An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)

Final Report

Setting name	Wonderland Childcare Centre
Setting address	FDYS Island Road Enniscorthy County Wexford Y21X984
TUSLA registration number	TU2015WX138
DCEDIY number	09WX0122
Date of inspection	06-03-2025
Date of issue of report	22-05-2025

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(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.

Early Years Education Inspection

Date of inspection	06-03-2025

Activities conducted during the Inspection

- Pre-inspection meeting with the setting person in charge and parent organisation Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
- 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 an Early Childhood Care and Education Programme session
- Interaction with young children
- Interaction with early years educators
- Feedback meeting with the setting person in charge and two assistant senior workers

Context of setting

Wonderland Childcare Centre is a community-operated Early Learning and Care (ELC) setting, run by a voluntary board of management. This setting is situated in Enniscorthy town and is one of three sister ELC settings located across County Wexford. It operates under its parent organisation, Ferns Diocese Youth Service (FDYS). Established since 1996, this setting provides full day and sessional care to children and families from the surrounding areas, and operates a morning session for children who are participating on the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the morning of the inspection, ten children were in attendance, along with five early years' educators. 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.
- A caring and nurturing atmosphere was present. The educators warmly greeted the children and parents during arrival and collection times.
- The educators were knowledgeable about the children's personalities, individual temperaments and needs. They had developed special relationships and attachments with the children by implementing a key person approach. They used this approach to plan for and extend the children's ideas, into small group activities.
- The educators planned calm and well-paced routines, which included one hour of uninterrupted free play. Whilst the routines were familiar to the children, there was no visual schedule of activities available for their reference.
- Snack time was a social occasion for the children. The educators gave each child their lunch and the children got their own drinks and disposed of their leftover waste. The educators sat and ate with the children, chatting and sharing their food preferences.
- The children were confident in their self-help and personal care routines. The children had some opportunities to complete small tasks, which were suggested by the educators in the moment.
- Time of transitions included a verbal signal for tidy up during free play and some verbal announcements in the moment. There were some prolonged waiting periods for the children when washing their hands and preparing for snack.
- The educators supported the children to express their emotions and discuss their feelings following a circle time story session. Some minor sharing disagreements amongst the children on the morning of the inspection were resolved by the educators.
- The children's uniqueness was well represented. The educators had created many photographic displays of the children for their birthdays, of their families and of them engaged in activities and had included the children's self-portraits in their learning journals.

- The parents were welcomed into the setting for the children's Christmas concert and end of year graduation for children moving on to primary school. A number of workshops on health and nutrition was organised for parents.
- The educators recognised and valued diversity. They had completed diversity, equality and inclusion training and celebrated cultural themes with the children. In addition, the children had access to multicultural books and dolls.

Actions advised

- In order to further promote children's independence in the daily routine, the educators are advised to develop more visual prompts across the learning environments. The inclusion of child-friendly visual daily routines and 'helper' schedules and extending transition strategies to include more auditory cues will support this.
- Building on the children's ability to express their emotions and communicate their feelings, the educators are advised to develop more visual strategies which will build on this and which will extend children's problem-solving language, so that they can resolve minor disagreements independently.

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 play-based child-led curriculum which was informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*.
- The educators planned on a medium-term and on a short-term basis, there was no overarching long-term plan in place. Medium-term plans recorded seasonal, cultural and themed topics. Short-term plans documented weekly activities and alignment to *Aistear* learning goals. Children's emergent interests were not recorded into short-term plans.
- The educators assessed the children's learning and development monthly, guided by *Aistear* themes. These observations had a developmental focus, which included descriptions of learning, and were shared with parents on a termly basis. The assessments did not record next steps in children's learning progression. The children had access to individual learning journals which consisted of their artwork and colouring-in pages.
- The educators interacted with the children in a give and take manner. They asked open-ended questions to support the children's learning and were attuned to their verbal and non-verbal cues.
- The indoor learning environment was purposefully structured into defined interest areas such as; a book area, a construction area, a home area and a socio-dramatic play area. It was well resourced with many quality Montessori materials and puzzles, a magnetic whiteboard easel, a play kitchen with wooden play food and toy hoovers and brushes, dress-up clothes, cars and small world figurines.
- The children engaged in a variety of play experiences. They cared for and dressed dolls, they flew aeroplanes, they made dinner with playdough and went on ride-on cars and trikes.
- The educators promoted the children's literacy and numeracy skills through their access to a wide variety of puzzles, books, child-friendly posters, fun rhyming songs, and through their use of sandpaper letters and numbers. On the day of the inspection, the educators celebrated world book day and provided the children with books to read at home with their families
- The educators supported the children to express themselves creatively by selecting songs during large group time. Whilst the children engaged in free painting and drawing experiences, many of the artwork displayed and in their learning journals consisted of template art and colouring-in pages.
- The educators had created an inclusive learning environment which ensured the active engagement of all children. They participated in the *Access and Inclusion Model (AIM)* programme.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to develop their long-term plan for children's holistic learning and development. They are further advised to document children's inquiry based and emergent interests into short-term plans, so that they can extend upon individual observations, strengths and culture and plan small group activities based on children's emerging interests.

- The educators are advised to consistently document next steps in learning for all children using *Aistear* learning record templates, and share these with parents on completion.
- The educators are advised to limit the children's engagement in template art for adult planned activities and provide more opportunities for children to engage in process art experiences.

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 fun and enjoyment and were motivated in their learning experiences.
- The children actively participated in activities. They made many choices and decisions whilst playing cooperatively, in pairs and small groups.
- The children demonstrated their capacity to reflect and recall events. During large group discussions, the educators provided the children with ample time to recall their knowledge about springtime, the weather and the character in their story.
- There were many occasions provided for the children to increase their confidence and coordination in their fine and gross motor development. They made patterns with pegs, glued cotton wool onto pages, kicked balls and balanced on beams.
- The children took part in events which promoted healthy choices. They participated in stretching and yoga exercises and had an awareness of the food pyramid and healthy eating.
- The educators had supported strong connections for the children to the local community. They had organised visits to the pre-school from *An Garda* and regularly visited the fire station, the library and the adjacent peace park. The children had created free drawing pictures of '*Vinegar Hill'* which could be viewed from the window of the setting.
- The children's ideas and suggestions for small group activities were acted upon by the educators. In some incidences the educators had recorded the children's voices in their observations, in the main, this was not consistent practice.
- The children had an awareness of the wider world. They explored different countries through planned themes and had access to a large map of Ireland and many lifecycle puzzles of insects, flowers and animals.
- Whilst the children played with playdough during free play and participated in painting activities, they had limited access to freely available sensory experiences and open-ended materials. The outdoor area which was not used on the day included empty sand and water trays.

Actions advised

- In further enhancing existing strategies in place which promote children's voices, the educators are advised to consistently record the children's voices and make them more visible across the learning environment. Capturing the children's comments, ideas and suggestions, and 'thinking and reasoning' language on their artwork, in their learning observations and journals and during small group discussions with key educators will support this.
- The educators are advised to include more freely available multi-sensory materials and opportunities for the children to engage with them, across the learning environments. The inclusion of daily access to water, sand, creative resources, along with more real and natural open-ended and recyclable materials will enrich children's play experiences. They are further advised to ensure all children have daily access to the outdoor play environments.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was very good.
- Channels of communications were clearly defined in terms of organisational and reporting responsibilities. Roles were defined in terms of room leads reporting to persons in charge, and subsequent reporting to the parent organisation's CEO and voluntary board of management.
- The management and educators held informal daily room meetings to share updates and address child supports and any emerging concerns. At the time of the inspection, the management reported that they were in the process of commencing formal whole team meetings.
- The educators reflected on quality improvement developments and internal processes on an informal basis. They had engaged with the self-evaluation tools in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* in the past.
- The management checked-in daily with the educators and operated an open door policy. The CEO provided ongoing support and offered coaching and mentoring opportunities to the staff team.
- The educators engaged in continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities. All staff had engaged in diversity, equality and inclusion training and had participated in the *National, Síolta Aistear Initiative* (NSAI). Four educators were engaged in accredited qualifications, which was actively supported by board members of the parent organisation.
- Effective two-way communications were developed between the parents and the educators. The children's learning and development progress was shared daily through informal chats and monthly and weekly activities were posted on a notice board outside the room. A parent handbook was developed which was shared electronically with parents. Strategies were in place to support parents for whom English was an additional language.
- New children and parents were supported to settle into the setting through onsite visits and on a phased basis based on their needs. During this time, the educators gathered information about the children's needs and personalities. Existing children transitioned across from the younger aged room with their key person.
- The educators supported the children's transition from pre-school to primary school through the establishment of strong relationships with two local feeder schools. They planned annual visits from the teachers to the pre-school and attended school open days with the children. They completed the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), *Mo Scéal* templates for children availing of the AIM programme. Transition templates were not completed for all children. The educators engaged the children in discussions about starting school and supported development of their independence skills.

Actions advised

- The management and educators are advised to formally engage in internal review and self-evaluation processes to support quality improvement developments. They are further advised to embed a quality agenda into team meetings and to document agreed decisions and shared responsibilities amongst staff. The action planning templates, resources and self-evaluation tools of the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* will support this.
- In order to strengthen children's transitions from pre-school to primary school, the management and educators are advised to complete the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) *Mo Scéal* templates for all children and share these with parents, who in turn can share with the schools, should they so wish to.

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

Department of Education Insights – Quality in Early Years Education webinars

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