



A GUIDE TO

Early-years Education-focused Inspection (EYEI)  
in Early-years Settings Participating in the Early  
Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme



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# A Guide to Early-years Education-focused Inspection (EYEI) in Early-years Settings Participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme

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# 1. Introduction

## a. Context

The Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills (DES) has responsibility for evaluating the quality of education provision in early-years settings participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme (the scheme of payments to early-years settings that provides free early childhood care and education for children aged 3+ years). The Inspectorate is also responsible for the evaluation of primary and post-primary schools and centres for education and for the provision of advice to the education system, the Minister and policy makers. Essentially, the work of the Inspectorate is concerned with improving the quality of learning for children and young people in early-years settings, schools and centres for education. Our inspections are designed to evaluate key aspects of education provision in the educational setting inspected and to promote improvement in that setting. Early-years education-focused inspection (EYEI) is carried out in accordance with section 13(3)(b) of the Education Act 1998 and in line with a Memorandum of Understanding between the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, the Minister for Education and Skills and the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills.

This guide sets out the practices and procedures involved in the early-years education-focused inspection (EYEI) process which are effective from 11 April 2016. The EYEI model of inspection operates in line with the Code of Practice for the Inspectorate, Department of Education and Skills (2015), available at [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie).

## b. What are EYEIs designed to do?

Early-years education-focused inspection evaluates the nature, range and appropriateness of the early educational experiences for children participating in the ECCE Programme. The EYEI model of inspection is based on a quality framework informed by the principles of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*, and *Síolta: the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education* as well as national and international research related to early childhood education and inspection.

Among the principles underpinning the quality framework are the following:

- Early childhood is a significant and distinct time which must be nurtured, respected, valued and supported in its own right
- High quality educational experiences in early childhood contribute significantly to life-long learning success
- Children's well-being and holistic educational development should be supported in early childhood in accordance with their needs
- The role of the practitioner in early-years settings is central
- Children should be active agents in their learning and development, and enabled to achieve their potential as competent, confident learners, through high quality interactions with their environment and with early-years practitioners
- Children's strengths, needs, opinions, interests and well-being are integral to the early education provided for them
- Play is central to the learning and development of young children
- Each child has his/her own set of experiences and a unique life story. The child's identity as an individual and as a member of a family and wider community is recognised
- The role of parents as children's primary educators is recognised and supported

- Early-years education-focused inspection takes cognisance of context factors related to the early-years setting, including socio-economic circumstances.

The EYEI model is designed to:

- Highlight the importance of high-quality early education in nurturing the foundations for lifelong learning and in helping children develop to their full potential now and into the future
- Identify and affirm good educational provision in early-years settings
- Support the ongoing development of quality in early-years settings through the provision of support and advice to practitioners about how children's learning experiences and achievements can be developed or improved
- Complement other national measures to support continuing improvement in early education provision, for example, the *Aistear/ Síolta* Practice Guide
- Support self-evaluation and review processes in early-years settings
- Provide an assurance of the quality of the early education experienced by children participating in the ECCE Programme
- Provide information to the public, including parents of pre-school children, on the quality of education in early-years settings through the publication of written inspection reports.

The EYEI model is used to provide evaluative information, advice and support regarding the quality of education provision in an early-years setting with reference to:

- The quality of the context to support children's learning and development
- The quality of the processes to support children's learning and development
- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements
- The quality of management and leadership for learning.

Early-years education-focused inspection is a collaborative process involving the inspection team, the early-years practitioner(s) in the setting inspected, and the manager/lead practitioner of the setting. The EYEI model also complements the monitoring and regulatory processes of other agencies in respect of early childhood care and education. The evidence base of an EYEI in a particular setting may include, where available, relevant evaluative information on education provision in the setting gathered through other inspection activity. The EYEI model takes account of a setting's progress in respect of actions advised in previous inspections.

## 2. How are early-years education-focused inspections (EYEIs) carried out?

### a. Before the inspection visit

#### **Scheduling of inspections**

In advance of scheduling an EYEI, the DES Inspectorate will liaise with other agencies that have monitoring or regulatory roles in early-years settings in order to avoid, as far as is practicable, overlapping inspections or the scheduling of different types of inspections in the one setting within an unduly short timeframe.

#### **Notice**

Normally, an early-years setting will receive prior notice of an EYEI. Typically, 48 hours' notice will be given. An inspector conducting the inspection (the reporting inspector) provides notice of the EYEI to the manager/lead practitioner of the setting usually by telephone.

When providing the official notification of the inspection, the reporting inspector outlines the format of the inspection, discusses arrangements for the meetings to be held with the manager and/or practitioner(s) on the inspection day, and clarifies any specific issues. The reporting inspector has overall responsibility for the EYEI including the allocation of team roles, the arrangement of meetings and the compilation of the final inspection report.

The DES Inspectorate reserves the right to conduct early-years education-focused inspections without prior notice in a proportion of cases and where an inspection without notification is deemed necessary by the Inspectorate.

## b. During the inspection visit

The inspection visit is conducted by one or more inspectors. Typically, the core inspection activity takes place over one pre-school day. The main focus of the inspection will be on the quality of the interactions and processes in the setting inspected.

The inspector(s) will visit the early-years setting on the day indicated to the manager/lead practitioner by the reporting inspector when providing notice of the inspection. Typically, the inspector(s) will arrive in the setting before the start of the day's activities.

### *Initial meeting*

On arrival, the inspector(s) will present official identification to the manager/lead practitioner in the setting. The inspector(s) will hold a short meeting with the manager/lead practitioner in order to:

- Outline the inspection process
- Agree the schedule of visits to the various learning room(s)/area(s)
- Discuss any practical issues that may affect the inspection
- Finalise arrangements for the feedback and discussion meeting with the owner/manager and/or relevant practitioner(s) after the inspection
- Request available planning documents and records of children's learning and achievements for review during the inspection
- Discuss self-evaluation practices and improvement priorities of the setting.

While the inspection team makes every effort to work within the agreed timeframe for the EYEI, unforeseen events may occasionally extend or alter this timeframe. Any changes will be discussed with the manager/lead practitioner in advance, where possible.

### *Inspection of learning activities*

The main activity of the education-focused inspection is the observation of the processes and practices that concern children's learning in one or more learning rooms/areas in the early-years setting. The scheduling of those visits is at the discretion of the reporting inspector who will indicate to the manager/lead practitioner which learning room(s) will be visited during the inspection.

An inspection visit to an early-years setting will generally last for the duration of the pre-school day. Visits to individual learning rooms in the setting can range in duration depending on the nature of the activities taking place. The visits typically include:

- Observation of learning activities
- Review of learning environments
- Interaction with the children

- Review/ discussion of available documentation.

Subsequent to a visit to a learning room, the inspector will provide the early-years practitioner(s) whose work was inspected with feedback on that work. Feedback may be provided directly after the observation visit, or at a time agreed by the inspector and the early-years practitioner(s). Observed good practice is acknowledged and affirmed and, where relevant, advice is given in relation to how provision can be improved or developed further.

In the event that more than one inspector is involved in the EYEI, a short meeting will be convened between the inspectors to enable them share their findings with each other and to arrive at an agreed judgement about each of the four areas outlined in the quality framework.

### ***Documents***

The main focus of an EYEI is on the quality of the processes that facilitate children's learning in the early-years setting. Notice of an EYEI does not require the creation of new records or documents. Inspectors review the available planning documentation used by practitioners to support the normal everyday practices in the setting. This information helps inspectors to evaluate the breadth, balance and developmental nature of the emerging curriculum provided for children. Inspectors also review the available records of children's learning experiences and achievements in order to develop an understanding of the children's learning progress. Opportunities are provided for the early-years practitioner(s) to discuss relevant documentation with the inspector(s).

### ***Evaluating professional practice***

While EYEI evaluations clearly involve an evaluation of the professional practice of practitioners and the quality of education provision in the early-years setting inspected, the inspection process is not a professional competence inspection. However, where an inspector has serious concerns about the quality of provision in a learning room/area, those concerns will be shared with the manager/lead practitioner and the relevant practitioner(s) as part of the feedback provided. Where concerns relate to management and/or leadership in the setting, they are shared by the inspector(s) with the person/body named on the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) registration documentation as the owner/responsible body.

### ***Child Protection***

The primary regulatory function in respect of inspecting the compliance of an early-years setting participating in the ECCE Programme with Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2011) rests with TUSLA. However, if deficiencies in respect of a setting's compliance with Children First: National Guidance come to the attention of a DES inspector in the course of an early-years education-focused inspection, the inspector will, in the spirit of Children First: National Guidance, alert the management of the early-years setting to the deficiencies noted and will report the matter to TUSLA.

Where a child protection concern is brought to the attention of the inspector(s) during an education-focused inspection in an early-years setting, the DES inspector(s) will follow DES procedures for reporting on child protection matters.

### c. Following the inspection visit

#### **Feedback meeting**

At the conclusion of the inspection, the inspector(s) will communicate the draft overall findings to the manager/lead practitioner of the early-years setting and, where available, to the practitioner(s) in the learning room(s) inspected. This feedback meeting is an important part of the inspection process. It allows for communication of the main draft findings of the inspection and provides opportunities for clarification of any information and for discussion about how the early-years setting can develop through taking the actions advised in the inspection feedback.

During this meeting, the inspector(s) seek to:

- Acknowledge and affirm effective practice
- Provide an evaluation of education provision in the room(s) inspected
- Identify areas for development and improvement and advise, as relevant, on the actions to bring about improvement
- Enable the manager and other practitioner(s) present to discuss and respond to the findings
- Gather any additional relevant information that may be needed to complete the written report on the inspection
- Outline the process leading to the publication of the report.

Using the bands of the quality continuum (Table 1) the inspectors discuss the quality of education provision with reference to each of the following four areas:

- The quality of the context to support children's learning and development
- The quality of the processes to support children's learning and development
- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements
- The quality of management and leadership for learning.

#### **The EYEI report**

A short draft inspection report is finalised following the completion of the feedback meeting. The report presents the main findings of the inspection under each of the four areas above and, as relevant, the actions advised. No singular overall rating on the quality of education provision in the setting is provided.

## 3. Publication of the EYEI report

The inspection report is processed through the normal quality assurance procedures of the Inspectorate. It is then issued to the setting for *factual verification* and later for *setting response* in accordance with the procedures set out in *Publication of School Inspection Reports: Guidelines* (DES, 2015).

When publishing an inspection report, the Inspectorate is committed to ensuring that the report is factually accurate and that the manager/lead practitioner has a right to respond in writing to the inspection report in advance of publication within agreed guidelines and time limits.

In the process of *factual verification*, the manager/lead practitioner of the early-years setting is invited to draw the attention of the Inspectorate to any errors of fact in the inspection report. The Inspectorate considers any matters drawn to its attention and then amends the report if necessary.



The report is then issued again to the manager/lead practitioner of the early-years setting for *setting response*. At the setting response stage, the manager/lead practitioner may choose to respond formally to the report or may decide to accept the report without comment. Where a formal response is provided, this will be published with the report.

Ordinarily, the finalised EYEI report and the response from the early-years setting are published on the website of the Department of Education and Skills ([www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)). Published inspection reports are also hosted on the websites of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and of Pobal.

## 4. Acting on the EYEI report

The manager/lead practitioner of the early-years setting should, as part of the agenda for continuing improvement in the setting, discuss the findings and actions advised in the EYEI report and should plan for the implementation of those actions. The EYEI report along with other types of information gathered by the early-years setting can also be used to inform self-evaluation processes in the setting and planning for improvement and development.

Responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the recommendations and improvements in an EYEI report rests mainly with the manager of the setting. In some cases, early-years settings may wish to access the assistance available from early-years mentoring services and other sources of advice when planning and implementing improvements. The degree to which progress has been made on the implementation of the actions advised in an EYEI report may be evaluated at a later date in follow-through inspections by the DES Inspectorate.

## 5. Quality Framework

Early-years education-focused inspections are based on a quality framework that is informed by the principles of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and *Síolta: the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education* as well as national and international research related to early childhood education and inspection.

The quality framework incorporates the key elements of best practice in early education and categorises provision under four broad areas:

- The quality of the context to support children’s learning and development
- The quality of the processes to support children’s learning and development
- The quality of children’s learning experiences and achievements
- The quality of management and leadership for learning.

In evaluating each of these areas, an inspector also considers how successful the early-years setting has been in implementing relevant actions advised in previous EYEI inspection reports, where this applies.

Key outcomes (20 in total) are identified for each of the four broad areas which describe aspects of best practice (Appendix 1). To ensure optimum transparency for early-years practitioners about the focus of the inspections, each outcome has been further described through the use of a number of possible signposts of practice (Appendix 2). The lists of

signposts of practice are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive. It is acknowledged that there are different approaches among early-years service providers and that providers are at different stages of development. It is not expected that all signposts will be evident in a given setting.

The quality of the **context to support children's learning and development** includes the following three outcomes:

- The atmosphere and organisation of the setting nurture children's learning and development and support the inclusion of all children
- Relationships are responsive, respectful and reciprocal
- Children's sense of identity and belonging is nurtured.

The quality of **processes to support children's learning and development** includes eight key outcomes:

- Provision is informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*
- Information about the child's development informs the next steps in learning
- High quality interactions with children are facilitated
- The environment and resources support children's learning and development
- Play is central to children's learning and development
- Emergent language, literacy and numeracy skills are fostered
- Provision for children's learning and development is closely aligned to their interests and developing capabilities
- Children learn in an inclusive environment.

The quality of **children's learning experiences and achievements** includes five key outcomes:

- Children demonstrate engagement and enjoyment in their learning and a positive sense of well-being
- Children experience achievement and are developing through their learning experiences
- Children are developing a sense of identity and belonging and personal and social skills to support their learning and development
- Children communicate their experiences, thoughts, ideas and feelings with others in a variety of ways
- Children make sense of their world by interacting with others and their environment through playing, investigating and questioning.

The quality of **management and leadership for learning** in the early-years setting includes four key outcomes:

- Planning, review and evaluation are informed by *Síolta; the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education*
- Management within the setting provides for a high quality learning and development experience for children
- Clear two-way channels of communication are fostered between the early-years setting, parents, families and children
- Transitions into, from and within the setting are managed effectively to support children's learning and development.

Inspectors engage in professional dialogue with practitioners about a selection of outcomes and signposts for practice during the inspection visit. Inspectors' judgements about the quality of provision in each of the four areas will be informed by their observation of activities organised and facilitated by the practitioner(s) on the day of the inspection.

### *The quality continuum*

In analysing and reporting on their findings in respect of each of the four broad areas, inspectors use a quality continuum with five quality bands as illustrated at *Table 1* below.

**Table 1: The quality continuum**

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

## 6. Review of Inspections

A practitioner or manager of an early-years setting affected by an inspection may seek a review of the inspection in accordance with the procedures outlined in *Procedures for Review of Inspections on Schools and Teachers under Section 13(9) of the Education Act (1998) (Revised 2015)* ([www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)).

## 7. Publication and Revision of this Guide

This Guide has been prepared following consultation with early-years practitioners, academics, parents, organisations that provide support to early-years services, and other stakeholders with an interest in early-years education as required under Section 13(8) of the Education Act, 1998. It has been approved for issue by the Minister for Education and Skills and the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

The Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills is committed to improving the ways in which it carries out its inspection and advisory work in early-years settings participating in the ECCE Programme. The provisions of this Guide will be reviewed after one year of the implementation of early-years education-focused inspections and at intervals thereafter.

**APPENDIX 1: Overview of the Quality Framework for Early-years Education-focused Inspections in Early Years Settings Participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme**

Area	Outcome
<b>Area 1 - Quality of context to support children’s learning and development</b>	1. The atmosphere and organisation of the setting nurture children’s learning and development and support the inclusion of all children
	2. Relationships are responsive, respectful and reciprocal
	3. Children’s sense of identity and belonging is nurtured
<b>Area 2 – Quality of processes to support children’s learning and development</b>	4. Provision is informed by <i>Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework</i>
	5. Information about the children’s development informs next steps in learning
	6. High quality interactions with children are facilitated
	7. The environment and resources support children’s learning and development
	8. Play is central to children’s learning and development
	9. Emergent language, literacy and numeracy skills are fostered
	10. Provision for children’s learning and development is closely aligned to their interests and developing capabilities
	11. Children learn in an inclusive environment
<b>Area 3 – Quality of children’s learning experiences and achievements</b>	12. Children demonstrate engagement and enjoyment in their learning and a positive sense of well-being
	13. Children experience achievement and are developing through their learning experiences
	14. Children are developing a sense of identity and belonging and personal and social skills to support their learning and development
	15. Children communicate their experiences, thoughts, ideas and feelings with others in a variety of ways
	16. Children make sense of their world by interacting with others and the environment through playing, investigating and questioning
<b>Area 4 - Quality of management and leadership for learning</b>	17. Planning, review and evaluation are informed by <i>Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education</i>
	18. Management in the setting provides for a high quality learning and development experience for children
	19. Clear two-way channels of communication are fostered between the early years setting, parents, families and children
	20. Transitions into, from and within the setting are managed effectively to support children’s learning and development

**APPENDIX 2: Quality Framework for Early-Years Education-Focused Inspections in Early Years Settings Participating in the ECCE Programme**

**Area 1 - Quality of context to support children’s learning and development<sup>1</sup>**

Outcome	Signposts for practice: Consider the extent to which...
<i>1. The atmosphere and organisation of the setting nurture children’s learning and development and support the inclusion of all children</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A caring ethos and a warm, affirming atmosphere are evident</li> <li>• Routines and procedures consistently promote children’s physical, social and emotional security, together with their learning and development</li> <li>• It is evident that children are active agents in choosing and organising their learning and development activities</li> <li>• Snack/meal time is seen as a social occasion and an opportunity to promote well-being and a healthy lifestyle</li> <li>• Children are supported to manage their own hygiene and personal care needs</li> <li>• Times of transition within the setting support positive learning experiences for children</li> </ul>
<i>2. Relationships are responsive, respectful and reciprocal</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practitioners show sensitivity, warmth and positive regard for children and their families</li> <li>• Practitioners foster caring and respectful child-child relationships</li> <li>• Secure relationships are fostered between children and key practitioners in the setting</li> <li>• Practitioners model and provide guidance and encouragement towards positive behaviour</li> <li>• Recognition, praise and encouragement are a regular feature of the responses to children</li> </ul>
<i>3. Children’s sense of identity and belonging is nurtured</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect for and recognition of the uniqueness of each child is evident</li> <li>• Opportunities are provided for children to develop an appreciation of themselves as individuals and as members of groups</li> <li>• Opportunities are provided which bring together children, families and practitioners in the setting</li> <li>• Diversity is recognised, valued and affirmed within an inclusive learning environment</li> <li>• The setting has made connections and is integrated with the local community</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup>These outcomes and indicators have been informed by *Aistear* and *Síolta*. The lists are neither exhaustive nor prescriptive.

## Area 2 – Quality of processes to support children’s learning and development

Outcome	Signposts for practice: Consider the extent to which...
<p><i>4. Provision is informed by Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A broad-based curriculum, informed by <i>Aistear</i>, has been documented and is being used to support children’s learning and development</li> <li>• Practitioners in the setting have been involved in the development of an emergent, enquiry-based curriculum and demonstrate knowledge, understanding and confidence about putting these plans into practice</li> <li>• Planning takes account of children’s varying interests, cultural backgrounds, strengths, needs and previous learning experiences</li> <li>• There is a planned approach to developing children’s dispositions, values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding</li> <li>• Planning supports the provision of a connected, holistic learning experience for children</li> <li>• Planning for curriculum implementation is organised on long-term, medium-term and short-term bases</li> <li>• The implementation of the curriculum is monitored and reviewed on a regular basis</li> </ul>
<p><i>5. Information about the children’s development informs next steps in learning</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A variety of assessment approaches is used to gather information about children’s learning experiences and achievements</li> <li>• Assessment for learning approaches are used to inform the next steps in children’s learning experiences and ensure continuity in their learning</li> <li>• Information about children’s learning is regularly documented to build a rich picture of children’s learning and development</li> <li>• Children are regularly provided with appropriate formative feedback to extend their learning and development</li> <li>• Parents are consulted and informed about their child’s learning and development</li> </ul>
<p><i>6. High quality interactions with children are facilitated</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The child is viewed as a competent and confident learner</li> <li>• The child is recognised as an active agent in his/her learning</li> <li>• There is an appropriate balance between adult-initiated and child-initiated learning and development activities</li> <li>• The practitioner knows the child well and responds to his/her interests and learning needs appropriately</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The practitioner engages and motivates the child in his/her learning and development in a respectful and caring way</li> <li>• The practitioner uses a range of appropriate interaction strategies and methodologies to facilitate a broad range of learning experiences</li> <li>• The practitioner promotes peer interactions in pairs and small groups to nurture supportive relationships</li> </ul>
<p><i>7. The environment and resources support children's learning and development</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indoor and outdoor environments are well maintained, safe and inviting</li> <li>• Indoor and outdoor environments are purposefully structured to develop children's curiosity, creativity, imagination and desire for exploration</li> <li>• Indoor and outdoor environments and resources are used effectively to stimulate, support, consolidate and extend children's learning</li> <li>• Children have regular access to outdoor learning environments</li> <li>• Resources are accessible, developmentally appropriate, and provide for multi-sensory learning experiences</li> <li>• The setting has a variety of literacy and numeracy/mathematical resources which are used regularly and purposefully</li> <li>• Children's achievements are creatively displayed and accessible to children and parents</li> <li>• Children make choices around their engagement with environments, resources and activities</li> <li>• The environments are used to develop children's physical fitness and gross and fine motor skills</li> <li>• The environment is structured to ensure children learn in a variety of contexts throughout the day</li> </ul>
<p><i>8. Play is central to children's learning and development</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play is the central medium through which children learn and develop within the setting</li> <li>• There are opportunities for children to plan for, talk about and think about their play experiences</li> <li>• Opportunities are provided for a variety of types of play including creative play, language play, physical play, imaginative play, socio-dramatic play and construction play</li> <li>• Play opportunities are freely available, accessible, appropriate and well-resourced</li> <li>• Play is used as a medium for children to interact with, explore and make sense of the world</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children have opportunities to engage in play activities alone, with peers and/or with practitioners</li> <li>• The practitioner effectively facilitates play, leads play and directs play in order to effectively support children’s learning and development</li> <li>• Play enables purposeful learning and development for all children in accordance with their needs and interests</li> </ul>
<p><i>9. Emergent language, literacy and numeracy skills are fostered</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practitioners model appropriate language, including mathematical language, and encourage an expanded use of vocabulary and language during interactions</li> <li>• Practitioners ensure there is a suitable balance between speaking and listening during interactions</li> <li>• Children are encouraged and supported to express their views, emotions and thinking in a range of ways</li> <li>• Children’s home language(s) is/are valued and affirmed</li> <li>• Children regularly enjoy and share a variety of rhymes, jingles, poems and songs</li> <li>• Children have access to high-quality books and are provided with regular opportunities to listen to and explore stories</li> <li>• Opportunities are provided for children to engage in mark-making</li> <li>• Mathematical thinking and learning is promoted through the use of open-ended resources and games, linked to the everyday lives of children</li> </ul>
<p><i>10. Provision for children’s learning and development is closely aligned to their interests and developing capabilities</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning for children’s learning and development builds on the interests, previous experiences and achievements of children</li> <li>• Practitioners set high but realistic expectations for all children in the setting</li> <li>• Opportunities are provided for children to achieve fulfilment, success and mastery during learning activities</li> <li>• Children are enabled and supported to make connections in their learning and to transfer their knowledge and skills to new learning situations</li> <li>• Children are encouraged and supported to respond creatively as they engage in learning</li> <li>• Learning activities provide progressively more complex, varied and challenging experiences for children in accordance with their individual needs and abilities</li> </ul>
<p><i>11. Children learn in an inclusive environment</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An inclusive approach is adopted to ensure the engagement of all learners within the setting</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practitioners recognise and accommodate diversity in the style, pace and focus of children’s learning and development</li> <li>• Specific attention is paid to the learning of children with additional needs, children who have English as an additional language, minority groups, and those affected by educational disadvantage</li> <li>• The learning and development of children is fostered in partnership with parents</li> <li>• The setting has made links with external agencies, where appropriate and possible, with a view to optimising support for children with additional needs</li> </ul>
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### Area 3 – Quality of children’s learning experiences and achievements

Outcome	Signposts for practice: Consider the extent to which...
<p><i>12. Children demonstrate engagement and enjoyment in their learning and a positive sense of well-being</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children demonstrate enjoyment in their learning</li> <li>• Children are motivated, interested and engaged in their learning activities</li> <li>• Children display initiative, self-reliance, self-confidence and demonstrate positive learning dispositions such as resilience, resourcefulness and persistence</li> <li>• Children make decisions about their learning and during their learning experiences</li> <li>• Children are aware of and can name their feelings experienced during learning activities</li> <li>• Children demonstrate creativity and a sense of wonder and natural curiosity</li> <li>• Children are developing the ability to play cooperatively, in pairs or small groups</li> </ul>
<p><i>13. Children experience achievement and are developing through their learning experiences</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children experience success during learning activities</li> <li>• Children regularly discuss or share aspects of their learning achievements with others</li> <li>• Children demonstrate an awareness of their changing and developing abilities</li> <li>• Information documented about children’s learning reflects their achievements in a range of connected learning experiences appropriate to an early education context</li> <li>• Information documented about children’s learning reflects their development with due regard for their individual interests, needs and approaches</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children show increasing confidence and co-ordination over their gross and fine motor skills</li> <li>• Children demonstrate a growing capacity to make healthy choices about nutrition, exercise and personal routines</li> <li>• Children demonstrate a developing capacity to reflect, use judgements and make decisions</li> </ul>
<p><i>14. Children are developing a sense of identity and belonging and personal and social skills to support their learning and development</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children show an awareness and appreciation of their own uniqueness and have a sense of who they are</li> <li>• Children are able to describe their interests, opinions, feelings, family background and personal experiences</li> <li>• Children are developing a positive understanding of their own identity as competent learners</li> <li>• Children are developing a positive understanding of their identity as members of families and groups</li> <li>• Children have an awareness of their local community and the roles of different people within that community</li> <li>• Children show an understanding of and regard for the identity, rights and views of others</li> <li>• Children understand the rules and boundaries of acceptable behaviour and demonstrate an evolving capacity for self-regulation and conflict resolution</li> <li>• Children are developing personal and social skills which enable them to respond appropriately to different situations e.g. turn-taking, co-operating, negotiating, taking responsibility, building relationships</li> </ul>
<p><i>15. Children communicate their experiences, thoughts, ideas and feelings with others in a variety of ways</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children use and interpret non-verbal communication strategies such as making eye contact and listening,</li> <li>• Children use language to give and receive information, interpret experiences, ask questions, make requests, refuse, negotiate, solve problems, imagine and recreate roles and to clarify their thinking, ideas and feelings</li> <li>• Children interact with other children and adults by listening, discussing, questioning and taking turns in conversations</li> <li>• Children appreciate their home-language and understand how different languages can be used with different people and in different situations</li> <li>• Children express their feelings, thoughts, ideas and creativity through story-telling, making art, mark making, moving to music, role playing and problem solving</li> </ul>

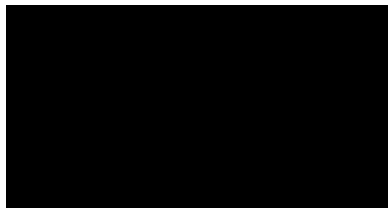
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children explore sound, pattern, rhythm and repetition in language</li> <li>• Children represent their ideas and feelings through various media and play activities</li> <li>• Children demonstrate an awareness and emergent understanding of the meaning and uses of symbols, pictures, print and numbers as a means of communication</li> <li>• Children have a growing understanding of the meaning and use of mathematical language</li> </ul>
<p><i>16. Children make sense of their world by interacting with others and their environment through playing, investigating and questioning</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children are inquisitive and confident in exploring and thinking about their learning experiences</li> <li>• Children are aware of the natural environment and its features, materials, animals and plants</li> <li>• Children engage, explore and experiment in their environment and use their developing physical skills to manipulate objects and materials</li> <li>• Children use books and ICT for fun, to gain information and to broaden their understanding of the world</li> <li>• Children collaborate with others to share interests and ideas and to solve problems</li> <li>• Children make connections and associations between new learning and what they already know</li> <li>• Children display the capacity to respond to a variety of 'I wonder why...' questions</li> </ul>

#### Area 4 - Quality of management and leadership for learning

Outcome	Signposts for practice: Consider the extent to which...
<p><i>17. Planning, review and evaluation are informed by Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management and staff regularly reflect on and review their practice, policies and procedures in order to improve learning experiences and outcomes for children</li> <li>• <i>Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education</i> informs planning, review and improvement practices</li> <li>• An ethos of professionalism, teamwork, collaboration and partnership is evident</li> <li>• The views of staff, parents, management and children are sought during self-review processes</li> <li>• Practitioners avail of mentoring and other external advisory supports, where available</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outcomes of self-review are documented, shared and acted upon to improve children’s learning experiences and achievements</li> </ul>
<p><i>18. Management within the setting provides for a high quality learning and development experience for children</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate systems are in place for the smooth organisation of educational experiences and activities in the setting</li> <li>• There is clarity around the roles and responsibilities of practitioners with regard to educational activities</li> <li>• Leaders provide a good role model for the staff, promote high standards and foster a clear vision and direction for the work of the setting</li> <li>• Opportunity is provided to each practitioner in the setting to take a leadership role in promoting quality learning</li> <li>• Effective strategies are in place for professional reflection and for the mentoring, support and continuous professional development of all staff in the setting</li> </ul>
<p><i>19. Clear two-way channels of communication are fostered between the early-years setting, parents, families and children</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents and families are proactively consulted as the primary educators of their child and involved as partners in their child’s learning and development</li> <li>• Parents and families are made aware of the policies, procedures and curriculum in operation within the setting</li> <li>• The setting shares information on children’s learning and achievements with parents and families in a spirit of openness, mutual respect and transparency</li> <li>• There are formal and informal opportunities to exchange information with parents and families and other professionals in the best interests of the child</li> <li>• The voice of the child is respected and included during decision making processes that affect them</li> <li>• Efforts are made to communicate with parents and families whose first language is not English</li> </ul>
<p><i>20. Transitions into, from and within the setting are managed effectively to support children’s learning and development</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information is gathered from parents, families and other settings on children’s prior experiences and used to ensure continuity of experiences and progression in learning for children</li> <li>• Information is shared between the early-years setting and the primary school to ensure continuity of experiences and progression in children’s learning</li> <li>• Policies and procedures have been developed to promote the sensitive management of transitions within and between settings</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX 3: Report Template



### Early Years Education-focused Inspection Report

<i>Name of Setting:</i>	<i>Identifier number:</i>
<i>Address of Setting:</i>	<i>Date of visit:</i>

<b>CONTEXT OF SETTING</b>	
•	Description of setting and relevant context factors
<b>AREA 1:</b>	<b>QUALITY OF CONTEXT TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT</b>
•	<i>Action(s) advised</i>
<b>AREA 2:</b>	<b>QUALITY OF PROCESSES TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT</b>
•	<i>Action(s) advised</i>
<b>AREA 3:</b>	<b>QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS</b>
•	<i>Action(s) advised</i>
<b>AREA 4:</b>	<b>QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING</b>
•	<i>Action(s) advised</i>
<b>CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE</b>	

### Summary of Overall Inspection Findings

<b>Area</b>	<b>Quality Level</b>
Quality of 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	

### Language used in Early-Years Education-focused Inspection Reports

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