An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)

Final Report

Setting name	Toddle In
Setting address	Loughglynn Castlerea County Roscommon F45PC82
TUSLA registration number	TU2015RN054
DCEDIY number	09RN0008
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, and the response submitted on behalf of the setting can be found in the appendix of this report.

Early Years Education Inspection

Dates of inspection	25-03-2026

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

Context of setting

Toddle In is a community-operated early learning and care setting. The setting offers a morning session for children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. It also offers a school-aged childcare service. On the morning of the inspection, eighteen children, the setting manager and two early years educators were present.

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 successfully created a warm and nurturing atmosphere. They showed sensitivity and positive regard towards the children and their families.
- Relationships between the educators and the children were respectful, responsive and supportive. The children settled quickly and demonstrated ease in expressing their needs and preferences. The educators showed strong awareness of the children's cues and emotional needs, responding with sensitivity and care. While these interactions promoted a secure and nurturing environment, a key-person approach had yet to be implemented.
- Well-paced routines were in place. The educators successfully supported long, uninterrupted periods of time for child-initiated play and learning, in both the indoor learning environment and the adjoining community hall. During these times, the children were active agents in choosing and organising their learning and development activities.
- The educators supported the children to effectively manage transitions through clear verbal and auditory prompts.
- The setting participated in Bia Blasta, the national pre-school nutrition programme. Snack-time was used effectively to promote positive food experiences and healthy habits. It was a social occasion where the educators joined the children and supported them to manage their individual needs.
- The educators fostered the children's developing sense of identity and belonging by using a family tree photographic display and personalised storage areas. Parents and community members enriched the children's experiences through their visits to the setting to share their traditions, interests and roles, and by taking part in celebrations, such as Christmas concerts and end-of-year graduation.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to develop and implement a key-person approach consistent with the setting's established policies and procedures.

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 implemented a broad-based curriculum informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* to support the children's learning and development. They

effectively provided the children with a range of learning experiences that focused on play as the central medium for education.

- The educators effectively planned for curriculum implementation on a long-term, medium-term and short-term basis. They decided on the themes that guided the planning process, with short-term plans successfully incorporating some of the children's interests.
- The educators had initiated strengths-based assessments, using observations to gather insights into some aspects of the children's learning experiences and achievements. They were developing their practice in recognising and supporting the children's schemas, repeated patterns of behaviour that show how the children were making sense of their world. The links between observation and the planned curriculum were beginning to emerge.
- Individual learning journals and folders were being developed by the educators for each child. These included samples of the children's creative work, though the children's own thoughts and ideas had yet to be added.
- The educators viewed the children as competent and capable learners and encouraged their active engagement and participation in self-chosen activities. They responded to the children's interests through playful engagement, praise and encouragement, and they used open-ended questions that supported the children to explore some of their interests.
- The children's emergent literacy and numeracy skills were fostered through books, story, rhyme, song, and a range of playful numeracy experiences such as counting games, matching activities, sorting, and exploring early mathematical language.
- The indoor learning environments were bright and spacious, and the educators provided a varied range of materials, including construction sets, small-world figures, fine-motor tools, and a selection of books. However, in the main learning room the educators had not clearly defined the learning areas, and there was limited access to real-life and nature-based materials. The outdoor space was not used during the inspection due to inclement weather.
- The educators promoted an inclusive environment. They linked with the parents and external professionals to support all the children, where appropriate.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to further develop the emergent and enquiry-based approach to curriculum planning, ensuring a clear distinction between group curriculum plans and individual learning plans. These plans should be informed by ongoing recorded observations that reflect each child's unique interests, dispositions, abilities, and needs.
- The educators are advised to consistently identify and record the next steps for each child's learning, ensuring the child's voice is visible throughout the documentation to support continuity and ownership of learning.
- The educators are advised to increase the availability of freely accessible real-life, sensory, and nature-based materials in the main learning room. As part of this process, they should complete a resource audit to rotate less-used items, expand materials that reflect the children's current play patterns, and involve children in decisions about additions or changes. They are further advised to develop opportunities, where appropriate, for free-flow access to the outdoor area to support daily outdoor learning.

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 enthusiasm and enjoyment in their learning, engaging in a variety of play-based activities. They showed positive learning dispositions, including curiosity, persistence and interest.
- The children demonstrated growing independence, successfully managing self-care routines and showing empathy and respect for others.
- The children successfully played alone, in pairs and in groups, and the educators supported them to express their preferences to others. In the large community hall, the children cycled, ran, climbed, explored the sand pit and moved through the pop-up tunnel. The foam blocks were very popular, and children gathered to "build a bridge" and "make a tower". Some of the children climbed into a large cardboard box and were busy "building a boat" while using toy screwdrivers and saws to create their imagined design. Others focused and balanced as they played hopscotch. These activities successfully supported the children's physical development, communication, creativity and developing relationships.

- The children were effectively developing their language, literacy and communication skills. They enjoyed sitting and talking together during group activities and explored sound, pattern, rhythm, repetition and language through conversation and songs. They demonstrated a good awareness of print, shape, colour, and numbers. The children also engaged in some self-initiated mark-making opportunities.
- Most of the children were developing the skills to make choices in their learning, and demonstrated emerging leadership skills by planning and initiating their own activities, particularly during imaginative play. Their enthusiasm for construction and sand play encouraged peer involvement effectively, fostering collaboration and shared exploration. A small number of children needed additional support with decision making and engagement in learning experiences.
- Across the indoor learning environments, the children engaged in a broad range of play experiences that supported their developing creativity, construction play, storytelling, and socio-dramatic play.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to introduce visual choice boards to further support the children's developing decision-making, independence, and engagement in their learning experiences.
- The educators are advised to develop a dedicated mark-making area and increase the availability of visible, readily accessible materials, such as paint to further enrich the children's creativity, emergent literacy and sensory exploration.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was very good.
- There was an ethos of teamwork, collaboration and partnership evident across the team.
- Effective management structures supported clarity in roles and responsibilities, with the manager overseeing the programme of learning and care and reporting to the chairperson and board of management.
- The educators adopted an informal approach to reflective practice to support professional learning and inform changes to improve practice.
- The educators had effectively established links with their local county childcare committee and external agencies, as needed. They engaged in continuing professional development (CPD) and the manager had completed the Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years (LINC) programme. The educators were considering engaging with the Better Start National Early Years Quality Development Service.
- The educators shared information about the children's learning and achievements with the parents through informal conversations, email, a messaging application, termly observations and social media.
- The educators supported the children's transition into the setting effectively by gathering relevant information about each child on an individual enrolment form. Visits to the setting by the children and their parents further supported the settling-in process. The parents had an overview of the general practices in the setting.
- Commendably, the educators had established links with the local primary schools. The educators talked with the children to prepare them for this transition. To further support the transition to school the educators were developing a report template for the parents to share with their child's primary school.

Action advised

- The manager and the educators are advised to access support from the Better Start Quality Development Service. This mentoring support should assist them to engage in ongoing self-evaluation and reflective practice that will lead to further development of the key-person approach, strengthening of planning and observation practices and completing an audit of the learning environments.

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

APPENDIX

SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

Our Early Years Educators have completed Aistear webinars called, exploring and understanding the updated Aistear- A national webinar series,

1. Bringing Aistear's image of the educator to life in practice.
2. Strengthening Emergent and injury based practice through your curriculum statement. There are two more webinars in this series and will be available on 23rd of September and 4th of November 2026 and we will be completing these also.

We have started a room audit and to remove and rotate less used items. We also have started to research and source real life, sensory and nature based materials.

Our Early Years setting has contacted The Better Start Quality Development Service for mentoring support for all the actions advised in our Early Years inspection report and we are currently engaging with them in regards to what support we need/want.

We have carefully considered all the recommendations in our report and are actively working towards them.