An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)

Final Report

Setting name	Little Rascals Rathangan
Setting address	The Lodge Bracknagh Road Rathangan County Kildare R51XK83
TUSLA registration number	TU2024KE005
DCEDIY number	24KE0499
Date of inspection	03-03-2026
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 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	03-03-2026

Activities conducted during the Inspection

- Pre-inspection meeting with the setting management team
- 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 three Early Childhood Care and Education Programme sessions
- Interaction with children
- Interaction with early years educators
- Feedback meeting with the setting management team

Context of setting

Little Rascals Rathangan is located in the village of Rathangan, in County Kildare. There were three pre-school rooms in the setting offering morning care with optional wrap around full day care to the local community. The children attending the pre-school were availing of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection the inspector visited all three ECCE sessions. Overall, there were thirty-four children, six educators and the two owner/ managers present during the inspection.

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.
- There was a warm and welcoming atmosphere in the setting.
- The educators were kind and caring towards the children. The educators knew the children well and spoke confidently about their individual personalities, likes and dislikes.
- The daily routine was busy and included a variety of activities which offered the children the opportunity to play, complete activities and go outside. In some learning rooms the children experienced a number of activities in a short space of time. At times children waited long periods for the next activity to begin.
- Transitions which took place during the day were verbally notified to the children, and some educators used songs or music to signal upcoming transitions.
- Snack was a social event where children sat and talked with their peers and the educators who sat with them. Most children were capable of feeding themselves and demonstrated good self-help skills. Healthy eating was promoted in the setting.
- All learning rooms had a family wall and a birthday display. Some community visits took place during the year including a Garda visit. Flags to represent all children's nationalities were displayed at the beginning of the year. Various occasions including Road Safety Week, World Book Day and Pyjamas Day were celebrated in the setting. One parent from Poland had shared donuts with the children and educators to celebrate Tlusty Czwartek (Fat Thursday) a significant day in their culture.

Actions advised

- The children would benefit from a slower approach to the daily routine. Reduced waiting periods, the use of visual aids and more small-group activities will embed this practice. Guidelines in *Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework 2024* regarding slow relational pedagogy will support this practice.
- Building on the experiences already planned to support children's awareness of culture, the educators are advised to explore children's own identity as part of their everyday learning experiences. Enhancing a sense of group identity for children in their key learning rooms will support children's sense of belonging in the setting.

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 with elements of children's emergent interests was in place in the setting. The curriculum was linked to *Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework 2024.*
- Long-term plans were developed by the manager with oversight for curriculum implementation. Medium-term plans and short-term plans were in place in each individual learning room. Overall documentation represented thematic planning and activities to celebrate annual events with varying approaches to the planning of children's group and individual interests.
- Each child had their own learning journal which recorded learning stories, narrative observations and a variety of photographs and artwork. There were some links to skills and dispositions by some educators in some learning rooms.
- Children enjoyed learning through play. They had exposure to a variety of different types of play including construction play, sensory play and outdoor play. The educators played with the children during the day.
- The educators interacted with the children using strategies such as questioning, testing knowledge on colours and shapes and directing them to new activities and instructing them how to complete activities.
- The management team were still developing and investing in their indoor learning environments and much work had already been achieved. There was a good variety of equipment available to the children including sand trays, kitchens, dress-up resources, various types of building blocks and doll houses. The tables dominated the centre of all the learning rooms with equipment and resources laid out along the side.
- The management team prided themselves on being an inclusive and diverse setting. Some children were availing of support from the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM). The managers had a good working relationship with their AIM mentor, and she visited and contacted them regularly offering advice and assistance. Learning goals and individual learning plans were in place for all children accessing AIM.

Actions advised

- The manager with responsibility for curriculum implementation, is advised to create consistency across all learning rooms in the planning and assessment approaches. She can support all educators to plan and record the children's learning needs and emergent interests using weekly short-term plans and monthly observations.
- An audit and overview of the indoor learning environment is required. The self-evaluation tools from *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide*, and mentoring from *Better Start, the Quality Development Service* will be useful in this regard. The educators need to create more defined areas removing the tables from the centre of the rooms.
- Building on the interaction strategies already used by the educators, they are advised to ask more open-ended questions and use repetition, key words and phrases to support children.

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

- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements was good.
- The children were happy and settled in their learning environments.
- Story time, yoga, dancing and music were all part of the daily routine. During circle time the educators spoke to the children about the theme or topic of the week introducing some new vocabulary. On the day of the inspection the educators shared a homemade nest with the children and spoke to them about eggs, hatching and the life cycle of a duckling.
- On the day of the inspection, the children enjoyed activities including playing with magnets to build houses and towers and using blocks to build to make different play scenarios.
- The educators placed a strong focus on developing children's independence and self-help skills. The children were learning to put on their coats, use the toilet and feed themselves. Many of the children in year two of the ECCE programme were very competent and capable in completing these daily tasks.
- Playdough and sand were available for the children to explore on the day of the inspection. The children enjoyed these hands-on learning experiences.
- All children had the opportunity to complete art activities on the day of the inspection, and these activities were pre-planned adult-led template art experiences. In one learning room, the children made bookmarks for World Book Day; one child was curious and asked the educator what they were making and how they could use it afterwards.

- There were a variety of art displays in all learning rooms celebrating the artwork completed by the children. Children had expectations set for them regarding sharing and completing tasks while at other times educators carried children and completed tasks they could do themselves. Children heard general praise such as ‘well done’ and ‘good girl’ throughout the day.
- The outdoor learning environment had a variety of climbing frames which promoted the children to use their gross-motor skills and co-ordination. Playhouses, trikes and recycled tyres were also available in the outdoor area.

Actions advised

- The children would benefit from more exposure to creative play and sensory play. The educators are advised to reduce the use of templates for art and crafts. Process art activities, loose parts, recycled materials and open-ended materials can replace template art activities.
- The educators are advised to focus on developing and celebrating children’s learning by setting realistic expectations for all children. Reinforcing learning and positive behaviours through affirmations, constructive guidance and encouragement using verbal prompts, visual aids and displays is advised.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was very good.
- The owners and educators were professional in their work and were dedicated to the children, parents and families attending the setting. There was a strong sense of teamwork throughout the learning rooms.
- The owners reported how they were new in their roles and were still learning new skills and gaining new information. They were very open and welcoming of advice and guidance demonstrating their eagerness to learn and try new things in the setting. This positive attitude highlighted their desire to operate a quality setting.
- The owners had shared the roles and responsibilities between them based on their skillset and areas of expertise. One owner had taken on the role of curriculum leader, while the second owner focused on paper-based work to support the running of the business.
- As the setting was still newly open, the owners had very effectively focused on team building and bonding with educators to ensure a positive work environment was established and supported educator wellbeing.
- Staff meetings, daily check-ins and group planning discussions were the main forms of support and supervision provided for educators. Formal support and supervision processes had not yet been established however the owners had explored the idea and had gathered templates and procedures to implement it in the future.
- The owners were keen to attend training based on *Aistear*, *2024* and were working with Better Start, for support regarding professional development and implementing *Aistear, 2024.* The owners believed upskilling the educators promoted independence and expanded their knowledge.
- A variety of communication methods were used to send information to parents including verbal sharing information, an online software applications and written communication. Parents were invited to take part in the curriculum, however the uptake on this initiative was low. Learning journals were rarely shared with parents.
- An open day offered parents and children an opportunity to visit the setting before they commenced their place in the setting. The owners had reflected on the settling-in procedures and decided to introduce a parent information evening for the coming year.
- The owners had already created strong relationships with the local primary schools inviting them into the setting and sharing both written and verbal information with principals and teachers.

Actions advised

- The owners/ managers are advised to introduce formal support and supervision meetings for all educators. This will aid the development of training plans, defined responsibilities and will document agreed actions.
- Parents should be invited to become more involved in the daily curriculum. This can be achieved through exploring family identities, looking at diversity, sharing learning journals/

observations, and inviting parents to speak to the children or to partake in curriculum activities.

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	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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