An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)

Final Report

Setting name	Newport Community Childcare Ltd., First Friends
Setting address	The Billy Ranch Knocknageeha Newport County Mayo F28T025
TUSLA registration number	TU2015MO097
DCEDIY number	09MO0016
Date of inspection	19-03-2026
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 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.

Early Years Education Inspection

Dates of inspection	19-03-2026

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/educator

Context of setting

Newport Community Childcare Ltd., First Friends, is a community-based setting located in Newport, County Mayo. It offers a morning Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme to participating children. On the day of inspection, there were four children, the setting manager and an educator in attendance.

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 calm atmosphere, showing sensitivity and positive regard for the children and their families. They demonstrated deep knowledge of each child, and used affirmations and encouragement to effectively promote the children's emotional wellbeing, confidence and secure attachments.
- The educators upheld the children's rights, agency and autonomy through a slow relational pedagogy. They supported the children to regulate their emotions by offering recognition, encouragement and attuned feedback.
- Commendably, the educators established a flexible, unhurried routine that afforded the children long, uninterrupted periods for child-led play and exploration in the indoor and outdoor learning environments. The educators supported the children to engage in self-directed play alongside optional, educator-supported small-group experiences. This balance successfully promoted the children's autonomy, sustained engagement, creativity and holistic development.
- Snack time was a social occasion, and the educators valued this opportunity to sit and talk with the children. Independence was encouraged by the educators throughout the session, with children hanging up their belongings and tidying up after themselves.
- A sense of identity and belonging was nurtured by the educators through conversations about the children's lives, displays of their work and engagement with local people and places. Community walks and visits helped to broaden the children's understanding of their locality, with visual representations of the local landscape and wider community yet to be developed.

Action advised

- The educators are advised to develop visual representations of the local landscape and community. This would further enrich the children's developing sense of identity, belonging and connection to their locality.

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 very good.
- The educators effectively implemented a play-based curriculum, informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. A broad-based approach to planning was evident, incorporating short-term, medium-term and long-term plans that reflected seasonal themes and the emerging interests of the children.
- The educators assessed each child's learning and development through narrative observations, photographs and notes. They were developing individual learning journals that included samples of the children's creative work. They used a strengths-based approach to capture the children's learning experiences and achievements. The educators used some opportunities to outline broad next steps in the children's learning and development and had yet to fully outline and record the ideas and perspectives of all the children.
- The indoor learning environment was bright and inviting, and the educators' thoughtful arrangement supported the children's engagement in learning. Clearly defined areas encouraged the children's purposeful learning through a variety of play types, including construction play, table-top activities and the use of books and mark-making materials.
- The educators viewed the children as competent and capable learners. They encouraged active engagement in self-chosen activities and responded to the children's interests through playful interactions, praise, and encouragement. Their use of open-ended questions supported exploration of ideas and contributed positively to early language development.
- The educators fostered the children's emergent literacy and numeracy skills through a print-rich environment, books, stories, rhymes, songs and mark-making activities.
- The educators promoted an inclusive environment and collaborated with the parents and external agencies to support all the children, where appropriate.

Action advised

- The educators are advised to enhance and expand on the detail recorded in the children's individual observations so that their plans for progressing each child's next steps in learning and development are clearly visible.

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 settled and content in the setting. They presented as being secure and were enjoying themselves as they engaged with the various spaces in the learning environments. Commendably they showed respect, empathy and positive regard for one another.
- The children demonstrated the ability to plan and lead their own learning. As they playfully engaged in activities, they displayed curiosity and imagination. They confidently invited peers and the educators to join a self-initiated guessing game, arranging chairs, selected objects and leading the group in identifying which item was removed. All the children participated with excitement, whispering, 'This is such a fun game!' and suggesting, 'Let's have two goes each.' They took turns naturally and supported one another, showing developing leadership, co-operation, communication and problem-solving skills.
- The children were actively making sense of their world through playful, inquisitive exploration. Outdoors, they demonstrated growing capacity to make decisions and use judgment as they explored blowing bubbles, observing how they floated, drifted and burst. They compared sizes, experimented with how to make stronger bubbles and tried to catch them. Their conversations reflected problem-solving and early scientific thinking. Nearby, other children moved between bubble play and outdoor painting, expressing creativity and making independent choices.
- Throughout the session, the children used and developed their language and communication skills to share information, interpret experiences, ask questions, make requests, negotiate, and express their thinking, ideas and feelings. The children shared rich ideas and expressions, though it had yet to be fully represented in the children's creative work and learning documentation

Action advised

- The educators are advised to record the children's voices within their creative work and documentation. Strengthening this practice would further support continuity in the children's learning and development while promoting their sense of ownership and capturing the children's unique insights and understandings.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was very good.
- An ethos of teamwork, collaboration and partnership was evident. The manager and the educator demonstrated a professional approach and were committed to delivering high-quality experiences, guided by the child-centred philosophy and vision of the setting.
- The educators engaged in informal internal evaluation and implemented quality-improvement plans that supported professional learning and informed enhancements to curriculum planning.
- The educators had effectively established links with their local county childcare committee and external agencies. They engaged in continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities and the manager had completed the Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years (LINC) programme.
- Parents and families were consulted as the primary educators of their children and involved as partners in their children's learning and development. Effective, clear two-way communication was established through daily informal exchanges, as well as regular updates via a messaging application, email, open days, phone calls and meetings, as needed.
- The educators effectively supported the children's transition into the setting by gathering relevant information on enrolment and facilitating visits for the children and their parents. The parents were provided with an overview of the setting's general practices to support a smooth and positive settling-in process.
- The educators had established strong links with the local primary schools and supported the children to prepare for this transition. To strengthen continuity of learning, they were reviewing the use of a transition report for parents share with the primary school.

Action advised

- The educators are advised to develop a transition-to-school report, such as the *National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) Mo Scéal* transitions document, to further support the children moving to primary school and promote continuity of learning.

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	Very 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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