



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)

Final Report

Setting name	Little Treasures
Setting address	Newtown Castlebar County Mayo F23P588
TUSLA registration number	TU2016MO004
DCEDIY number	16MO0189
Date of inspection	14-11-2023
Date of issue of report	08-04-2024

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	14-11-2023
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pre-inspection meeting with the setting manager• Introductory meeting with the early years educators• Review of setting documentation and records of children's learning and development• Review of the education resources and facilities• Observations of interactions during a number of sessions• Interaction with the children• Feedback meeting with the setting manager and the early years educators	

Context of setting

Little Treasures is an early learning and care setting located in Castlebar, County Mayo. It offers two morning sessions for children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme across two rooms. It also offers part-time provision and after-school care. The manager works between this setting and a sister setting and was present for the inspection with the four educators. The setting has capacity for thirty-eight children. At the time of the inspection, the outdoor learning environment was undergoing renovation and was not in use. 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.

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 friendly atmosphere was sustained by the manager and the educators for the children and their families.
- The educators implemented a key-person approach which supported them to get to know the children in their designated group, and to facilitate their learning.
- The educators organised a daily routine which provided ample time for child-initiated play. This enabled the children to be active agents in their learning where they followed their interests.
- For most of the session, the children were supported by the educators to prepare for changes in the routine. The educators used verbal prompts such as songs to signal tidy-up time. At the end of the session, the children were less prepared for departure.
- The educators worked with the children on the class behaviour agreement. They regularly supported the children to develop their social skills and used timers to assist with sharing of play items.
- There were some missed opportunities for the children to take responsibility for self-help tasks.
- Engagement with the community was a strong focus of practice. The children had regular visitors to the setting such as a dentist, a librarian, and members of a local soccer club. The educators welcomed parents into the setting as they shared their interests and aspects from their culture.
- A photographic book, 'Book of Friends' was provided for the children; this supported their understanding of their uniqueness.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to review the support provided to the children at the end of the sessional service. For example, the introduction of a circle time with the children gathered together for a calming story time or songs/rhymes would enable them to prepare for the next significant transition. The use of a visual of the routine with the children would support their understanding that some children go home after the three-hour session.
- In order for the children to develop their capacity to do things for themselves, the educators are advised to support and enable them to take greater responsibility. For example, the children can set up their own art activity and put their food waste in a compost bowl independently.

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.
- The highly-effective curriculum developed and implemented by the educators was informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. It provided the children with a broad range of learning experiences with play as the central medium for education.
- The educators used their long, medium and short-term planning documents to guide provision for the children's learning. The short-term plans for daily activities were similar in content for both rooms. They did not fully take account of the children's individual varying interests and learning needs.
- At the end of each term, the educators shared written observations and photographs of the children's learning with their parents. Within these learning journals the educators effectively captured a profile of each child's learning experiences.
- The educators used highly-effective interaction strategies which engaged and motivated the children to learn. They respectfully scaffolded the children in a way which extended their learning and they used rich vocabulary including mathematical language.
- The bright and spacious learning rooms provided the children with access to a range of suitable play materials. These environments promoted movement for the children. A number of sensory-rich materials such as sand, water, setting-made playdough, and pieces of ice were available for the children to explore.
- The educators effectively supported the children's literacy and numeracy learning. A variety of age-appropriate reading and language experience materials were accessible including child-led mark-making opportunities. The educator-led art and craft experiences were less age-appropriate.
- The educators provided equal opportunities for the children to learn. They demonstrated respect for the children and their families in a manner which recognised and appreciated diverse backgrounds.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to develop short-term plans that reflect more closely the children in the rooms. These plans can build on the children's emergent interests and offer experiences that provide progressively more complex and varied experiences guided by their observations.
- Building on the very good opportunities for meaningful child-led literacy experiences, the educators are advised to consider the age and stage of the children's development as they plan writing and mark-marking activities. In so doing, the children will continue to experiment and explore ways to create, make marks, and build their understanding of the world.

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

- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements was very good.
- The children showed deep levels of involvement in the learning. They demonstrated excitement and enjoyment.
- The educators respected the children's choices. For most of the session, the children lead their learning; they made choices and decisions competently.
- The children played together cooperatively and had developed positive relationships.
- The children's voices were effectively captured by the educators within their learning journals. Their verbal and non-verbal cues were responded to by the educators. There was scope to reflect the children's home languages to a greater extent in the setting.
- The children engaged in elaborate pretend and imaginative play. While using suitable props they pretended to care for pets, they made sushi, and they acted out familiar experiences in the home areas.
- The opportunities for the children to engage in construction play merited review.
- The children had access to technology to extend their interest in space. They used a light projector to see and discuss different images such as astronauts, rockets and planets.

Actions advised

- Building on the very good range of play types provided, the manager and educators are advised to provide a greater variety of materials for construction play. They could add real and natural items such as cardboard tubes/boxes, pieces of wood of different sizes, shapes, sticks and stones, shells and other natural materials. Real construction items such as plumbing pipes, tools and a work bench could be included in the new outdoor area. Valuable advice is provided in the Effective Outdoor Learning Environments webinar series of *Insights – Quality in Early Years Education*.
- The educators are advised to make the children's home language more visible in the setting. For example, samples of the children's home languages can be added to the book area and visual displays and day-to-day phrases could be used by the educators.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was very good.
- The manager and the educators demonstrated a professional approach to leadership for learning.
- The manager actively worked with and supported the educators to identify and implement quality improvement initiatives. They used the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* to inform this practice. The educators were focused on developing an emergent curriculum.
- Regular staff meetings and performance reviews were held which promoted staff development. Educators from both settings came together to share views and ideas during community of practice sessions. They attended local early years' networks.
- Communication with parents was facilitated effectively, on a mostly informal basis. The parents had some opportunities to meet with their child's key worker. More formal meetings opportunities were arranged between the educators and the parents of children with special educational needs.
- The practices to support the children as they moved into and within the setting were child centred. Parents were welcomed into the setting during the settling-in phase.
- The setting had previously used and shared the *Mo Scéal* templates with parents. Plans were in place to re-introduce this practice, and in turn, parents can then be encouraged to share the templates with their child's primary school.

Action advised

- The educators are advised to convene more formal meetings with the parents of the children in their designated group. This will afford parents time and space to discuss the learning journal and their child's experiences and learning progress.

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
Excellent	<i>Provision that is excellent is exemplary in meeting the needs of children.</i>
Very good	<i>Provision that is very good is highly effective in meeting the needs of children.</i>
Good	<i>Provision that is good is effective in meeting the needs of children but with some aspects to be developed.</i>
Fair	<i>Provision that is fair requires practice to be improved to meet the needs of children.</i>
Poor	<i>Provision that is poor is inadequate and requires significant improvement to meet the needs of children.</i>

The following resources can be used by ELC settings in their quality improvement:

[Aistear Siolta Practice Guide](#)

[Department of Education Insights – Quality in Early Years Education webinars](#)