



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)

Final Report

Setting name	St Sheelan's Community Child Care Services Company Limited By Guarantee
Setting address	Templemore County Tipperary E41NY60
TUSLA registration number	TU2015TY066
DCEDIY number	09TN0077
Date of inspection	07-03-2024
Date of issue of report	16-05-2024

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	07-03-2024
Activities conducted during the Inspection <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pre-inspection meeting with a lead early years 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 two Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme sessions• Interaction with children• Interaction with early years educators• Feedback meeting with the setting manager and two lead early years educators	

Context of setting

St. Sheelan's Community Childcare is located in Templemore, County Tipperary. Established in 2003, the setting provides a full day care service that includes two ECCE sessions. This inspection focussed on the ECCE programme. There were twenty-five children and six early years educators, one of whom is the setting manager, in attendance. 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.
- There was a very welcoming and relaxed atmosphere in the setting. The children and parents were greeted at a designated entry point, from where the children were escorted by the educators to their respective learning rooms located on the second floor. Parents were encouraged to regularly visit their children's learning rooms.
- The daily routine had a set sequence with sufficient flexibility to accommodate the children's interests and needs. Substantial time was allocated to child-led play alongside complementary individual and small-group learning experiences.
- Many of the educators informed the children of pending transitions in the daily routine through verbal announcements. Some children did not hear these announcements and were unaware of pending changes to the routine.
- Snack times were valued as social occasions and times to support the children's self-help skills. The educators sat and ate with the children, and together they engaged in conversations about topics of interest.
- The educators nurtured secure and meaningful relationships with the children and their families. They skilfully adapted their practice to suit each child's temperament, likes and dislikes. Some children required additional support from the educators to resolve minor conflicts with their peers.
- The children's developing sense of identity and belonging was recognised and celebrated through attractive displays. Among these were self-sign-in stations, personalised coat hooks, and family and birthday displays. Books and maps were used to celebrate cultural diversity.
- Photographs of past community events were evident in the group floor books. These were easily accessible to the children. Among more recent events was a visit from a farmer and lambs and from the local librarian, and an excursion to the nearby *Garda* collage to attend a *Garda* band match.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to incorporate a wider range of strategies to support all children to adjust to changes in the daily routines. The use of consistently implemented auditory and visual strategies are encouraged. This could include interactive visual schedules, displayed at child height.
- To support the children to independently resolve minor peer conflicts, the educators are advised to review the behaviour management policy. They are encouraged to include inquiry-based conversation strategies to support children to explore and resolve the issue at hand, as appropriate to their stage of development.

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 educators implemented a highly effective child-led, play-based curriculum that was informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*.
- The educators compiled long, medium and short-term curriculum plans to support the children's learning that aligned to group interests, and seasonal and thematic topics.
- An online childcare management application was used to compile the children's observations and to share the children's learning progress with the parents. In addition, individual learning journals and group floor books were used to support the children's learning progression. Each key educator periodically rotated to oversee the assessment documentation of a different group of children.
- The educators used highly effective playful and language-rich interactions with the children that were authentic, affirming and encouraging. These rich interactions supported the children's early language acquisition and concepts relating to science and mathematics.
- The indoor learning environments were aesthetically pleasing and well organised into well-resourced interest areas. These included large art and craft stations, libraries, home corners, and transport and construction area.
- Both learning rooms opened out onto a shared rooftop play area with a sheltered area. When in use, the children enjoyed a free flow of movement between indoors and outdoors. They engaged in many sensory-rich, mark-making and construction play and learning experiences. The pre-school children also had use of a more natural play area on the ground floor. Here they engaged with many planting projects.
- The educators recognised and accommodated diversity in the style, pace and focus of children's learning. In partnership with parents, they made links with external agencies, to optimise support for children with additional needs.

Actions advised

- To more effectively support each child's learning progression, the educators are advised to review the approach used for curriculum planning and assessment. They are encouraged to record each child's play interests and provide a more holistic description of their progress. Furthermore, they are advised to use these interests periodically in the group short-term curriculum plans, and to inform the next steps of each child's learning journey.
- To ensure continuity of each child's learning experiences, each key educator is encouraged to oversee the individualised learning progression plans and assessment documentation for a set group of key children for as long as practicable.

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

- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements was very good.
- The children displayed significant enjoyment. Some children talked about their entries in the 'Home Book' that recorded each child's turn to bring home the book for a weekend.
- The children demonstrated a growing sense of wellbeing. They confidently expressed their ideas. Two children used recycled materials from a scrap bag to create what they called 'Rocket Blasters' that they attached to their backs as part of their space play scenario.
- The children were highly motivated and displayed many positive learning dispositions. While a group of children used large blocks to construct what they called "a *sleep house*" they displayed great attention to detail, creativity, resourcefulness, persistence, and problem-solving skills. Many of the dispositions the children were developing were not recorded in the children's assessment documentation.

- The children experienced achievement through reflective conversations with the educators about their play and learning experiences and through reviewing the content of their individual and group learning journals. Occasionally, the children partook in recap and recall sessions.
- The children very competently communicated their thoughts, ideas and emotions through action songs, dance, open-ended art and crafts, playdough modelling and storytelling. There were many rich conversations between the children and educators that supported sustained shared thinking and the co-construction of knowledge.
- The children were making sense of the world through playful, inquisitive exploration of the well-prepared learning environment. Some children proudly talked about the growth cycle of their planting projects.

Actions advised

- To highlight the rich learning power of the open-ended art and craft projects the children engage in, the educators are advised to record the many positive learning dispositions the children are developing through these experiences in their observation records and learning journals. The learning story approach could be used.
- To further support the children's sense of confidence as competent learners and to experience success, the educators are advised to add the children's reflective comments into their learning journals. In addition, they are encouraged to provide more regular opportunities for the children to partake in small-group recap and recall sessions.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was very good.
- There was a very strong ethos of teamwork. The manager provided for a high-quality learning and development experience for the children and was available to the educators on a daily basis to support their practice.
- Detail annual support and supervision sessions were conducted and recorded. Formal staff meetings were conducted termly.
- When staffing levels allowed, two of the lead educators engaged in tasks related to their dual role of quality development officers. This role supported the educator team with the development of their pedagogical practices.
- The educators used very detailed reflective journals to record the effectiveness of the children's learning experiences and linked to the themes of *Aistear*.
- The setting had previously engaged in mentoring through the Better Start Quality Development service to support quality improvement planning. Some aspects of practice were not reviewed on a regular basis.
- The educators had a strong commitment to continuing professional development and to sharing their newly acquired knowledge with one another. Among the topics covered in more recent courses were outdoor play, neurodiversity, and self-regulation skills. Some educators attended the Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years (LINC) programme.
- Commendable strategies were used to support the exchange of information with parents. This included an online childcare management application and a web site, and through conversations over the telephone and at drop-off and collection times. Parent-educator meetings were facilitated to discuss the children's learning progress.
- The children's transition to primary school was supported through a focus on school readiness skills, play props and photographs of local primary school buildings. The educators used the *Mo Scéal* resources to support the parents to share information about their children's learning progress with the primary school principal and junior infants teacher.

Actions advised

- The manager is advised to ensure that the lead educators who hold the dual role of quality development officers have the opportunity to engage more regularly in tasks that support the educator team with the development of their pedagogical practices.
- To assist in future quality developments, the manager and educators are advised to establish a more robust and recurring approach to internal evaluation. The use of the full suite of self-evaluation templates in the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* will support this practice.

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](#)

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