



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI) Final Report

Setting name	The Grove Preschool
Setting address	The Grove Pre-school The Old Convent Our Lady's Grove Goatstown Road Dublin 14 D14V290
TUSLA registration number	TU2015DR119
DCEDIY number	09DR0171
Date of inspection	14-12-2023
Date of issue of report	26-02-2024

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(s) 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	14-12-2023
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pre-inspection meeting with the setting owner/manager• 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• <i>Feedback meeting with the setting owner/manager and early years educators</i>	

Context of setting

The Grove Preschool is a long established community setting located on the grounds of Our Lady's Grove Primary School in south Dublin. The setting comprises of two pre-school rooms and is run by a voluntary board of directors and a full time manager. On the day of the inspection, 5 educators and 27 children were present across the two pre-school rooms. The setting offers the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme in both pre-school rooms for eligible children. The setting manager and two lead educators attended the post-inspection meeting. The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the report, and the response of the setting will be found in the appendix of this report.

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 very nurturing and affirming atmosphere prevailed in the setting. The educators and families had familiar and warm conversations at arrival and collection times as parents were welcomed into the learning rooms with their children.
- Children were supported to become confident and independent with their self-care needs. They hung up their coats and put away their bags and managed their personal care routines independently such as toileting and hand washing.
- A daily routine was displayed on the door of one room for educators and parents. The routine observed in both rooms provided ample time for indoor and outdoor play, optional educator-led activities, meal times, circle time and story time.
- Upcoming transitions within the daily routine were effectively managed by the educators with the use of verbal prompting and sand timers for the children.
- The educators used wall displays which featured the children's birthdays and families and samples of their artwork to nurture the children's growing sense of identity and belonging. Welcome signs and diverse displays were used to capture the diversity in the setting.
- Relationships between the educators, children and parents were respectful, responsive and caring. On the day of the inspection, one parent was welcomed into circle time to discuss his occupation with the children and answered lots of questions that they posed.
- The educators adapted their practices to suit each child's temperaments. For example, some children chose not to participate in circle time and the educators respected their decision by offering them an alternative activity nearby. They continued to acknowledge the children by giving them the option to join in by including them in conversations.

- The setting has made connections with the local community and children have opportunities to get to know people and places within their community. Visits from a nurse, a *Garda*, the fire brigade and many family members were photographed and displayed around the rooms.

Actions advised

- Educators are advised to use consistent strategies to support the children's transitions within the daily routine from one activity to the next. This could include the use of a visual routine and consistent verbal and visual cues.
- The educators are advised to utilise the meal-time activities to further support the children's self-help skills whereby the children independently prepare a table, self-serve their food and drinks and clean-up after the meal. The educators are further advised to sit and interact with children during this time to role model appropriate behaviour and encourage social engagement.

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 play-based curriculum approach that was informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and elements of the *Montessori Method of education*.
- Curriculum planning was organised into long-term, medium-term and short-term thematic plans and captured the emerging interests of the children.
- The educators documented termly observations of the children's learning and development and shared these with parents for their feedback and comments. The educators also completed developmental checklists and took regular photographs of children's engagement in activities and gathered anecdotal notes of children's conversations.
- The educators used calm, positive tones when interacting with the children. There was an appropriate balance between listening and speaking in their interactions.
- The indoor environment was effectively organised to support children's engagement in play. A vast assortment of resources and activities were available to the children including construction materials, socio-dramatic play, sensory play, mark-making, table top puzzles and natural/ discovery materials. Defined interests areas and the use of labels within the environment further supported the children.
- Children had daily access to a large outdoor area with a variety of different activities to promote their gross motors skills such as ride along toys and scooters, construction materials, buggies and planting. The manager discussed the current plans for refurbishment of this space.
- Children's emergent literacy and numeracy was supported through engagement in songs and rhymes, counting activities and music during circle time and throughout the morning. The children were learning about different languages. The educators used Irish in everyday situations throughout the day.
- The setting has made links with external agencies such as Better Start Access and Inclusion (AIM) with a view to optimising support and participation of all children.

Action advised

- During their planned refurbishment and enrichment of the outdoor play space, educators are advised to consult the self-evaluation tool from the online *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* on extending and enhancing the outdoor learning environments.

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

- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements was very good.
- *The children were interested and very engaged in the play activities and explorations that they initiated and led themselves as well as the adult-guided learning experiences.*
- The children enjoyed the opportunities to interact with peers and educators. They collaborated very well during free play activities and arts and crafts activities.
- Storytelling and circle time was greatly enjoyed by all children. The majority of children demonstrated active listening skills and participated in circle time discussions with the educators.
- The children had opportunity to express themselves creatively through role play, mark making and sensory play such as sand and playdough.
- *The children's voices were visible within the setting. For example, in one room the children's process-focused art work was on display in the window with notes from the educator documenting the individual child's description of their creations. Many displays around the room captured the children's voice in relation to past visitors to the setting and topics of interest.*
- Children had a growing understanding of the meaning and use of mathematical language. Counting was used in circle time, discussions and displays were evident related to shape, size and age.
- A collection of children's artwork and some photographs of learning experiences were recorded in individual learning folders for the children.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to promote children's self-expression and creativity by encouraging process-focused art and craft and reducing the emphasis on adult-planned art and templates during creative activities.
- The educators are advised to enhance the children's individual folders by including the educators observations and the voice of the child within the journal.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was good.
- *Formal, documented team meetings happened once per month and informal meetings between educators occurred regularly.*
- The manager and educators used a daily communication diary and a social media messaging platform for team communication.
- The manager sought advice and circulated updates from support agencies such as the local county childcare committee and Better Start AIM.
- There were clear roles and responsibilities assigned to a full time manager, two lead educators and three assistant educators. The team worked seamlessly together.
- Communication and information sharing with parents occurred informally during arrival and collection times. *The manager sent email updates to parents at the beginning of the year and as necessary. Parents were heavily encouraged to participate in the day-to-day life of the setting and regularly discussed occupations and hobbies during circle time with the children. Parents and families were also welcomed in formally for a Christmas play, sports day and graduation.*
- Transitions into the setting were supported using a child-centred settling-in approach and parents completed a detailed registration form to support educators to get to know their child. An annual open day was held for children joining in the coming September.
- Transitions out of the setting were supported by educators who completed an end-of-year report for each child and were available for formal meetings with parents upon request. The

majority of children continued on to the adjacent primary school which they visited during the year to see the classrooms and meet the teachers.

Actions advised

- In order to promote reflective practice and identify the educators' training needs, the *manager is advised to convene formal support and supervision sessions.*
- To assist in planning for future quality developments, the manager and educators are advised to establish a formal, recurring approach to internal evaluation. They are advised to use the suite of materials from the *Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide* and to centrally document this work.
- The manager and lead educators are advised to develop a parent's handbook. This document should include information pertaining to the curriculum, policies and procedures, staff and organisation of the setting.

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	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](#)

APPENDIX

SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report.

Overall, Manager and Staff are very happy with the report. We are pleased that the inspector recognised the good rapport between staff, children and families and observed the happy environment within both classrooms. This contributes to the happy and nourishing environment that is created. We are happy that the inspector recognised the short, medium and long term planning that takes place behind the scenes that helps deliver a good quality educational experience for all children in our service. We welcome the inspector's actions advised and made changes where needed.

Area 2 *Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.*

Visual routines have been displayed in the classrooms, with pictures of the kitchen, garden, bathroom, where they keep their coats as to advise of transitions within the daily routine both visually and verbally. This is especially helpful where children are non-verbal and English is not their first language. Photos of schools, places of worship and retail buildings within the community will be displayed in the classrooms to strengthen connections to our community.

Educators have implemented a policy of sitting with the children during break times but also ensuring that there is a mix of age and ability at each table, put their lunchboxes and drinks away and helping other children if needed.

Our outdoor area is being refurbished at present and all staff and children are having an input into what play equipment will be provided for our garden area. Our outdoor area will be an all weather space for all children in the service to use which will benefit them physically and socially.

Advice has been taken on board about individual art and craft activities with less input from the educators. Art and craft materials will be displayed and available at all times to promote children's self-expression.

Educators are discussing the observations that are done three times a year and how best to include them in the children's learning journal so as to reflect the child's ongoing learning and progression. At present learning stories are recorded in the classroom as a group experience and are available for parents to view if they wish. However, we are considering individual learning stores that could be included in the end of the year folder for each child.

Our Manager will conduct annual appraisals and a half yearly meeting with each employee to discuss all aspects of their work. The purpose of these meetings will be to re-evaluate the worker's objectives, job description, their success and achievements and motivate staff to build on their strengths. Also to identify areas for improvement and how training needs will be met.

These meetings will be recorded and kept on employee's file. Staff supervision and training policies are made available to all employees and updated when necessary.

We are in the process of putting together a Parent's Handbook which we plan to hand out on our open day. This will include information as advised by the inspector.