An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)

Final Report

Setting name	Canovee Community Playschool
Setting address	Canovee County Cork P12P651
TUSLA registration number	TU2015CC082
DCEDIY number	09CC0121
Date of inspection	29-01-2025
Date of issue of report	15-05-2025

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	29-01-2025

Activities conducted during the Inspection

- Pre-inspection meeting with one of the setting owner/managers
- 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 a number of Early Childhood Care and Education Programme sessions
- Interaction with young children
- Interaction with early years educators
- Feedback meeting with one setting owner/manager and an early years educator

Context of setting

Canovee community playschool is a rural early learning and care setting, located in the parish hall building of Canovee. Two early years educators provided early years education and care for ten children during the morning session and eleven children during the afternoon session. Both owner/managers were also present at different times on the day of the inspection. 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 was good.
- The setting established a caring ethos. The educators created a nurturing, welcoming atmosphere. They demonstrated warmth and affection physically and emotionally through positive, respectful relationships.
- The daily routine was displayed in picture sequence and PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) cards were used to further inform the children of transitions and expectations. The daily routine consisted of numerous transitions. Sedentary times and adult-initiated/led activity times outweighed child-initiated/led, active and interactive activity times. This approach did not fully support the children's active agency in choosing and organising their engagement.
- After washing their hands, the children got their lunch boxes, sat together at the tables and ate their snack. One educator supported a child with additional needs, while the second educator used the time to prepare the painting activity, which was following snack time. This was a missed opportunity to support the children's language development, as well as to create and enjoy a relaxed, family type mealtime atmosphere.
- The children's self-help and self-care skills were fostered effectively, in a meaningful and respectful way.
- The educators provided some good guidance towards positive behaviour and fostered caring and respectful child-child relationships. A reward sticker was provided to the children at the end of each day, this was not supportive of fostering effective emotional development and regulation for the children.
- The educators provided a range of meaningful opportunities for the children to develop an appreciation of themselves as individuals and as members of groups. Several photographs of the children and their families were on display and some of the children's art work was respectfully presented.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to change the daily routine to provide more agency to the children to choose and organise their own learning and development activities. Adult-initiated/led activities, based on the emergent curriculum, could be optional so that the children can choose to engage in them, or to continue to engage in their self-chosen activities.

- The educators are advised to create a more relaxed, family type, well organised snack time, which provides maximum engagement for the children to set the tables and clean and tidy up after the meal. The educators, as role models are advised to sit with the children and engage them in small group conversations.
- The educators are advised to reflect on their reward systems in place, considering what they want to foster further and how this could be achieved in a more meaningful way than giving every child a sticker daily. Providing instant, relevant, positive affirmation and meaningful encouragement towards the children's skills, their positive behaviour or achievements could be considered.

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 requires improvement to achieve a good standard.
- The educators implemented a broad-based curriculum with a focus on teaching letters, phonics, numbers, shapes, colours and Irish words and sentences. Some of the children's interests were followed in practice. An emergent, enquiry-based curriculum was not yet developed.
- Each child had an art collection scrapbook containing their work; this was mainly tracing of letters and numbers, matching activity sheets, template art and colouring-in sheets. The educators documented individual observations, which focussed on various areas of development. These were not always strength-based and were collected in a group folder.
- The educator's interactions with the children during play were meaningful, and extended the children's learning and development.
- The majority of materials and resources were aligned along the walls of the room. Play engagement happened mainly around the tables and the tuff tray, which offered coloured rice and Choco pops with some animals, scoops, cauldrons and diggers. Outdoor play time happened on an enclosed, safety-surfaced pitch, where balls and hoops were used and the children enjoyed some group games with a parachute. The settings designated green space outdoor area was not used, as the ground was wet and the owner had health and safety concerns. All children had full raingear and boots available in the setting, these were not worn on the day of the inspection.
- The educators provided some time for exploratory, active and interactive play during the indoor play time. During this time the children had choice and agency over their activities. The importance of spontaneous, child-initiated/led, active and interactive play throughout the session was not yet recognised or afforded.
- The educators used circle time for rote learning of letters, numbers, shapes, colours and Irish words and phrases. This practice did not support active, hands-on learning experiences.
- The educators created an inclusive approach and positively engaged all the children, irrespective of their abilities to take part in all activities.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to broaden their skills and knowledge about assessment and planning of an emergent, enquiry-based curriculum. This could be supported by systematically working with the relevant areas of the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* and engaging with the 'Assessment' webinar of *Insights: Quality in Early Years Education'*.
- The educators are advised to create indoor and outdoor learning environments which inspire exploratory, child-initiated/led, active and interactive play throughout the sessions. The indoor learning environment would benefit from the establishment of more designated, meaningfully resourced interest areas. The educators are also advised to ensure that the children wear their suitable outdoor clothing to enable them to play and explore in the settings designated, natural outdoor play area on a daily basis.
- The educators are advised to move away from the use of formal teaching methods, rote learning and focus on utilising teachable moments during their play interactions. This will provide context and meaning through every day lived experiences and support the children to understand the concepts behind these abstract symbols and their usefulness in daily life.

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

- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements was good.
- The children arrived happy and were at ease. They showed positive learning dispositions, such as interest, natural curiosity and resourcefulness.
- Some children engaged in individual exploration and play with construction materials, showing high levels of concentration. They were very focussed and persistent.
- Some beautiful, lengthy play scenarios developed during the indoor play time, where the children co-operated, negotiated and organised their roles and responsibilities during play, using their well-developed communication skills and conversation strategies. This, and their ability to self-regulate, enabled them to play autonomously in pairs and small groups.
- The children regularly enjoyed some songs and rhymes and they danced, following the instructions of a recording. They interactively explored some books and some free drawings on A5 sized paper were collected. There was a lot of evidence of the use of template-based, outcome oriented art work and colouring-in during the whole group art and craft activity time, which did not allow creative, individual expression.
- The children's opportunities to become aware of the natural environments, their features and plants and sense-rich experiences was very limited. As was their engagement, exploration and experimenting with manipulative, diverse materials and resources.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to consider the desired learning outcomes of each activity and to maximise the outcomes. For example, letting the children draw or paint freely rather than colouring-in a template picture, offering a broader range of materials and resources to inspire creative expression for arts and craft activities, and singing action songs together with the children, instead of using a recording, will enable them to share their own ideas for characters, actions, sound, pitch and pace and thus extend learning and development more.
- The educators are advised to provide plentiful opportunities to the children, particularly during outdoor play times, to use and refine their physical skills by manipulating a broad range of objects and diverse materials and resources. This includes the provision of opportunities, that build early positive dispositions towards science, engineering, the arts and mathematics through hands-on, active experiences, linked to everyday life.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was good.
- The educators engaged in informal planning and reflection as time or opportunity was available. This was not effective in supporting collaborative planning of an emergent curriculum, setting self-evaluation and in-house professional development. Opportunities for internal self-evaluation and regular reflection on the effectiveness of practices and procedures were not strongly established.
- There was an absence of a clear, shared vision and understanding of the practice within the setting between the owners and the educators.
- The educators had engaged in some professional development, mainly in relation to the mandatory courses, such as fire safety and first aid.
- The setting used various strategies to ensure that the families were kept informed. These included daily informal chats, a parental handbook, and sharing of information using electronic media.
- Transitions into and from the setting were managed well and sensitively. Settling-in was a sensitive, slow process, ensuring continuity of experiences for the children. Good working relationships were established with the local primary school. The children were very familiar with the local school, the teachers, the principal and the students. Occasionally, primary school children would visit the children in the pre-school and engage in conversations and play interactions.

Actions advised

- Management is advised to ensure that appropriate systems are in place for the smooth organisation of educational experiences and activities; this includes collaborative setting self-evaluation and in-house professional development, using the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* and the *Insights: Quality in Early Years Education* webinars. This work will support the creation of a shared vision and direction for the work of the whole setting. Regular staff supervision and staff appraisal meetings would support this work further.
- Management is advised to seek the support of external professionals and support services, such as *Better Start, the National Early Years Quality Development Initiative*. The educators are further advised to utilise professional development opportunities to broaden their knowledge around current best practice guidelines about children's learning and development.

Summary of overall inspection

Area	Quality level
Quality of context to support children's learning and development	Good
Quality of processes to support children's learning and development	Requires Improvement
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 Síolta Practice Guide

Department of Education Insights – Quality in Early Years Education webinars

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