An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)

Final Report

Setting name	CHRISTCHURCH CRECHE AND MONTESSORI SCHOOL
Setting address	DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL Civic Offices Wood Quay Dublin 8 D08RF3F
TUSLA registration number	TU2015DY303
DCEDIY number	25DY0918
Date of inspection	13-11-2025
Date of issue of report	12-02-2026

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(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.

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.

Early Years Education Inspection

Dates of inspection	13-11-2025

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

Context of setting

Christchurch Crèche is privately owned and was established in 1995. It is a work-based setting that provides full-day, part-time and a morning pre-school session for children enrolled in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. For the past two years, the setting was relocated to temporary location while their current premises was redesigned and renovated. At the time of the inspection, the team and children had only recently moved back into the refurbished building. Four educators, one of which was the owner/manager, and sixteen children were present during the inspection.

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 caring and warm atmosphere was evident in the setting.
- At arrival and collection times, the children and their parents were warmly greeted. The highly effective open-door policy allowed parents to enter the learning environment, drop their children off at their learning rooms and engage in relaxed and unrushed conversations.
- Relationships between the educators and the children were positive and responsive. Through observing the educators' discussions with parents and children, it was clear that they knew the children and their families well.
- The educators supported the children's emotional development through sensitive interactions, and by being attentive to their individual needs. Children confidently sought the educators out for support and comfort when needed. Activities to support emotional awareness were regularly planned.
- The daily routine included opportunities for the children to engage in free play both indoors and outdoors, mealtimes, large group and adult-directed activities. Nappy changing and sleep-times were also scheduled. The routine was not documented for the children's use.
- The educators used music and a timer to inform the children that tidy-up-time had started. While many of the children transitioned smoothly between activities, there was no notice given to inform them that activities were coming to an end.
- During snack time, the children sat together and openly chatted with their peers. On the day of inspection, the educators moved around the tables as they served food and engaged in discussions with the children.
- Sleep and nappy changing activities were managed very well. Children who needed nappy changing or naps, were respectfully informed when it was time for these activities.
- The uniqueness of each child was represented in the environment through photographs, a family wall, birthday and height charts, hand prints and artwork displays.
- The educators supported the children's developing sense of identity and belonging, through planned activities. For example, parents and family members attended events such as the family fun day, Christmas and graduation activities.

- To connect the children to the wider community, parents and community members were invited to share their professional experiences. Family members and employees of Dublin City Council, for instance architects, barristers, ambulance personnel and fire fighters came to visit. The children went on regular visits to places of interest for example, the library, the ARC cultural centre, a farm, and the Christmas crib at the 'Mansion House. They also occasionally visited the civic office historical sites and used the amenities for events.

Actions advised

- To support the children's awareness and predictability of daily events, the educators are advised to document the daily routine and use this along with other audio and visual aids to inform the children of impending transitions.
- To further enhance meal times experiences the educators are advised to sit with the children during this time.

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 play-based curriculum, with links to *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the Montessori Method of Education, was in operation.
- Curriculum planning was organised on a long-term, medium-term, and short-term bases. Planning for the children's learning was predominantly thematic, based around seasonal events, and the children's learning goals.
- During the inspection, whilst the children's emergent interests were identified and followed, it was noted that these were not used to inform the children's next steps in learning or short-term plans.
- A group diary, individual learning journals and observations linked to the children's involvement in activities were used to record and document the children's learning.
- The educators valued play and created a calm and relaxed environment that supported the children's active learning and playful engagement.
- Interactions between the educators and the children were consistently positive. The educators sat with the children at their physical level, commented on their engagement in activities, and joined their pretend play. Occasionally they used open-ended questions to scaffold and extend the children's thinking.
- The learning environment consisted of a bright, airy learning room and an adjoining outdoor space. Combined, the indoor and outdoor spaces provided children with play experiences, which fostered their imagination, exploration, creativity and physical development.
- Having recently moved back into the premises, the educators were in the early stages of developing the indoor environment and had created some clearly defined areas of interest for pretend play, table top and quiet book activities. It was noted that most of the pretend play resources were wooden or plastic.
- The children had daily access to the outdoor play area, where they had opportunities to engage in gross-motor, sensory, mark-making and pretend play activities.
- When the children explored and manipulated materials like sand and playdough and participated in the adult planned mark making and gluing activities their imaginative skills and their sense of creativity were observed to be developing well. While the children had opportunities to engage in these activities, it was noted that many of the creative resources were not freely accessible.
- The children's emergent language and literacy skills were very well supported through conversation, a print-rich environment, access to books and mark-making resources and through story, song, and rhyme activities.
- The owner/manager and the educators promoted an inclusive environment. They linked closely with parents and with external agencies to support children with additional needs and had availed of support under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM).

Actions advised

- To support the implementation of an emergent and inquiry-based curriculum, the educators are advised to review their approach to the cycle of planning. In doing so, they are advised to align the children's emergent interests, documented observations, next steps in learning, and short-term plans.

- To assist with the development of areas of interest, the educators are advised to conduct a review of the environment, using the 'Environment audit' tool from the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide*. They are also advised to include real items in the learning environment and make freely available more open-ended creative resources.

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

- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements was very good.
- The children demonstrated high levels of wellbeing. They were happy, content, secure and at ease in their surroundings and had settled well into the new environment.
- The children's positive social skills and sense of fun was observed in their laughter and their engagement with their peers and the educators. Good friendships were observed as they played together in pairs and in small groups.
- As the children playfully engaged in self-chosen activities, they displayed positive learning dispositions, such as motivation, persistence, engagement, and concentration. They also demonstrated their ability to lead their own learning.
- The children displayed strong communication skills. They expressed themselves both verbally and non-verbally through their use of language and gesturers and in some cases through the use of picture cards. They were observed requesting help, they asked and answered questions in context, shared information and were successful in taking turns, and sharing with others.
- Many children displayed self-assurance and the ability to share their interests and successes with others. For example, they shared information on their drawings and chatted about what they were making with playdough and sand.
- Most children demonstrated a very good sense of their own identity. They confidently introduced themselves, referred to their likes, and spoke about family members. Opportunities for the children to reflect on activities linked to the community or local places of interest were limited.
- The children's personal-care and self-help skills and their care for the environment were observed to be developing well. With little adult support, most children independently used the toilet facilities, washed their hands, wiped their noses, and tidied up equipment after completing activities. There were missed opportunities by the educators to further support the children's independence and self-help skills during meal times.
- The children's co-ordination, fine motor and gross motor skills were observed to be developing well. These were evident in their effective use of table top activities and when they engaged in activities, such as climbing and running while playing outside.
- Many of the children exhibited natural curiosity and demonstrated a strong awareness of the world around them. For example, some children were observed discussing shells, birds, aeroplanes and family members who lived in Australia, while others eagerly fed or watched the fish being fed.
- The children's language, literacy and numeracy skills were observed to be developing well. During the inspection, some counted the number of spoons of sand it took to fill a bucket, while others referred to colour and shape. They enjoyed singing songs and rhymes and freely chose books to look at.

Actions advised

- To further support the children's sense of identity and belonging, the educators are advised to reflect within the learning environment the local community and community-based activities that the children participated in.
- The educators are advised to develop strategies which will increase the children's independence during mealtimes. This can be achieved by providing opportunities for the children to become 'helpers' in setting up for meals and to self-serve food and drinks.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was very good.
- A professional atmosphere was evident in the setting.
- The owner/manager demonstrated a very good oversight and a clear commitment to the early learning and care offered to the children. The setting's mission statement and vision were reflected in the educators' interactions and practice.
- The owner/manager and the educators were observed to have developed positive relationships, and they showed strong support for one another. The owner/manager also took on an active role in the daily management of the setting and supported staff by providing cover in the learning rooms as needed.
- There were very good structures in place to ensure the effective delivery of the learning programme, the sharing of information amongst staff and the evaluation of practice. These included regular team meetings, individual supervision, observations of practice and the use of the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide*, and the *Nurturing Skills* resources to support reflection.
- Roles and responsibilities were clearly defined, and the educators had an opportunity to lead learning at different stages during the session. A key person approach was in place. Each key person had responsibility for observing and documenting the children's learning. Along with the owner/manager the key person also shared information on the children's learning with parents. At the time of the inspection, the educator employed under AIM support was assigned as a key person to children only accessing AIM.
- The owner/manager had established links with the county childcare committee (CCC), Better Start Quality Development Service, private early years consultants and networks for advice and training.
- Continuing professional development (CPD) was encouraged within the setting. The educators had participated in both e-learning and face to face training. The owner/manager had completed the Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) in the Early Years Programme and was awaiting a place on the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion training.
- A comprehensive set of policies and procedures was in place. These were developed in conjunction with Dublin City Council, parents and the educators. A handbook was used to share policies with parents.
- Very effective channels of communication had been established between the setting and the parents. The owner/manager reported that the established parents' committee was a valuable means of supporting two-way communication between the setting and parents. Information was also shared through informal chats, formal meetings, social media and a monthly newsletter.
- The settling-in procedures in place, were very effective in supporting the children's smooth transition from home to the setting. Most of the children started in the setting as babies. 'All About Me' information for each child was collected before they started. A phased settling-in approach was aligned with each child's needs and parents were encouraged to stay during the settling-in period. The owner/manager reported that a phased settling-in approach, supported by key workers, was also used to assist the children's transitions between learning rooms, this was not documented in a policy.
- The educators prepared the children for primary school through discussions and planned activities. A junior infant teacher was invited to visit the children in pre-school to discuss the move to 'Big School'. With parental consent, the *Mo Scéal* documents, developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), were used to share information about the children's learning experiences with the schools they transitioned to. The transition to school policy did not include information on the use of *Mo Scéal.*

Actions advised

- To further support inclusion, the educators are advised to review the make-up of the key groups to include all children.
- The owner/manager is advised to carry out a review of the transition policy. As part of this review, it is advised that a 'Transition Between Learning Rooms' policy be developed, and information on the use of the *Mo Scéal* resources be included in the 'Transition to School' policy.

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

Aistear - Nurturing Skills website

Department of Education Insights – Quality in Early Years Education webinars

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