An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)

Final Report

Setting name	Tír na nÓg Playschool
Setting address	Sliabh gCua Community Centre Touraneena village Balinamult County Waterford E91F788
TUSLA registration number	TU2015WD093
DCEDIY number	09WD0042
Date of inspection	28-04-2026
Date of issue of report	26-06-2026

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(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.

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	28-04-2026

Activities conducted during the Inspection

- Pre-inspection meeting with the setting owner/educator
- 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 children
- Interaction with an early years educator
- Feedback meeting with the setting owner/educator

Context of setting

Tír na nÓg Playschool is an early learning and care setting providing a morning and afternoon session of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. During the inspection sixteen children and two early years educator were present, one of which was the owner/educator.

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 educators created a caring ethos and a welcoming atmosphere. The children and parents were warmly greeted by the educators on arrival and the educators and parents engaged in a brief exchange of information before the children commenced their day.
- The children presented as well settled and were very familiar with the daily routine; they hung-up their coats and bags on arrival.
- The educators were aware of the children's personalities and preferences which supported them to get to know their individual needs.
- A daily routine was in place; it provided ample opportunity for the children to be active agents in their learning.
- Transitions were managed by the educators, predominantly in advance, through the use of verbal cues, which most of the children responded to. A number of transitions required children to wait, and these times were not optimised for purposeful learning.
- Snack time was relaxed and enjoyed as a social occasion and as an opportunity for the children to develop their self-care and independence skills. There was discussion about the various food items the children and educators were eating and recent family activities and events. The educators provided support as needed at this time.
- The educators showed affection, sensitivity, warmth and positive regard for the children. The educators provided affirmation and support to the children and effective praise and encouragement were regular features of the educators' responses.
- Recognition for the uniqueness of the child within the learning environment was nurtured to some degree. There were photographs of the children, displays of their artwork, a birthday chart and a community and family display. The educators and the children had rich conversations about some of the children's family farms and the local amenities. There was limited representation of this within the learning environment.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to develop strategies that will support the effective management of transitions. Giving the children time to process, understand and participate in the daily transitions will maximise the learning potential at these times and reduce inactive waiting periods. The use of a daily routine display and visual and auditory cues will assist this.

- To build on the current practices of supporting the children's developing sense of identity and belonging, the educators are advised to enhance the resources provided to greater reflect the children, their families and the community within the learning environment.

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, broadly informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*, was in place. The educators organised planning on a long and short-term basis. The plans identified monthly themes, primarily informed by educators' ideas and seasonal events. Planning placed a strong emphasis on using art and craft activities as the main vehicle for exploring and engaging with topics.
- Assessment for children's learning was documented through regular observations. The observations captured a rich picture of the individual child, and focussed on the child's social development, interests or dispositions. The next steps in learning were not identified and the observations were not used to inform the development of the short-term curriculum plans.
- The educators used interaction strategies which were authentic, and affirming of the children. At times, they were playful and used open-ended questions and prompts which invited the children to share their knowledge or understanding.
- The indoor environment was bright and inviting, with a small number of defined spaces that were supportive of children's engagement through play. They provided a variety of play experiences, with a small amount of sensory and open-ended play resources such as sand and playdough. The layout of the learning room did not ensure that all areas were freely accessible or visible for the children.
- The setting had three outdoor learning environments to choose from. On the day of the inspection a playground area was used and the children engaged with swings, climbing, music making, group games and exploring wildflowers.
- The educators provided opportunities for children to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Activities included recalling past learning experiences, songs and mark-making. The learning environment was print rich and children were observed to skilfully free draw many pictures.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to enhance their current assessment and planning practices to ensure that the next steps and emergent interests are identified and used to inform the development of the emergent, short-term plans in respect of individual children's interests, needs and dispositions.
- The educators are advised to enhance their interaction practices through increased play partnering and extension of learning through play.
- The educators are advised to review the layout of the learning room and to enrich the indoor and outdoor learning environments through the incorporation of additional items for the children to explore, such as loose parts, open-ended, natural and sensorial resources. The development of additional interest areas in the learning environment would enhance the opportunities for play.

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

- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements was good.
- The children were very well settled and contented. They presented as happy and demonstrated enjoyment and fun in their learning.
- The children were affirmed, comforted and supported to manage their feelings and emotions in a way that enhanced their wellbeing.
- The children were developing friendships and appropriate social skills; they often played collaboratively and developed role scenarios together.
- The children presented as confident, articulate and interested in the activities that they engaged with. They discussed their families, recent events and their likes and dislikes.
- The children displayed dispositions such as resourcefulness, resilience and persistence, this was observed as they engaged with construction play and playdough.

- The children had some opportunities for creative expression, through the materials provided for mark-making and exploration of playdough. There was much emphasis on template or product artwork and missed opportunities for the children to explore and complete creative activities independently.
- The children discussed and shared aspects of their learning with other children and the educators during their activities. The educators commented and affirmed their accomplishments; this supported the children to recognise their own capabilities and achievements.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to provide increased opportunities for all children to engage in activities which prompt exploration and playful engagement in learning and creative self-expression as distinct from template-based activities. Ensuring art and craft materials are freely accessible would support this.
- The educators are advised to provide opportunities for the children to develop a greater awareness of their progression in their learning. This could be achieved by developing the learning journals to include links and descriptions of the child's individual learning. The reduction in product and template art and an increase in self-expressive, process art will support this individuality. Additionally, the use of the learning journals to invite the children to reflect on and document their reflections would be beneficial.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was good.
- There was an ethos of professionalism; effective teamwork was evident, and the owner and educator verbalised their commitment to providing a quality learning experience for the children.
- The owner and educator engaged in informal daily discussions. There was evidence of formal review of the curriculum noted on the monthly curriculum plans. They had not yet engaged with the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* to evaluate and inform change.
- A variety of effective strategies were in place to communicate with the children's parents. These included daily contact and a messaging service to inform parents about recent learning activities and upcoming events. Formal meetings were provided as needed or requested by parents.
- The children's transition into the pre-school was supported by a gradual settling-in period, dependent on the needs of the child. Parents were invited to visit the setting in advance, with their child to meet the educators and a parent handbook was provided.
- The transition from pre-school to primary school was supported through the establishment of the relationship with the local primary school, the preschool attended various functions with the school community. The educators planned activities to explore the topic of 'going to school'. The educators completed a transition document to further support continuity of learning for the children.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to enhance their current team meetings through engagement with the self-evaluation toolkit in the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide*. This will support the development of a reflection and self-evaluation process. These reflections will assist them to identify goals for quality improvement. It is advised that this practice is implemented regularly, recorded, monitored, and reviewed systematically.
- The owner is advised to access support through availing of continuing professional development or engaging with the Nurturing Skills website to fully implement and embed *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*.

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	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

Aistear - Nurturing Skills website

Department of Education Insights – Quality in Early Years Education webinars

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