An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)

Final Report

Setting name	Magic Moments
Setting address	78 Hawthorn Drive Portlaoise County Laois R32DX26
TUSLA registration number	TU2015LS016
DCEDIY number	09LS0018
Date of inspection	15-10-2025
Date of issue of report	05-01-2026

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.

Early Years Education Inspection

Dates of inspection	15-10-2025

Activities conducted during the Inspection

- Pre-inspection meeting with the setting owner/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 a number of 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

Magic Moments is located in Portlaoise, County Laois. The setting offers care and education to children availing of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. Full day care is also available in the setting. The two owner/managers, six educators and forty-six children were present in the setting on the day of the inspection. 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 warm and welcoming atmosphere was evident in the setting. Lots of conversation and chat between parents and educators was heard at drop off and collection times.
- The educators were kind and caring towards the children. They offered the children re-assurance and affection throughout the day.
- As part of the daily routine and to build a sense of group identity, the children completed a self-registration each day and they sang welcome songs in English and in Irish. The children enjoyed these activities and spoke about people who were absent and on holidays.
- The daily routine offered the children a variety of experiences including free play, circle time, snack time and outdoor play. The children were active throughout the daily routine and enjoyed participating in purposeful planned activities based on their current interests.
- Timers, buzzers, songs and visual aids were all used successfully to notify the children of tidy-up time and the next activity. Some activities towards the end of the session, at home time, required the children to sit for long periods waiting to be collected.
- Snack time promoted independence and the development of self-help skills. The older children were kind and patient as they guided the younger children to open their food and clean up their belongings.
- The setting had a variety of displays to promote children's sense of identity and belonging. Parents and family members were regularly invited into the setting for events including a teddy bears picnic, grandparent's day and a Christmas jumper day. At the time of the inspection, one educator was exploring the Hindu festival Diwali with the children teaching about her culture and the costumes, dances and symbols which represented her home life.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to review the home time routine to ensure children are not waiting too long to be collected. Planned games, songs and stories would be useful during this time.
- Building on the very good practices, the children would benefit from further exploration of their own unique culture and local community.

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.
- A play-based curriculum was in place in the setting. The curriculum was strongly influenced by *Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and also included elements of the *Montessori Method*.
- The educators valued play as the main medium through which children learned. The educators were skilled play partners and engaged in the children's play with the purpose of extending learning.
- The educators were in a transition period of recording their planning on a software application. The educators came together as a group to brainstorm and share observations regarding the children and their current interests. Using this information, they created their medium-term and short-term plans. Evidence of these daily experiences were captured on the software application and shared with parents on a continuous basis.
- The setting completed narrative observations on a regular basis. Observations recorded details of the children's current development, however next steps for learning were not always considered and the observations did not link to the short-term plans.
- The indoor learning environments were well organised, inviting and had many clearly defined interest areas. Educators had an extensive range of play materials which they had collected over many years. In some learning rooms, books were stored in boxes or stacked on shelves and children's access to loose parts was limited. The setting had invested in developing their outdoor area and created defined interest areas including a sand area, an outdoor kitchen, a climbing area and space for gross-motor play and free movement.
- The educators focused on extending children's learning, knowledge and understanding of the world. They found opportunities throughout the day to introduce numeracy concepts to the children. A small group of children enjoyed building structures using blocks of varying sizes. The educator sat with the children and discussed the importance of a solid base and structure and how to stack the blocks to ensure they balanced. Another group of children played a board game where they enjoyed counting and matching patterns to different animals.
- The educators had availed of support for children with additional needs through the *Access and Inclusion Model* (AIM). An individual learning plan was in place for all children who required it. Visits from external agencies including an occupational therapist had been crucial in creating plans and setting goals for some children.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to further explore children's individual interests and learning needs through deeper connections between the short-term plans and the narrative observations.
- A review of the indoor learning environments is advised. Focus on enhancing book areas and introducing more loose parts is advised.

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 very happy and well settled into their ECCE groups. At the beginning of the year, the educators had partnered with the parents to gather information using an 'all about me' form and used the information about each child, their family and their favourite things to support a smooth settle-in process.
- The children flourished in their mixed learning environments. The younger children looked up to the older children who acted as role models and demonstrated the routine and how to complete tasks or showed children where items belonged. One group of children worked together to roll up the mat at the end of free play, the older children provided the instructions on how best to roll the mat then everyone worked together to carry it over to the side of the room and neatly store it away.
- Learning journals contained artwork and photographs. They recorded the various activities and experiences the children enjoyed throughout the year. Observations and reflections were not yet included in the learning journals.

- At the time of the inspection, the children enjoyed access to tuff trays with Halloween themed activities including pumpkins, coloured rice and witches. Throughout the year children enjoyed exploring other sensory materials including pasta, flour and playdough.
- In one learning room the children were invited to engage in an activity using modelling clay. The educators spoke to the children about how their hands could manipulate the clay as they pressed and squashed the clay and how the heat from their hands would soften the clay and make it easier to shape. The children were engrossed in the activity and fascinated by the changing shape of the clay.
- The children had access to a range of creative materials and during free play the children produced a range of imaginative paintings and crafts using open-ended resources. Templates were used to complete art activities based on various themes the children were exploring. In one room stencils were used to create fireworks on black paper while a small group of children used their own initiative to draw fireworks on the blackboard using chalk.
- The children were supported to explore and express their feelings. During circle time, the educators used puppets to introduce the concept of feelings and to discuss how children were feeling on that day.
- The children heard lots of praise, acknowledgement of their efforts and reassurance from the educators. This encouraged the children to persist with activities and try new things.

Actions advised

- To fully optimise the learning journals already in place in the setting, the educators are advised to include children's observations within the learning journals and to gather reflections from parents and children within the learning journals.
- Building on the creative and unique process art displays already in the setting, the educators are advised to follow the same methods for art activities based on themes and occasions.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was very good.
- All educators were hard-working and dedicated to the setting. There was a strong sense of teamwork across all learning rooms.
- The two owner/ managers shared the roles and responsibilities for running the business. They were organised in their roles and supported each other every day. They were passionate about empowering educators and progressing their setting.
- Formal procedures were in place to support supervision and professional development for educators. Team meetings and a strategic induction process were in place to support all educators in their roles. The educators were aware of the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* and used it sporadically to support reflective practice in the setting.
- The managers had shared some roles and responsibilities with educators including the role of setting manager for the day-to-day running of the setting. No educator had been given responsibility for the oversight of the curriculum in the setting.
- The settling-in procedure was carefully considered and focused on a family viewing and visit to the setting. Families and children were supported to familiarise themselves with the educators and learning environments using videos which were sent home before starting their place in the setting. Parents played a key role in the settle-in process and assisted in the gradual settle-in time for their children.
- Emails, text messages and a software application were very effectively used to share information with parents and keep them up to date on daily and weekly activities. There was an extensive variety of annual events where parents were invited into the setting to play and spend time with their children.
- The setting had built very good relationships with the local schools. The setting managers had requested videos of the school environments and teachers to share with children and parents, and they had made a very positive effect on supporting the transitions to school for all children. The educators provided all school teachers with written information to support children to transition to school. The managers followed up with parents every September to ensure the transition to school had been positive and to see if any further support was required.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to use the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* to implement the actions advised in this report.
- The management team are advised to nominate an educator to lead and implement the curriculum across the setting. This 'curriculum coordinator' should attend training on the updated *Aistear* 2024 and use the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* within their role.

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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