An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)

Final Report

Setting name	Making Memories Pre-school
Setting address	The Maples Hazelhill Ballyhaunis County Mayo F35KW99
TUSLA registration number	TU2020MO004
DCEDIY number	20MO0250
Date of inspection	25-03-2026
Date of issue of report	19-06-2026

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 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 setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised in this report, the setting chose to accept the report without response.

Early Years Education Inspection

Dates of inspection	25-03-2026

Activities conducted during the Inspection

- Pre-inspection meeting with the setting owner/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 early years educators
- Feedback meeting with the setting owner, manager, room leader and an early years educator

Context of setting

Established in 2020, Making Memories Pre-school is a private early learning and care setting in Ballyhaunis, Co. Mayo. There is a sister setting in Knock. The setting provides two concurrent morning pre-school sessions for children availing of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. On the day of the inspection, the owner, manager, room leader and two early years educators were present with thirty children in total.

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.
- The educators created a warm, nurturing and caring atmosphere in which the children felt secure and valued.
- The children settled easily and demonstrated a strong sense of comfort and belonging.
- The educators knew the children and their families well. They were affectionate and attentive in their interactions with the children. Most of the family members remained at the entrance doors at arrival and departure times.
- The educators recognised and affirmed the children's efforts through commentary that supported the children's confidence and self-esteem.
- Commendably, the educators structured the daily routine to provide long uninterrupted periods of child-led play, which effectively supported the children's agency, independence and decision making. The educators signalled transitions and supported the children as they moved between activities.
- The educators celebrated cultural events with the children in an inclusive manner, most recently Eid al-Fitr. On the day of the inspection, birthdays were celebrated and all the children were included in these experiences, supporting a sense of community.
- While relationships and inclusive practices were strong, opportunities for all the children to see themselves, their families and their wider community in the environment were not consistently evident. On occasion, some of the children's preferences to use their home languages were not encouraged by the educators.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to ensure that all children can see themselves, their families and their community reflected in displays, resources and experiences.
- The educators are advised to enable and encourage the children to use their preferred or home language during play, while continuing to model English, to further support identity, inclusion and language development.

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 educators effectively implemented a play-based curriculum informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. Their bi-monthly plans outlined a broad range of suitable learning experiences linked to themes that supported the children's engagement. In one learning room, the educators effectively observed, noted and responded to the children's interests, for example by extending learning through activities related to an interest in bees.
- The connection between planning and assessment was not consistently evident across both learning rooms. The educators completed observations that were strengths-based for the most part.
- The indoor learning environments were bright and well maintained, and supported the children's independent movement. A range of interest areas promoted different types of play, including socio-dramatic, mark-making and literacy experiences. One learning room provided a richer range of real and sensory materials, such as rice, pasta, real handbags and empty perfume bottles. On the day of the inspection, the children from one learning room had the use of a separate room for gross motor play and small-group activities.
- The outdoor learning environments were not used on the day of the inspection. The spacious outdoor area had different surfaces, including stone and grass areas, with a water wall, sand boxes, water trays and a wooden climbing frame.
- On the day of the inspection, the educators facilitated whole-group art activities that resulted in some of the children experiencing waiting periods before accessing materials. For some children, the range and quantity of materials available were not sufficient to sustain their engagement and extended exploration.
- The educators promoted literacy and numeracy learning effectively through play. High-quality construction play opportunities supported the children to problem-solve and measure while songs and reading materials were used to develop the children's English language skills.
- The educators demonstrated a strong commitment to inclusion. They implemented Access and Inclusion plans for children with special educational needs and showed respect for the cultural backgrounds of all the families.

Actions advised

- To strengthen the connection between planning and assessment, the educators are advised to consistently use observations, written in strengths-based language, to inform future learning experiences.
- The educators are advised to ensure that all of the children have access to sensory materials across all learning environments to further support and enrich child-led play.
- The educators are advised to organise small-group experiences specifically for their key group of children. It is advised that the educators provide a wider range of materials, particularly for art activities, to reduce waiting times and support the children's engagement.

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

- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements was very good.
- The children were happy, comfortable and secure in the setting. They demonstrated enjoyment and enthusiasm in their learning and engaged positively with both peers and educators.
- The children showed deep levels of engagement and concentration during self-selected play. The children's play preferences were respected by the educators. They experienced success and satisfaction as they explored materials such as playdough, wooden blocks and resources within the home areas.
- The children demonstrated strong problem-solving skills and creativity, particularly during construction play. In one learning room, the block area included visuals and props to inspire the children.
- The children led their own learning confidently for much of the session, where they used their interests and prior knowledge to shape their play. For example, some children engaged in discussion while exploring the family display, counting family members and debating whether pets formed part of the family.

- The children used their imagination and real-life experiences during socio-dramatic play, including office work and caring for babies. Access to real-life materials, such as keyboards and telephones, supported technology learning and inquiry.
- In one learning room, the children were observed to engage in mindfulness exercises that supported their emotional awareness and self-regulation.
- While the children had access to rich indoor learning experiences, on the day of the inspection they did not have opportunities for outdoor play. This limited opportunities for active, exploratory and nature-based learning.

Action advised

- The educators are advised to provide daily opportunities for outdoor play, ensuring access to loose parts and natural materials to further support physical development and child-led learning.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was very good.
- The educator team demonstrated a professional and collaborative approach, underpinned by positive teamwork. The owner, manager and room leaders met weekly and maintained regular communication with the wider team, supporting the quality of practice.
- The educators engaged in informal reflective discussions about the curriculum and the children's experiences. These discussions supported ongoing improvement. However, the team had not yet established a structured system for self-evaluation and quality assurance.
- The team had a strong commitment to professional development. The educators engaged in online training provided by Better Start, including a sensory processing course. Three of the educators had completed the Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years programme. They had plans to attend a workshop on the updated *Aistear* framework.
- The educators maintained strong communication with parents through an online application, sharing photographs and information about how the children were learning through play.
- When transitioning into the setting, the educators fostered positive partnerships with the families through open days and by encouraging the parents to share information about their child's interests. The educators demonstrated sensitivity and care in supporting the children during their settling-in period, using thoughtful strategies to reassure both the children and parents.
- Transition to primary school was also well supported. The educators prepared the children through experiences that supported their social and emotional development and introduced school-related props. Links with local schools were strengthened through visits by teachers to the setting.

Action advised

- The management and educator teams are advised to develop and implement a structured system of self-evaluation. Building on their reflective practices, it is advised that the team use the national quality frameworks of *Síolta* and *Aistear* to document reflection, collectively identify priorities and implement actions that support continuous improvement and quality assurance.

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	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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