An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

Follow-Through Inspection
Final Report

Setting name	Early Steps Childcare Ltd.
Setting address	Corcloon Milltownpass County Westmeath N91W7T2
TUSLA registration number	TU2022WH001
DCEDIY number	22WH0192
Date of inspection	28-01-2026
Date of issue of report	11-05-2026

What is a Follow-Through Inspection?

Follow-through inspections evaluate the progress a setting has made on implementing actions advised in an earlier inspection rather than the overall quality of education provision in a setting. Inspectors also advise the setting on strategies and actions to enable them to fully address actions advised in the earlier inspection report.

How to read this report

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated the progress the setting has made in implementing actions advised in an earlier inspection under the following headings:

1. Progress achieved to date
2. Summary of findings
3. Actions advised

Inspectors describe the quality of the progress made in each of these areas using the Inspectorate's follow-through quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The follow-through quality continuum explains the terms used by inspectors when evaluating the setting's progress in implementing actions advised.

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.

ORIGINAL INSPECTION DETAILS	FOLLOW-THROUGH INSPECTION DETAILS
Type: EYEI - Pre-school	**Date of Inspection: 28-01-2026**
Date of inspection: 02-05-2024	
Report published? Yes	

Follow-through inspection activities

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
- Observation of interactions during a morning Early Childhood Care and Education Programme session
- Interaction with children
- Interaction with early years educators
- Feedback meeting with the setting owner/manager

Context of Setting

Early Steps Childcare is located in Milltownpass, Co. Westmeath. The setting offers care and education to children availing of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. A morning ECCE session, an afternoon ECCE session and wrap around care is available in the setting. The manager, two educators and twenty children were present in the morning session on the day of the inspection.

Action/s advised in Area 1 in the original inspection report	Progress achieved to date on implementation of actions advised
The educators are advised to review the daily routine to ensure children had an opportunity for an extended child-led period of play in the indoor learning environment. To further enhance the daily routine the educators can prepare the children for clean-up periods, providing visual and verbal notifications.	**Good progress** The educators reviewed the daily routine to ensure children had an opportunity for an extended child-led period of play in the indoor learning environment. The daily routine has become further enhanced through the introduction of verbal notifications and songs to support clean-up time. Visual aids had been introduced to support children to understand helper roles. On the day of the inspection, the time before and after snack caused some waiting periods for children.
The children would benefit from further exposure to culture, diversity and community awareness. The educators can include visual aids into the environment, invite more visitors to the setting and introduce more resources to explore these topics.	**Good progress** The children had been exposed to more culture, diversity and community awareness. The educators had created visual aids in the learning environment which recalled occasions where parents and community members visited the setting. They had also introduced more resources into the interest areas including the book area and the dress-up costumes. Some children's identity and uniqueness were not yet represented in the learning environment.
Action/s advised in Area 2 in the original inspection report	**Progress achieved to date on implementation of actions advised:**
The educators are advised to begin explicitly documenting children's individual interests and to explore these in a more in-	**Good progress** The educators had made good progress in documenting children's individual interests and trying to explore them in a more

depth way. The educators can expand the use of the individual learning journals to record the emergent curriculum.	in-depth way. Most weekly interests were still based on whole group activities. The educators had effectively used the children's individual learning journals to record the emergent curriculum by including anecdotal notes, formal narrative observations and records of children's work through art and photographs. Each learning journal aimed to capture the individuality of each child in the setting and their learning journals.
The educators are advised to extend the use of interactions strategies to include repetition, open questioning and using specific language.	**Good progress** The educators purposefully repeated key words and phrases to extend the children's knowledge and language development. The use of open questioning was limited during the inspection. The educators planned specific language to introduce to the children to explore themes and topics.
To further enhance children's exposure to literacy, language and numeracy concepts the educators can include more resources and enhance the language used in the learning environment to promote these concepts.	**Good progress** The educators had focused on extending children's exposure to literacy, language and numeracy concepts. The educators had included some resources into the learning environment including cash registers, prices on foods, a laptop, weighing scales and number candles on a cake. During the inspection, one educator spoke to the children about protein discussing different foods we get protein from and how it helps our bodies. This provided a fun and natural way of enhancing the children's language development during snack time.
Action/s advised in Area 3 in the original inspection report	**Progress achieved to date on implementation of actions advised:**
The children will benefit from further extension of the outdoor learning environment. The outdoor learning environment will benefit from permanent mud kitchen areas, sensory areas and creative spaces.	**Very good progress** The educators had extended the resources in the outdoor learning environment. They had created a mud kitchen area with pots and utensils, a sensory area for water play and planting and creative spaces for building and using their imagination. The children also enjoyed mark-making with chalk outdoors and playing with vehicles. The manager shared an array of additional ideas she hoped to implement in the outdoor learning environment in the coming months; her ideas and passion for developing the outdoor learning environment was to be commended.
Circle time requires review and development to ensure it is a planned and purposeful time of day. Circle time can provide children with time to recall their learning and develop a sense of group identity.	**Very good progress** The educators had been very creative in how they redesigned circle time and developed it to ensure it is a planned and purposeful time of day. Circle time now took place in short, open and flexible 'learning moments' during the day where the educators and children talked about topics, interests and daily events for example the weather. Storytelling and reading books took place at the end of the day as requested by the children.
To fully optimise the small group planned activities taking place in the daily routine, the educators can plan specific and	**Good progress** The educators planned specific and focused small group activities to develop children's interests and to fully optimise the small group planned activities taking place in the daily routine. These activities were based on ideas the whole group shared with

focused activities to develop children's interests and learning needs.	educators including baking and planting. Additional planned small group activities focused on celebrating themes, topics and seasonal occasions which take place each year.
Action/s advised in Area 4 in the original inspection report	**Progress achieved to date on implementation of actions advised:**
The educators are advised to implement an open-door policy. This will include welcoming parents into the setting, organising regular events and encouraging them to contribute to their children's records of learning and observations.	**Very good progress** The educators had opened their doors to family members and community members to come into the setting. They had added additional security fencing to the outdoors to facilitate parents having more access to the outdoor area and the reception area. Parents were welcomed into the setting, and organised events including Christmas concerts and graduation were planned for during the year. Parents were encouraged to contribute to their children's records of learning and observations as learning journals were sent home on a termly basis. In the past, some parents had suggested ideas of activities to add to the curriculum including 'show and tell' and a visit from the Tidy Towns committee.
The educators are advised to begin using the *Mo Scéal* resource developed by the *National Council for Curriculum and Assessment* to support the transition to school. A written transition policy is also advised. The educators are advised to build up resources to support the transition to school also.	**Good progress** The educators had developed very strong relationships with the two local national schools. They had regular communication and shared information as required. This had supported the transition to school for all children attending these schools. The manager reported that this year some children will transition to primary schools outside the area and the manager was considering completing the *Mo Scéal* resource to support the transition to school for these children. The manager is waiting to attend training in the coming weeks before developing a written transition policy for the setting. The educators had built up a good variety of resources to support the transition to school including uniforms, books and photographs.

Summary of findings

The managers and educators had made very good progress in three of the actions advised and good progress in seven actions advised. The manager and educators were very dedicated to the setting, the children and families. They were keen to continue to develop the quality practice in the setting.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to review waiting periods during the daily routine and to ensure they are short and used as an opportunity for games, songs or relaxation time.
- The children would benefit from resources which depict their unique identity and the identity of their family e.g. exploring wearing glasses or being a twin.
- The educators are advised to continue documenting children's individual interests and learning needs in the short-term plans.
- The educators are advised to continue extending their interaction strategies to include open questioning and commenting.
- To further enhance children's numeracy concepts the educators can include more resources and enhance the language used in the learning environment to promote these concepts.
- To continue developing the small group planned activities, the key person is advised to continue focusing on developing learning experiences based on the children's learning needs in their key group.

- Building on the good practices already introduced, the educators are advised to share the learning journals with the children, giving them a sense of ownership over them. Sending the learning journals home for shorter periods should help ensure they are all returned to the setting for completion.
- The educators are advised to use the *Mo Scéal* resource to support the transition to school for children not attending the local primary school. A written transition policy is also advised.

Language used in Early Years Education Follow-through inspection reports

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the setting using the language which is shown below.

Level	Description
Very good progress	Very good progress indicates that appropriate action has been taken to address the action advised, and that the action has fully achieved or will achieve the required outcome.
Good progress	Good progress indicates that appropriate action has been taken to address the action advised, and that substantial improvement has occurred, although further progress is necessary.
Partial progress	Partial progress indicates that some appropriate action has been taken to address the action advised, and some improvement has occurred, but considerable further progress is necessary.
No progress	No progress indicates that no action has been taken, and that the original action advised remains to be addressed.

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