An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)

Final Report

Setting name	Carrickmacross Childcare Limited
Setting address	Carrickmacross Workhouse Shercock Road Carrickmacross County Monaghan A81E372
TUSLA registration number	TU2015MN010
DCEDIY number	19MN0096
Date of inspection	07-11-2025
Date of issue of report	23-01-2026

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	07-11-2025

Activities conducted during the Inspection

- Pre-inspection meeting with the setting owner, manager and one lead 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 three Early Childhood Care and Education Programme sessions
- Interaction with children
- Interaction with early years educators
- Feedback meeting with the setting owner and setting manager

Context of setting

Carrickmacross Childcare is a privately-owned setting located in Carrickmacross, County Monaghan. The early learning and care setting offers full and part-time day care and three concurrent morning sessions for children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, the three ECCE sessions were evaluated and the owner, the manager, three lead early years educators, five early years educators and thirty-three children were present. 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.
- The educators created a welcoming atmosphere through their warm and personable interactions with the children and parents at arrival and collection.
- The educators represented the daily activities using a visual daily routine in each of the pre-school rooms. One of the *Naíonra* rooms used Irish language alongside the routine to describe the sequence of activities. The routines provided opportunities for child-initiated play indoors and outdoors.
- The educators planned a routine with minimal transitions which supported a smooth flow to the sessions. The educators provided the children with verbal cues to notify them about the upcoming transitions to snack and circle time.
- The educators and children sat together during snack time, which created a sociable experience. On the day of the inspection, the snack experience was observed in one of the *Naíonra* rooms. The educators used Irish words when offering the children food choices such as *pancóga* as they offered the children pancakes.
- The educators implemented a key person approach in the setting. The list of the key groups was displayed in each room. Each key person was responsible for completing observations for their group of children.
- The educators showed warmth, affection and care for the children in each room. The children appeared content and at ease on the day of the inspection and experienced warm and caring interactions with the educators.
- The educators consulted the parents when their child was transitioning from the toddler room to the pre-school room. This transition was managed sensitively, ensuring that each child's individual needs and temperaments were carefully considered.
- The educators fostered the children's sense of belonging by displaying their family photographs and birthday charts. The educators in one learning room displayed some photographs of the children in the entrance area to the room. The educators in another room created a display to demonstrate the cultural diversity of the children in the room.

- The educators invited the *Garda* into the setting to discuss road safety with the children. At times, members of the community including local musicians visited for extracurricular activities and fostered an appreciation of traditional music during *Seachtain na Gaelige*.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the educators create more regular opportunities to strengthen relationships with the parents of their key children. Meeting parents throughout the year will help educators gain insights into each child's family, culture and interests, and to share the child's learning progress.
- The educators are advised to extend the cultural resources and experiences in the setting to reflect the diverse backgrounds of the children enrolled and their families. Inviting parents in to share their knowledge, interests and skills with the children will further enhance the children's sense of identity and belonging.

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.
- The educators completed weekly plans in each of the learning rooms. The plans outlined the daily adult-planned activities and at times the activities reflected some of the children's interests. The level of detail contained in the plans varied across the three rooms. The educators used post-it notes to record the children's interests, preferred activities and comments.
- The educators used childcare management software to record termly observations of the children's learning. Many of the observations were generic and not individual to each child. The educators regularly uploaded photographs of the children's activities for the parents to view.
- The educators were very warm and responsive towards the children. They engaged as play partners and at times, used their interactions to build on the children's learning. For example, one educator responded to a child's interest in chickens by sharing a personal memory from childhood with them. Another educator weaved mathematical language such as bigger and smaller into a conversation when describing the vehicles the child was playing with.
- The three pre-school rooms offered opportunities for table-top play, small-world play, mark-making, role play and varying levels of sensory play. The educators in one room offered the children paint, play dough and water play which supported their interest and engagement. There were some authentic materials available in the home corners in each pre-school room.
- The educators in the three pre-school rooms planned outdoor play each day for the children. They provided the children with access to a sand pit, wheeled vehicles, role play and a large space to explore.
- The educators promoted the children's language and literacy skills through circle time, one-to-one stories and mark-making opportunities. Some of the educators across the two *Naíonra* rooms used Irish words with the children and provided a small selection of Irish books and materials.
- The manager had attended diversity, equality and inclusion training to promote inclusive practices in the setting. The setting worked with an Access and Inclusion Model specialist to support children's developmental goals. The educators in one pre-school room identified cultural diversity as an area for further development and discussed ideas to strengthen this aspect of practice.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the educators use the short-term plans to record activities that connect more directly to the children's current interests and learning needs. Using the weekly evaluations to review the children's learning and experiences and applying this information when planning the following week, will strengthen the continuity and extension of learning.
- The educators are advised to further develop the indoor and outdoor learning environments to offer a broader range of inviting spaces with authentic and open-ended materials for the children to explore. Providing a richer selection of accessible, multi-sensory play opportunities across the three rooms is advised.

- It is advised that the educators provide richer resources to promote the children's emergent language, literacy and numeracy. Adding a wider variety of books, in both English and Irish, and increasing the availability of print-rich and mark-making materials in more areas of the rooms is advised.

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

- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements was good.
- The children engaged with and enjoyed a range of activities across the three learning rooms. Many children chose sensory activities and small world play with their peers. Some children took on the role of doctor and used the resources to check their peers and to tell them how much medicine they needed.
- The children's self-help skills were encouraged during toileting, handwashing and hanging up their coats. The educators missed opportunities at snack time and during tidy-up time to encourage the children's participation and independence.
- The children received frequent affirmation from the educators for their efforts, kindness and creations. This supported the children's developing sense of themselves as capable, caring and competent learners. Each child had a scrapbook that contained samples of their drawings and art. Some scrapbooks included photographs of the child engaging in activities. Across the three learning rooms, the scrapbooks lacked comments and dates on the children's art. The educators planned to send the scrapbooks home for the parents to view.
- Some of the children across all learning rooms were developing strong friendships with their peers. They greeted their peers with hugs, played co-operatively and shared ideas during play. The children connected with some people in the community through the weekly music sessions and the *Garda* visit. The pre-school bears went home with different children each week and this helped strengthen connections between home and the pre-school setting.
- The children developed their understanding of the world through sensory play and exploring topics such as hibernation, animal habitats and the solar system. At times, the educators used digital technology to further the children's knowledge and interest in topics. Exploration of the children's individual and shared interests was limited on occasions.

Actions advised

- To further support the children's self-help and independence, it is advised that the educators use the snack time experience and develop daily helper roles to strengthen these skills.
- The educators are advised to use the children's scrapbooks and learning records to capture a more meaningful and individual picture of their ongoing learning experiences and achievements.
- To extend the children's knowledge and understanding of the world, it is advised that the educators introduce additional resources such as digital technology, factual books and resources to deepen and sustain children's shared and individual interests.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was good.
- The manager and educators used internal self-evaluation processes to develop aspects of practice, supported by Better Start Quality Development Service. The designated Quality Lead Person in the setting, along with the manager engaged in a three-month review process to reflect on further areas for improvement.
- An ethos of collaboration, teamwork and partnership was evident across the setting. The educators were aware of their role and responsibilities and used appropriate systems to support each session to run smoothly. The educators were familiar with and had used external services to support children's development and learning needs.
- The manager had previously attended training to support pedagogical practices such as emotional and social development, positive behaviour and supporting children with English as an additional language. Many of the educators had not engaged in recent continuing professional development.
- The educators shared information with the parents through childcare management software and a social media page. The educators met with parents when they requested or when the need arose.
- The educators supported the settling in process by inviting the children and their parents to two open days in the setting. This was used as an opportunity for the children and families

who were already availing of the service to view the rooms and to develop connections with the new children and families. The manager provided the parents with a comprehensive parent booklet before their child started the setting.
- The educators informed the parents when children were transitioning to another room in the setting. This process typically took place during the summer months as many of the children attended the full day care service.
- The educators supported the children's transition to school through the addition of resources to the learning rooms, discussions about school and a graduation event. The teacher of junior infants from one local primary school visited the setting to meet the children transitioning to her class. At the time of the inspection, the educators did not share official information about the children's learning with the parents or the teacher of junior infants prior to their transition to school.

Actions advised

- The manager is advised to embed processes for self-evaluation further in the setting. Holding regular staff meetings to engage reflectively with the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* will support ongoing quality improvement. Continuing to seek mentoring support from the Better Start Quality Development Service will further enhance practice.
- The manager is advised to develop regular support and supervision opportunities for the educators to strengthen professional development and practice. Using this as an opportunity to analyse training needs and to promote reflection on practice will enhance the learning experiences for the children. Engaging educators in training such as Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years and training on curriculum and assessment, will strengthen pedagogical practice and inclusive approaches.
- To promote continuity of learning for the children, the manager is advised to introduce the completion of transition reports for each child at the end of each year. This will provide the parents and educators with information to support the child's learning. Obtaining consent from the parents before sharing the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment *Mo Scéal* transition report with the primary school is advised.

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	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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