in the toddler room, and the cosy area in the tweenie room.
- In the setting, play was the medium through which the children learned and developed. The children had opportunities to engage in play alone or with other children, indoors and outdoors. When the educators introduced some planned activities, such as painting, and resources, such as sand and water, this enabled the children's creative expression for short periods.
- There were quite a few different languages spoken by the educators, the children, and their families. This rich diversity of languages was not evidently valued and used to inform the planned activities, resources, and interactions observed. At times in some of the learning

rooms, the educators used books effectively to engage the children. Song and movement were occasionally used by some educators. The educators did engage in conversations with the children. There was no planned approach to the support of the children's communication, language, literacy, and numeracy through playful engagement and activities.

- The setting had an inclusion coordinator and an inclusion policy. The manager and lead educators had, in partnership with parents, accessed support for children through the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM). AIM inclusion plans were in place for children. The educators recognised diversity in the style and focus of children's learning and development and their individual temperaments.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to develop a system of short-term planning to promote the children's learning and development.
- Educators are advised to engage as play partners at every opportunity, purposefully using strategies to prompt the children's exploration, thinking, and learning.
- The educators are advised to continue to evaluate and develop their learning environments. It is advised that all learning environments, indoors and outdoors, be designed and resourced to develop children's curiosity, creativity, imagination, and exploration.
- It is advised that the educators use the rich diversity of languages present in the setting as a foundation for the planned support and promotion of the children's communication, language and literacy development.

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

- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements required improvement.
- Overall, the children were at ease and content in the setting. They had a good sense of belonging within their learning room group of children and educators, and with the children in the other rooms.
- In all learning rooms, there were times when the children were enjoying and engaged in their play. The children were developing the ability to play alongside and co-operatively with others. Some children were confident in expressing their wishes and needs. The children had choices around whether to join in play or not.
- Babies and young children were supported by the educators to increase their confidence and co-ordination in relation to their gross and fine-motor skills. In the outdoor learning environment, the educators were patient in helping the children to climb the steps of the slides independently and encouraged children to be confident to try to climb up steps and walk down a ramp. In the baby room, the babies explored and manipulated resources and materials stored in baskets and containers within their reach.
- The children were experiencing and expressing an appropriate range of emotions in many ways. At times, the educators' responses did not comfort, affirm, and support them to manage their feelings and emotions in a way that enhanced their wellbeing.
- Children were communicating, both verbally and non-verbally, using gesture, such as pointing and turning their head away, and language to interact, share experiences, and express their needs and intentions.
- During opportunities for sensory play, the children were happy, relaxed and content. They were engrossed in sensory exploration and were calmed and soothed by these experiences. Many children demonstrated creativity and self-expression as they painted with their fingers and hands and with tools. There was limited opportunity, support, and resources for the children's engagement in role play and fantasy play.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the educators establish daily routines that include times for the children to engage in different types of social groupings and playful learning activities, supported by the educators. This should include extended time for child-initiated play, educator-facilitated small-group discussions and activities, and larger-group experiences.

- The educators are advised to develop a consistent approach to positively support the children to experience, express, and manage their emotions in a manner that enhances their wellbeing.
- It is advised that the educators provide resources, time, and support for the children's engagement in a wide range of freely accessible sensory play, role play and fantasy play, every day.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning required improvement.
- The setting is one of a group of five early learning and care settings. The setting manager received support in her role from an area manager and head office administration support. The manager also attended monthly meetings with the managers of the other four settings. There was evidence of some good teamwork among the educators in the setting.
- At the time of the inspection, the whole setting was availing of mentoring support from Better Start Early Years Quality Development Service. The setting had yet to develop processes for internal review, self-evaluation, and planning for quality development, at learning room and whole-setting levels.
- The setting had an induction process for newly employed staff. Educators were offered annual support and supervision meetings. There were named lead early years educators in each learning room. The role and responsibilities of the lead educators as pedagogical leaders who ensure the organisation of educational experiences and activities, was not clearly established. Some educators demonstrated thoughtfulness and an awareness of the importance of their role.
- The educators communicated with parents around their child's care routines using the setting childcare management software. The setting had a parent handbook and an information sheet around funding. At the time of the inspection, the educators were planning to share the newly developed children's learner journals with their parents.
- Some information, required by regulation, was gathered from families prior to their child's enrolment in the setting. The booking and enrolment forms did not gather information about children's prior experiences. The setting had a standardised approach of providing families with a period of up to five hours to settle their child into the setting. The setting did not have a policy to guide the procedures and practices to promote sensitive management of transitions for babies and young children.

Actions advised

- To improve children's learning experiences and achievements, the company management and the setting manager are advised to support the continued development of an emergent curriculum and a slow relational pedagogy in all rooms through provision of continuing professional development for the educators. It is also advised that the manager request the continuation of Better Start mentoring support in the setting.
- The manager is advised to engage the whole staff team in the development of a setting curriculum statement which clearly outlines the dispositions, values, knowledge, skills, and attitudes that the curriculum programme in the setting promotes for the babies and young children.
- It is advised that the role of pedagogical leader in the setting, and within each learning room, be established, clearly outlined, and implemented in practice.
- It is advised that the manager implement evidence-based quality practices to support the smooth transition into, within, and from the setting and record this in a transitions policy. It is also advised that the educators in the pre-school room, in partnership with parents, complete a National Council for Curriculum and Assessment *Mo Scéal* report for children transitioning to primary school.

Summary of overall inspection

Area	Quality level
Quality of context to support children's learning and development	Required Improvement
Quality of processes to support children's learning and development	Required Improvement
Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements	Required Improvement
Quality of management and leadership for learning	Required Improvement

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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