An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>Bomany Nursery and Montessori School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>Bomany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Letterkenny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>County Donegal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>09DL0050</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Date of Inspection: 04-03-2019
WHAT IS AN EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION?

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

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector(s) evaluated and reported under the following headings or areas of enquiry:

1. Quality of the context to support children’s learning and development
2. Quality of processes to support children’s learning and development
3. Quality of children’s learning experiences and achievements
4. Quality of management and leadership for learning

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate’s quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the setting’s provision in each area.
Early Years Education Inspection

Date of inspection: 04-03-2019

Inspection activities undertaken:
- Meeting with the setting manager
- Meeting with the practitioners
- Observation of interactions during three concurrent pre-school sessions
- Interaction with the children
- Review of relevant documents
- Feedback discussion with the setting manager and pre-school leader

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Bomany Nursery and Montessori School is a privately-owned, full day care, sessional pre-school and after-school service located on the outskirts of Letterkenny, County Donegal. The setting offers three concurrent morning pre-school sessions to children participating on the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. The setting implements a blended pedagogical approach to education informed by both the Montessori approach and Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. During the inspection, the owner/manager, three leaders, three assistant practitioners and forty-six children were present. The owner/manager and one pre-school leader attended the post-inspection feedback meeting. 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 is very good.
- The atmosphere in each of the pre-school rooms is very warm and welcoming. The children are encouraged to self-register upon arrival and each child has a personal space for his/her belongings.
- A routine is displayed in each of the rooms. Some rooms offer a visual routine to enhance the children’s familiarity with the daily experiences. Practitioners enable the children to become active agents in their play throughout the morning, both indoors and outdoors.
- Transitions are successfully managed in most instances using highly effective auditory, visual and verbal cues to notify the children of a change in activity. During the inspection, there were occasions when the children experienced lengthy periods of waiting at some transition points. On some occasions, they were not provided with ample periods of time to process the upcoming change in the routine.
- Practitioners interact in a relaxed manner with the children at snack-time, utilising it as a social experience and an additional opportunity to strongly nurture the children’s self-help skills.
- There is a key-person approach in place within the three rooms. Practitioners interact with their designated groups of children on a daily basis and record frequent observations of their learning experiences.
- Practitioners recognise the uniqueness of the children and celebrate this in many effective visual displays. A ‘Proud Wall; ‘Look what we can do’ and acts of kindness are used to highlight the children’s competent abilities.
- Practitioners encourage respect and kindness amongst the children in each of the rooms. They use the language of feelings when minor conflicts arise. During some observed times of conflict, the children were overly-reliant on adult support and intervention.
- There are commendable opportunities provided for the children to develop a strong sense of identity and belonging. This is nurtured through the wealth of personal and visual displays, family trees, visits from community helpers and the ‘Birthday walk’ organised for the child and their parents to celebrate their special day.
**Actions advised**

- It is advised that practitioners consistently utilise the established transition strategies to provide appropriate lead-in periods to upcoming transitions and develop strategies that minimise waiting periods for the children during some routine activities.
- It is advised that practitioners develop and utilise consistent conflict resolution strategies that enhance the children’s independent problem-solving capabilities during minor conflicts.

----

**AREA 2**

**QUALITY OF PROCESSES TO SUPPORT CHILDREN’S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

- The quality of the processes to support the children’s learning and development is very good.
- Each room has long, medium and short-term plans in place, which the practitioners evaluate frequently. Practitioners are beginning to develop an emergent approach incorporating the children’s voice during planning. All three rooms are working to blend the Montessori approach with the Aistear framework.
- Assessment includes snapshot observations, photographs and descriptions of the children’s learning. Learning stories are occasionally recorded for each child.
- Practitioners view the children as highly competent and they engage effectively with them as play partners during many exchanges throughout the day. Some observed strategies such as scaffolding, modelling and the occasional use of open-ended questions were used to support the children’s learning.
- The children regularly access one of the four outdoor play areas during the session. Practitioners utilise these environments effectively to develop the children’s physical fitness and gross-motor skills.
- Each of the indoor areas is well-defined with various play opportunities on offer such as role-play, construction, mark-making and table-top activities. Multi-sensory experiences are minimal within the three pre-school rooms.
- Practitioners encourage the children to express their views and thoughts during spontaneous play and circle-time activities. The children have regular opportunities to sing, play instruments and to listen to music. Practitioners in one of the pre-school rooms have recently introduced the Irish language through resources, print in the environment and when conversing with the children.
- Commendably, practitioners in one of the rooms are providing frequent opportunities for the children to engage with a range of activities that promotes early dispositions towards Science and Mathematics through experiments involving the exploration of magnets and the properties of water.
- Practitioners successfully promote an inclusive environment to ensure the engagement of all children within the setting. They collaborate with external agencies such as the Better Start Access and Inclusion Model (AIM). Practitioners communicate frequently with the parents regarding useful support strategies, the children’s progression in learning and their overall development.

**Actions advised**

- It is advised that practitioners utilise the Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide to collaboratively explore the curriculum foundations section and to support the further development of an emergent, enquiry-based approach to curriculum provision. Making explicit connections in planning to the children’s observed interests and learning needs will support this development.
- It is advised that practitioners develop opportunities for sustained, shared thinking using open-ended questioning, extended vocabulary and mathematical language to enhance interactions.

----

**AREA 3**

**QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is very good.
- The children enjoy a range of learning experiences such as construction, role-play, mark-making and outdoor play. They demonstrate imaginative, persistent and independent dispositions.
• The children are developing a positive sense of well-being through yoga and regular physical play outdoors. The majority of children display self-confidence during the morning sessions.

• The children’s voices are visibly respected and celebrated within each room. They provide ideas for planned activities and share stories and thoughts from their personal backgrounds.

• Each child has an individual ‘Record of achievement’ book which contains some learning stories, records of parents’ voices, photographs with descriptions of the child’s learning and individual creations. There is scope to extend this information to reflect a rich and holistic picture of the development of the individual child.

• The children are developing a strong sense of belonging and achievement through the many displays that create a child-friendly space that is evidently dedicated to them. Their sense of identity is nurtured through many organised visits to various local places of interest as part of the ‘Sharing from the Start’ project. The children have the opportunity to develop relationships with children from a partner pre-school over a three-year project cycle.

• The majority of the children demonstrate confident abilities when communicating in each of the rooms. Daily activities such as circle-time, story and song promote speaking and listening skills. Each room receives a termly opportunity to engage in speech and drama from a visiting external professional to further enhance communication skills.

• The children are provided with some opportunities to problem-solve during play in each of the rooms. There were missed opportunities on these occasions to further the children’s sense of enquiry and prediction.

• The children have frequent opportunities to explore the natural environment during nature walks, play in the outdoor environment, planting and the use of literacy resources indoors. On occasions, practitioners use Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to broaden the children’s knowledge.

**Actions advised**

• It is advised that the information collated regarding the children’s learning reflects a holistic picture of their connected and progressive learning experiences, interests, approaches and cultural backgrounds.

• It is advised that the children are provided with frequent opportunities to investigate, problem-solve and explore during play. Providing them with opportunities to make connections in learning and developing their ability to respond to open-ended questions, will reinforce learning and strengthen cognition.

**AREA 4**

**QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

• The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.

• There is an ethos of professionalism, teamwork and partnership evident throughout the three preschool rooms.

• The manager provides opportunities for the whole staff team to meet bi-monthly to discuss general matters arising. The setting has previously engaged with the Síolta Quality Accreditation Programme. There are minimal opportunities provided currently to promote and embed continual collaboration within the staff team.

• The manager provides the practitioners with weekly non-contact time for planning and assessment and supports them to engage in continuing professional development.

• The manager has a staff induction handbook in place which outlines roles, responsibilities and policies relating to practices within the setting. Each new member of staff is supported during an induction period by the manager and the practitioners within the rooms.

• The manager provides regular, informal support to the practitioners during daily discussions and meetings within individual rooms. Practitioners receive occasional opportunities for formal supervision during the year and annual appraisals are currently not conducted.

• Practitioners communicate with parents informally on a regular basis. All rooms have started to garner parents’ voices within the children’s achievement books. Formal meetings are held with parents, upon request. There is some inconsistency in the methods and frequency of strategies used to promote communication with parents between each of the three rooms.

• The manager obtains some parental views when updating setting policy and procedures. An informative parents’ notice board is available at the entrance to each room.
• An annual open day is provided for new children. The children in the full day care setting have many opportunities to visit the rooms before making the transition into the preschool setting. Parents are provided with a parents’ handbook and a registration form, with staggered visits offered to support the children during the settling-in period.
• Practitioners complete a transition statement for each child moving on to primary school. These are sent by email to each of the local schools with parental permission, to support continuity of learning experiences. There is regular communication with some of the principals from the local schools.

**Actions advised**

• It is advised that the manager organises frequent opportunities for practitioners to collaborate and develop action plans for improvement using the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide*. Regular and formal measures for appraisal will support practitioners in their roles and identify pathways for continuing professional development.
• It is advised that consistent procedures are used to communicate with parents regarding their children’s learning throughout the year. The introduction of formal communication procedures would benefit this practice.

**CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE**

The capacity of the service to implement the actions advised above is very good. The manager and practitioners demonstrate strong commitment to ongoing improvement in the quality of provision in the setting.
### Summary of Overall Inspection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Quality Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of context to support children's learning and development</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of processes to support children’s learning and development</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of children’s learning experiences and achievements</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of management and leadership for learning</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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