



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI) Final Report

Setting name	Keen Kidz
Setting address	Ballygunner GAA complex Ballygunner Waterford City X91R863
TUSLA registration number	TU2015WD033
DCEDIY number	11WY0044
Date of inspection	27-02-2025
Date of issue of report	19-05-2025

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

Date of inspection	27-02-2025
Activities conducted during the Inspection <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pre-inspection meeting with the setting manager• 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 Programme sessions• Interaction with young children• Interaction with early years educators• Feedback meeting with the setting owner and manager	

Context of setting

Keen Kidz is a privately owned Early Learning and Care (ELC) setting, located on the grounds of Ballygunner GAA complex in Waterford City. Established since 2012, the setting offers part-time and sessional care to young children and their families from the surrounding areas. The setting provides two morning pre-school sessions to children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. On the day of the inspection, a total of twenty-nine children were present, along with six educators and a third level early years student on work placement, across both learning rooms. The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the report; a response was not received from the setting.

Area 1: Quality of context to support children's learning and development

- The quality of the context to support the children's learning and development was very good.
- A calm, nurturing and affirming atmosphere was present. The educators warmly greeted the children and their parents and carers during drop off and collection times, and used this time to exchange information on the children's learning and development progress.
- Strong relationships between the educators and the children were well established. The educators were knowledgeable about children personalities, needs and individual preferences. The children and educators naturally shared anecdotes about their home life, their siblings and past and upcoming events.
- The educators had created several daily routine displays which supported all children's familiarity with the sequence of events. Throughout the morning, the children were observed referencing visual routines and 'now and then' displays. The educators also made reference to each activity verbally and through the use of visual images.
- The children were confident in managing their own self-help and self-care needs. They independently took out and put away materials and took off and put on their coats and confidently attended to their bathroom needs. Whilst the educators made reference to some 'helper' roles in the moment, there were no clearly defined 'helper' roles for the children.
- The educators promoted smooth transitions for the children through the use of verbal signals and announcements, songs, visual images and sand timers. The children were involved in announcing transitions to and from activities.
- The educators operated a key person approach. They used this approach to complete their key children's learning and development observations and to plan around the children's interests.
- The educators had created highly effective strategies to support the children to express their emotions and feelings. The children routinely registered their emotions each morning, by selecting real photographic images and placing them on a 'how do you feel today?' visual display.

- The children's uniqueness was very well represented across the learning rooms, through photographs of them engaged in activities, at their coat hangers, for their birthday displays and of their families.
- Parents were welcomed into the setting to discuss their careers and roles and for the children's annual Christmas concert and end of year graduation.
- The educators supported the children's connection to their community by organising visits from the librarian, *An Gardaí*, the lollipop lady and firefighters. Whilst there were strong community connections developed, the educators missed some opportunities to reflect the community and the children's cultural identity, across the learning rooms.

Actions advised

- In further strengthening the children's independence in the daily routine, the educators are advised to create and display child-friendly 'helper' schedules. This will support the children to predict roles and responsibilities during the morning.
- In further enhancing the children's sense of belonging, the educators are advised to include photographic displays and information which represent local landmarks and community amenities. They are further advised to include more materials and items which reflect the children's cultural identity, across the interest areas.

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 play-based child-led curriculum which was informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and influenced by the Montessori Method of Education.
- Curriculum planning was organised on a long-term, medium-term and short-term basis. The long-term plan was aligned to *Aistear* and reflected the settings curriculum learning outcomes. The medium-term plans included themed seasonal and cultural topics and short-term plans documented the children's emergent interests.
- The educators used a variety of assessment approaches to document the children's learning and development. The key educators completed developmental checklists and documented detailed learning descriptions and photographs to capture the children's interests. Whilst there were some next steps in learning progression recorded, these were not consistently recorded for all children. Completed assessments were typically shared with parents at the end of the academic year. The children had access to their individual learning journals which contained their artwork and photographs, in addition to reviewing activities in a large group learning journal.
- The educators implemented highly effective interaction strategies as they engaged with the children. They viewed the children as confident and competent active learners and were affirming of their efforts and achievements. They asked open-ended questions with a view to extending the children's learning, ideas and explorations.
- The learning environments were purposefully structured to develop the children's curiosity, creativity, imagination and desire for exploration. Throughout the morning the educators rotated shelves, which offered the children a variety of different materials and spaces to work within. The children had access to two secure all weather outdoor areas, in addition to the use of large indoor pitch.
- The resources across the learning rooms included open-ended, real and natural materials which provided a range of multi-sensory learning experiences for the children. The settings designated outdoor play area included climbing structures, planting areas and a mud kitchen.
- The children expressed themselves creatively through songs, movement and mark making. The educators planned gluing and painting experiences for the children, these involved the use of template art and colouring-in pages.
- The children engaged in rich free-play experiences. They made ramps for dinky cars, played with water at the sink, fed and cared for 'babies' in the home area and 'farmed ducks in small ponds' and 'fed hay to pigs' during farm play.
- The children's emergent language, literacy and numeracy skills were fostered greatly. The educators had created print rich environments which included well-presented photographic displays of nature, animals, people from different cultural backgrounds and springtime. The children had access to 'a sound of the week' basket, full of items beginning with the letter

'h'. In addition, the children developed their numeracy skills through a variety of hands-on learning experiences and activities, such as, placing candles in playdough to match number cards and sorting and counting coloured stones to match coloured cards.

- The educators had developed highly inclusive strategies which supported the active engagement of all children within the setting.

Actions advised

- In order to strengthen the children's learning and development observations, the educators are advised to consistently document next steps in learning for all children. They are further advised to share written observations with parents upon completion, for their feedback, as this will provide parents with a rich portrait of their children's learning and progression.
- The educators are advised to limit the children's engagement in their use of template art and colouring-in pages for adult planned activities, and provide more opportunities for the children to explore their creativity and mark making through open-ended process art experiences.

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

- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements was excellent.
- The children were intrinsically motivated and interested in their play experiences. They demonstrated fun and enjoyment as they planned and led their own learning.
- The children played co-operatively in pairs and in small groups, and had developed strong friendships. Some children were observed happily and securely playing alone and in parallel to others, following their own interests.
- The children made many choices and decisions throughout the morning, and had developed positive learning dispositions as they engaged in activities, with perseverance and as problem-solvers and strong communicators.
- The children experienced mastery and success during their learning activities. The educators provided them with many opportunities to share and discuss their learning as individuals and within groups.
- The educators supported the children to make links to past and future learning connections. They were encouraged to discuss their experiences having participated in the local book sale that morning. Each week the children contributed to curriculum planning and activity ideas, in preparation for the following week.
- The children had a growing appreciation of their own uniqueness. They were assertive in expressing their thoughts and actions during their learning activities, and demonstrated confident turn taking and negotiating language when working with their peers.
- The educators successfully captured and made the children's voices visible across the learning rooms. The children engaged in the use of 'I statements' to articulate their likes and dislikes and used a sticker system to identify which artwork they wanted to keep in their learning journals. The educators recorded the children's direct quotes, ideas and suggestions on their artwork and in their learning observations and journals.
- The children had a growing understanding of mathematical language. They measured their height on a large wall chart, counted frequently during play and referenced quantity when sourcing materials.
- The children were aware of the wider world and natural environment. They participated in activities about the earth and the continents and had access to a wide variety of nature and animal books. They planted seeds and watered plants, and had access to a basket of found materials which included pinecones, shells, twigs and wooden circles.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was very good.
- The management provided strong oversight and responsibility for the programme of learning and care. It was clear that the management and educators worked closely to ensure that the best interests of children was core to their practice.
- The management and educators met informally on a daily basis to share updates and address any emerging concerns. They met formally three times per year and used this time to discuss operational procedures and review curriculum plans.
- The management and educators reviewed quality development practices on an informal basis. They did not engage in any formal self-evaluation or internal review processes.

- The settings mission statement was strong and the ethos of the setting was evident in practice of all staff.
- Support and supervision meetings with individual educators were held regularly with the manager, and annual appraisals were completed with both the owner and the manager.
- The educators actively engaged in continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities. All staff had completed diversity, equality and inclusion and sensory processing training, along with the whole teams' participation in the *Aistear* and Play programme. Two educators had completed Lámh and Hanen communication courses, and the manager had completed the *Leadership for INClusion in the Early Years (LINC)* programme.
- Effective two-way communications were fostered with parents. The educators posted the children's weekly group activities onto a social media application. The parents were invited to share their suggestions towards quality improvement developments. A comprehensive parents' handbook was developed, which informed parents of the settings policies, procedures and the curriculum activities.
- The educators provided new and existing parents with a welcome pack each autumn term. New children were supported to settle-in at their own pace during August and parents were welcomed to remain on site until they had settled.
- In supporting children's transitions from pre-school to primary, the educators had developed strong relationships with the principal and teachers of their local feeder school, which was located adjacent to the setting. The children were invited to attend regular school events over the year to familiarise themselves with the school environment. During the morning, the inspector accompanied the educators and the children to an annual book fair hosted by the primary school. The educators had worked closely with their local county childcare committee in developing transition templates which are due to be completed this year.

Actions advised

- The management and educators are advised to engage in formal internal review and self-evaluation processes and to document decision outcomes and shared responsibilities amongst staff. The resources and self-evaluation tools in the *Aistear, Sóolta Practice Guide* will support this.

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	Excellent
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](#)