An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)

Final Report

Setting name	Whizzkids Community Childcare Committee
Setting address	58 Mill Race Park Mill Rd. Drumlish County Longford N39DK63
TUSLA registration number	TU2015LD023
DCEDIY number	09LD0027
Date of inspection	19-05-2025
Date of issue of report	04-11-2025

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	19-05-2025

Activities conducted during the Inspection

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

Context of setting

Whizzkids Community Childcare was established in 1999 and offers sessional, full day and after-school services. There are two sessional programmes running concurrently, both of which provide the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, both these learning environments were visited where there were thirty-one children and five educators present. 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.

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.
- Educators created a warm atmosphere in the setting. The manager greeted parents and children on arrival before the children independently entered the setting. They displayed great independence as they hung up their coats and bags, placed their lunchboxes in the fridge and washed their hands.
- The daily routines offered a variety of learning experiences including creative experiences, mealtimes and opportunities for outdoor play.
- The children enjoyed a picnic outdoors as their meal. Most educators sat with the children during this time where lovely natural, free-flowing conversations were overheard.
- Some transition times, where there was movement between experiences and areas, were managed effectively. On occasion, an educator used a timer to inform children that a change was about to happen. Other transitions were less effective and resulted in abrupt stops to the children's play and on occasion, children were left waiting aimlessly for their turn to wash hands.
- Relationships between educators and children were warm and kind. The educators knew the children and were attentive to them and their needs.
- Various visuals throughout the learning environments supported the children to feel a sense of belonging. Recognition of the children and their families, alongside many informal conversations about families supported the children in understanding and appreciating that they were members of their family.
- Recognition and celebration of the diverse culture within the setting and the wider community was in its infancy. Educators had access to key phrases in one of the home-languages and displayed national flags in the learning environments. The manager also reported using digital technologies to translate notes for parents.
- Various connections were made between the setting and the local community. Numerous opportunities were available for the children to engage in the community and its facilities. For example, throughout the year, the children had opportunities to visit the local library, the community garden and the local playground. Members of the community also visited the children in the setting and included a parent who was a paramedic.

Actions advised

- Educators are advised to effectively facilitate all transitions ensuring that children are actively involved and therefore these times support positive learning experiences for all children. A review of the role of educators during this time is further advised to minimise waiting times, ensuring times of change and movement are brief, unhurried and purposeful.
- Educators are advised to further develop how they recognise and celebrate diversity in the setting. Consideration of how both the resources and the books could also reflect and celebrate diversity, in its broadest sense, would also be beneficial.

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.
- A play-based curriculum with links to *Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* was in place.
- Planning for curriculum implementation was organised on long-term, medium-term and short-term bases. Short-term plans varied between learning rooms with some listing the children's interests while others demonstrated where some of the children's interests were followed up on in practice.
- A variety of assessment approaches were used to capture children's learning and development. These included an 'emerging interest' board, documented observations, a group and individual learning journals. Documented observations had moved onto a digital application in the year of the inspection. These were very brief in nature and did not provide a rich picture of the individual child and their learning.
- Generous time was allocated to child-initiated play experiences. A variety of play types were also made available, including creative play, construction play and imaginative play.
- Educators facilitated some effective interactions with the children. They were attentive and supportive to the children and their needs. During the inspection, there were many missed opportunities where children's learning and development was not built upon or extended. Frequent use of closed questions between educators and the children was also observed. This did not support the promotion of the children's language or thinking skills.
- The indoor learning environments consisted of some defined interest areas with a variety of materials available. The positioning of the tables was quite dominant impacting on the layout of the various spaces available to the children.
- Daily opportunities were provided to the children in the outdoor learning environment. A variety of effective experiences were made available, such as the mud kitchen, sensory tuff trays and mark-making opportunities.
- Educators and management have made efforts in establishing an inclusive environment. Inclusion plans were in place for children with additional needs and were updated regularly. The setting had also made with links with external agencies, such as the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) where some supports have been made available. An Inclusion Co-ordinator, within the setting, supported the promotion of inclusive practices and maintained regular communication with parents.

Actions advised

- Educators are advised to review assessment practices ensuring that documented observations clearly outline the learning that is happening for children, how this learning can be best supported and what progress was made when these 'next steps' were followed through. Using this information, educators would benefit from building on planning processes, clearly outlining how the interests that are currently being identified are being supported. Meaningful engagement with the 'Planning and Assessment' pillar of the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* would assist in improving this practice.
- Educators are advised to broaden their range of interaction strategies by consistently modelling, scaffolding and extending children's learning. Such opportunities and possibilities could also be discussed and planned for in the short-term plans. An intentional emphasis and promotion of the children's early numeracy, literacy and languages skills through play would also be beneficial.
- Educators are advised to review the layout of the indoor learning environments with a view to consistently creating clearly defined spaces which are richly resourced using natural,

open-ended and real materials. Minimising the number of tables in the learning environment, and/or their positioning, would help in this regard.

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

- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements was good.
- Children presented as content and happy in the setting. They demonstrated enjoyment in their engagement of the various learning opportunities on offer.
- Many children demonstrated a sense of achievement. They regularly discussed and shared aspects of their learning with their peers and educators. The children's individual learning journals were accessible to them and their artwork was displayed in the learning environment giving due regard to the children's successes and achievements.
- Children displayed a developing sense of self. They openly discussed family members, friends and shared real-life experiences. Children were also supported in recognising their uniqueness. This was evident during the inspection when one child and educator celebrated the child's physical growth after she had measured herself against the wall chart.
- Children experienced some opportunities to support their communication skills. An optional circle time, where children joined in if they wished, saw an educator facilitate natural conversations where the children had time and space to share their stories and experiences with their peers. A small number of open-ended questions were used by educators which supported children to express their thoughts, ideas and opinions.
- Large group experiences with children saw a strong focus on product art where the emphasis was predominantly on the final product with little opportunity for individual creativity or expression.
- Various opportunities were provided for children to make sense of their world. Children demonstrated an awareness of the natural environment. They had opportunities to engage in sensory experiences, such as sand, water and compost. Opportunities for children to explore education for sustainable development were in their infancy where the children engaged in planting seeds and fruit which they attended to over time.
- Some opportunities were provided to support the children's developing literacy skills. Children had access to books throughout the indoor learning environments with opportunities for mark-making also available. The use of worksheets did not allow for individualised learning or differentiation which would recognise each child, their skills and strengths.

Actions advised

- Educators are advised to intentionally promote children's communication and language skills. Questions, prompts and new vocabulary could be planned for as part of team meetings and in the preparation of short-term plans. Consistent use of open-ended questions would further develop relationships by educators engaging in meaningful conversations with children. Furthermore, this style of questioning can also develop the children's language as they have opportunities to use different words and a wider range of vocabulary.
- Educators are advised to reflect on the purpose of product art. Replacing these with processed focused experiences would provide much greater opportunities for children to creatively express themselves.
- Educators are advised to intentionally promote children's literacy skills in playful and meaningful ways. A review of the book areas and the selection of books available would also strengthen how the children's language and literacy skills are fostered. Removing the use of worksheets in the setting is further advised.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was good.
- Management and educators regularly reflected on and reviewed their practice. Opportunities were provided for educators to come together throughout the year and an annual in-service day facilitated a whole team meeting.

- Management and educators previously had some engagement with an early years specialist from the Better Start Development Service. As part of this mentoring process, educators used self-evaluation tools from the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* to evaluate the effectiveness of the learning environments and planning and assessment practices.
- Management regularly facilitated support and supervision meetings with educators. These meetings identified what was working well for educators while also helping to identify areas in need of further development.
- The setting manager had a degree in early childhood education and actively promoted the use of *Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. She facilitated in-house professional learning opportunities and had previously supported educators in completing relevant online webinars. At the time of the inspection, a small number of staff were not confident in the implementation of the curriculum framework.
- Various communication strategies were used to exchange information with parents. These included the use of a digital application, a texting system and phone calls. Various face-to-face events happened throughout the year and included a tea party, a Christmas gathering and a St. Patrick's Day parade. Parent-educator meetings were facilitated with parents of children in their last year of ECCE. Parents did not have an opportunity to enter the setting and while the manager met parents individually at arrival and collection times, this meant that parents did not have an opportunity to meet with their child's educators on a daily basis.
- Settling-in procedures were in place to support children starting in the pre-school. Children within the setting, moving between rooms, were introduced slowly and gradually over the summertime. New children coming into the setting for the first time had an opportunity to visit the setting in advance of starting where they could become familiar with the learning environments and the educators. A booklet had also been prepared for the children to support them with this transition.
- Various commendable efforts were made by educators in supporting the children's transition to primary school. They had discussions with the children, provided the school uniforms in the socio-dramatic play areas and displayed photographs of the local schools in the learning environments. Educators completed the *Mo Scéal* (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)) and transition templates in collaboration with parents. The educators and children then embarked on a local bus tour of the neighbouring primary schools where the individual children hand delivered their *Mo Scéal* to their primary school teachers. This effective practice demonstrated the value management and educators placed on the importance of such an important transition in the lives of the young children.

Actions advised

- All educators are advised to actively engage in professional learning opportunities in relation to the revised Aistear (2024). It is important that management and all educators attend this training together, where possible, to ensure a shared understanding of the curriculum framework.
- Management is advised to reintroduce parents and families back into the setting. Building on the partnership with parents, this would provide opportunities for daily informal exchanges of information while also strengthening the ways in which parents are involved in their child's learning and development.

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	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	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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