**EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION**

**REPORT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>Tir na nÓg Early Years Care and Education Centre</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>Model Court</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Athy</td>
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<td>County Kildare</td>
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<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>17KE0407</td>
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**Date of Inspection:** 14.06.2019
WHAT IS AN EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION?

The Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI) model is used to provide evaluative information, advice and support in relation to education provision in a pre-school setting participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. These inspections affirm good practice and advise actions, where appropriate, to aid the further development of education provision in the service.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspectors evaluated and reported under the following headings or areas of enquiry:

1. Quality of the context to support children’s learning and development
2. Quality of processes to support children’s learning and development
3. Quality of children’s learning experiences and achievements
4. 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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of inspection</th>
<th>14th June 2019</th>
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| Inspection activities undertaken | • Meetings with practitioners  
• Interaction with children  
• Review of relevant documents  
• Feedback to owner/ manager, quality assurance officer, AIM support worker and practitioners |

**CONTEXT OF SETTING**

Tir na nÓg Early Years Care and Education Centre is a privately-owned, full day care setting in operation since 1996. Children partake in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme across six rooms; one room follows a Naíonra programme and one room follows a Montessori programme. On the day of the inspection fifty-five children, who are in their first year or second year of the ECCE programme were in attendance, together with seven practitioners and an Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) support worker. The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the 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 is excellent.
- The atmosphere and organisation is very welcoming, caring, warm and affirming.
- The children have developed close secure relationships with their practitioners and practitioners are very attentive towards them.
- Documented routines are in place for all rooms including visual routines for the children. These support their understanding of the daily schedule of activities, and are linked to *Slotfa* and *Aistear*. There are circle time, storytelling and child helper routines.
- The children move confidently between activities. Practitioners successfully signal upcoming changes using verbal reminders, bells, countdowns, songs and visual prompts.
- The children manage their own personal care needs and they are encouraged to be independent and to take responsibility.
- Snack time is valued as a social occasion and the practitioners sit and chat to the children. Table cloths are placed on the tables. Healthy eating is promoted and the children take turns to give out cups, plates, spoons and placemats.
- In all rooms, the practitioners model positive behaviour very well using calm tones, ‘please and thank you’ and they offer consistent praise and encouragement to the children.
- The children are very much viewed as active agents, and as knowers and thinkers. They are encouraged to make decisions and they are listened to.
- The uniqueness of each child is celebrated and affirmed, through displays which present them as competent learners, and through self-portraits, birthday displays, and individual and group photographs throughout the setting. Photographs of room practitioners are on each door; this further supports children’s sense of identity and belonging.
- Parents are fully involved at the setting. The practitioners know children’s families very well and they chat at arrival and collection times. Frequent opportunities are provided for parents and families to visit the setting. Parents and community members are encouraged to share their cultural background, interests and occupations; there have been visits from a fireman, a bee keeper, a vet, a farmer and a member of *An Garda Síochana*. Cultural events and festivals are celebrated. There are displays of ‘Hello’ in different languages and flags representing the home countries of the children.
• The setting is very connected with the local community. The children visit the local recycling centre, the train station and at Christmas they visit a local nursing home to sing songs. In some rooms there are photographs of local landmarks and community members, props and books. The setting is regularly involved in the local St. Patrick’s Day Parade. This year, the setting hosted its own parade, with a Ceili and stalls. Members of the community were invited to this event.

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 is very good.
• Provision is informed by Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework and an emergent curriculum is in place. Long-term, medium-term and short-term plans are set out, and plans are evaluated. More explicit links could be made to individual pedagogical approaches in planning to reflect specific curricula. There is also scope for clearer distinction in the medium-term plans for different age groups. Each learning room has individual daily and weekly plans and these are visible for parents.
• Children’s learning is regularly assessed using different approaches including strengths-based developmental checklists and Montessori mastery checklists. There is an individual learning journal for each child containing photographs, records of activities and events, children’s art work and parents’ comments. In some rooms, interesting things the children say and do are recorded, and with the children’s consent video recording is used to enable them to revisit their setting experiences. The emergent interests of individual children are followed for group activities. The management of the setting have identified that more focussed observations are required to identify the next steps in learning for individual children.
• The admirable interactions observed between the practitioners and the children extend and engage children’s thinking and problem-solving skills. Open-ended questions and prompts are used, and the children are encouraged to be curious explorers and imaginers. Play is very important at the setting and is predominantly child-led. The adults promote, initiate and join in play when invited.
• The stimulating indoor environments are well laid out with a range of accessible resources. The environments include Montessori materials, and materials which promote the arts, mathematics, literacy, geography and culture. Play materials across learning rooms are plentiful and include hand-made materials, props, and real food and kitchen items. There are areas for socio-dramatic play such as dress up, a restaurant, a kitchen and a shop, and areas which support construction and small-world play. A sensory room has been developed. Digital learning equipment such as a laptop for children’s research, clocks, desk-top phones, cash registers and calculators are in place.
• A print-rich environment with very good labelling is evident across the setting and there is a dedicated library room. Posters, maps and magazines are plentiful. Books are rotated; they relate to the themes of Aistear and the setting’s activities. Books reflect diversity, emotion and varied interests.
• The practitioners’ model language including mathematical language very well. They discuss concepts such as size and weight. In the Naionra children learn Irish through songs, rhymes, stories and phrases, and Irish books are available.
• In each room, and outdoors, children have access to very good mark-making opportunities. They use markers, pencils, crayons, paint, glue and varied writing materials.
• The ECCE outdoor environment is commendable. It includes covered play spaces such as a sand area, an imagination station and it provides opportunities for risky and adventure play. The resources provided are open-ended and include opportunities to swing, a play house, a climbing frame, an investigation station, motor garage facilities, a construction area, a music and art station, a chalkboard, a mud kitchen, water, a telescope and a basketball hoop.
• Trees including an apple tree, a compost area and planting opportunities are visible. The children grow strawberries and collect apples in September.
• Practice is very inclusive at this setting. Children with additional needs are well supported. Access and Inclusion plans are in place. Relationships have been developed with parents and outside bodies for the sharing of information. The setting is involved in the Demonstration Project, a pilot programme in conjunction with the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) to provide speech and language and occupational therapy within educational settings.

Action advised
• It is advised that more explicit links be made to individual pedagogical approaches in planning to further reflect specific curricula. A clearer distinction needs to be made for different age groups when medium-term plans are being devised. This would be beneficial in ensuring varied provision.

AREA 3
QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS
• The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is excellent.
• The children demonstrate sustained enjoyment and a positive sense of self.
• The children communicate and interact very well in pairs, small groups and large groups. At the weekly ‘show and tell’ they bring in a toy of their choice. During the inspection, they eagerly discussed their toys and interests with each other.
• The children display positive learning dispositions of problem solving. They competently consider the problem and they come up with their own solutions to resolve the issue.
• The children have a strong awareness of their own wellbeing. For ‘fruity Friday’ they bring in fruit and the importance of fruit is celebrated. They have ample opportunities for physical exercise and engage in yoga and meditation activities.
• Emotion displays are evident in all rooms. The children confidently negotiate, refuse and make clear decisions and philosophise. ‘I wonder why’ is a feature of their interactions.
• The children are developing an appreciation of art. Recently, they chose various artists to emulate as they prepared for an art exhibition. They are avid photographers; they take their own photographs for display.
• The children partake in science activities such as inflating balloons and making volcanoes; this supports learning in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Science week is celebrated yearly.
• The children have a very good sense of their environment, with knowledge of recycling, planting and in one room they care for a goldfish. They use the outdoor area in all weathers and they have an awareness of nature.
• The children enjoyed story-time in all rooms observed and were encouraged to be part of the story. They are strongly aware of letters, shapes, numbers and colours.

AREA 4
QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING
• The quality of management and leadership for learning is excellent.
• The owner and the management team demonstrate commitment and have a clear vision for their practice. This inspired leadership motivates the whole staff team. There are excellent procedural systems in place at the setting; the setting is well-organised and it runs smoothly and effectively. Whole-staff meetings are held regularly, the ECCE practitioners hold a cluster meeting at least once each term, and it is evident that they collaborate very effectively. A learning journal resource pack, and videos of practice are available to all educators to support them in developing learning journals for children, and to support quality practice.
• A new quality assurance officer was appointed this year. Mentoring, appraisals, induction procedures and support and supervision supports are in situ. Staff self-evaluate their own practice. Various systems are in place to support and promote staff wellbeing; staff are regularly affirmed.
• A structured approach is in place to support practitioners to share their ideas, practice and expertise, talents and skills through the staff noticeboard, staff teaching ideas, websites, articles, videos and books. Staff have a social media platform and partake in team building exercises.
The setting is currently taking part in the Siolta revalidation process and it has strong links with the local county childcare committee.

Effective strategies are used for professional reflection and to support staff to access continuous professional development opportunities. The setting welcomes students who wish to avail of work experience opportunities.

The views of all stakeholders are sought. The children are fully involved in decision making; currently they are completing questionnaires about their father's likes and dislikes for Fathers' day, and they identify and take photos of their favourite play resource. They were involved in the garden reconstruction plans.

The setting works collaboratively with parents to support each child's learning. End-of-year surveys are used to seek parents' views.

Information and tips about early learning, education and child development are shared with parents through newsletters, social media, and at parent talks. A copy of the setting's policies and procedures and a parent handbook are available to parents.

The children are supported well to transition in and out of the setting. They visit the setting with their parents, they attend summer camps and a parent evening is held for new parents. The children can attend for reduced hours during the settling-in period, and parents are encouraged to stay with their child. At the start-of-year parent evening, the parents meet each other and interact.

The children's transition to school is supported through a transitions policy and through props and resources in the environment. These include school books, uniforms, photos of children going to primary school and a photobook of new schools. The setting has strong links with the local primary schools. Recently, primary school teachers visited to view the environments, meet with the children and to garner information about implementing Aistear.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the setting to implement the actions advised above is excellent.
### Summary of Overall Inspection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Quality Level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of context to support children’s learning and development</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of processes to support children’s learning and development</td>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of management and leadership for learning</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
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### Language used in Early-Years Education-focused Inspection reports

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