EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>Little Wonders Montessori</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>Chapel Street</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Charleville</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>County Cork</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>09CC0071</td>
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Date of Inspection: 22-03-2019
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 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of inspection</th>
<th>22-03-2019</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inspection activities undertaken</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Meeting with setting manager</td>
<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Observation of interactions during a session</td>
<td>• Feedback to setting manager and practitioners</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Interaction with children</td>
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**CONTEXT OF SETTING**

Little Wonders Montessori is a privately-owned, sessional pre-school. It is located in a number of rooms in a community hall. The setting was established in 1992 and it adopts a Montessori approach to supporting children’s learning and development. On the morning of the inspection, four practitioners and nineteen children were present. One of the practitioners was employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) and one practitioner was a third-level student on a college placement. The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the report; a response for publication 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 excellent.
- A warm, affirming and caring ethos has been successfully created. The children are familiar with the morning routine and appear confident and relaxed; they initiate their own learning activities on arrival.
- The session observed was calm and very well managed. The carefully planned programme of activities, the prepared environment and the purposeful deployment of the practitioners successfully support and promote children's engagement in open-ended, child-led, collaborative and enquiry-based learning experiences.
- Relationships between the practitioners and the children are commendable. A key-person approach, where each practitioner has primary responsibility for a small group of children, very successfully supports children to develop positive relationships with the practitioners.
- The practitioners provide exemplary support for children to be as independent as possible. The children competently complete their self-initiated tasks and activities, and they return materials to their rightful place when they are finished. They look after their own personal care and hygiene needs and they competently participate in cleaning up before and after snack time.
- Transitions within the daily routine are managed very effectively. The transitions are minimal and respectful of children’s need to know the sequence of activities and to move calmly and seamlessly from one activity to the next. A pictorial visual of the daily routine is used purposefully; this routine is flexible and is adapted in response to the children’s changing needs and interests.
- Commendable opportunities are provided for children to develop an appreciation of themselves as individuals and as members of groups. Attractive photographic displays have been created that include the local community, the children’s families, their achievements, birthdays and individual creative art work with their own comments. The children have individual learning journals that are accessible and displayed at their eye level. On the morning of the inspection, the children eagerly shared their achievements and their learning experiences using their learning journals.
- The setting is very well integrated into the local community. The children get to meet many local heroes and they visit natural habitats. Families are invited to participate and share their skills and to attend end-of-year events and seasonal celebrations.
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 excellent.
- The practitioners provide a very broad and balanced curriculum which is clearly based on the Montessori philosophy and Method of education.
- Planning is clearly informed by many of the principles of Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. It is individual to each child and based on the six areas of learning within the Montessori programme. The medium-term and short-term plans incorporate the Montessori cycle of activities; these are flexible and take due account of children’s current and emergent interests and needs throughout the year.
- A variety of appropriate assessment approaches are used to track children's learning achievements and to inform planning. These include individual strengths-based constructive observations, Montessori records of achievements, anecdotal notes, and children’s individual learning journals and work samples. The children receive regular formative feedback on their learning.
- The practitioners keep daily reflections and these are used purposefully to monitor and review their programme of activities and the learning environments.
- The practitioners engage meaningfully and respectfully with the children. They are very attuned to the children and skillful in offering guidance, prompts and in asking open-ended questions that extend children’s learning. They support children to initiate their own learning activities and they skilfully add value to their enquiries by planning small and large group hands-on, inquiry-based experiences and activities.
- The indoor and outdoor environments successfully promote children’s curiosity, imagination, and creativity, desire for exploration, socialisation and physical fitness. There is a wide range of organised and labelled Montessori materials and play objects accessible to the children.
- The setting has a diverse range of mathematical resources which are used purposefully by the children to explore mathematical concepts. Many of the displays promote and support an understanding of the use of number and sequencing.
- The practitioners value play as a means by which children learn and develop. The children have ample time to engage in spontaneous, open-ended play within a diverse range of play types.
- The children’s emergent language and literacy skills are fostered very successfully. Rich literacy experiences are woven throughout the programme of activities; the children enjoy singing songs and rhymes, they listen to stories regularly and they have access to wide variety of books and writing materials.
- The practitioners provide many opportunities for small and large group, hands-on projects and experiments. These very effectively support the children to develop strategies for active exploration, thinking and reasoning.

AREA 3
QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is excellent.
- Children demonstrate deep levels of engagement and enjoyment in their play and learning. They are given great autonomy in choosing their own learning activities. They have ample time to achieve success and mastery, to be independent and to explore. The children play on their own, in pairs and in small groups.
- The children confidently share their thoughts, opinions and personal experiences with each other and with the practitioners. They are competent communicators and demonstrate a developing capacity to use judgements, make decisions and follow through on their own play agendas. On the morning of the inspection, one child in partnership with a practitioner successfully created a 'Henry Hoover' from junk materials. He discussed his plans and his thinking and ideas were supported very effectively by the practitioner and through the availability of the materials and the scheduling of time for spontaneous play.
• The children clearly enjoy participating in storytelling, in singing songs, reciting poems and drawing and writing. On the morning of the inspection while looking at their learning journals, a small number of children spontaneously sang a Christmas song as they reflected on their Christmas experiences and many of the children appeared eager and competent in drawing and writing their own names.
• The children’s development of early mathematical and scientific concepts is supported successfully. They demonstrated positive dispositions towards Science and Mathematics and a keen knowledge and understanding of life cycles and time lines. The shared their knowledge of the counties in Ireland, why the planets orbit the sun and the fact that the moon orbits the earth.
• The children are inquisitive and confident in their learning. They demonstrated very good capacity to answer the open questions posed by the practitioners during the science experiment, the exploration of the planets and the active, storytelling session.
• The children are provided with a diverse range of opportunities to express their feeling, thoughts and ideas. They represent these through their free drawing, through discussion, drama, storytelling and music.
• The children interact easily and confidently with each other and the practitioners. They are kind and mannerly and strong friendships are evident.
• The children demonstrate very appropriate pro-social skills, such as sharing, turn-taking and the ability to problem solve. For example, during the inspection a small group of children successfully collaborated on completing a large map of Ireland puzzle, they shared their success and then competently and carefully returned it to its rightful shelf.

AREA 4
QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING
• The quality of management and leadership for learning is excellent.
• Very good systems are in place to ensure the smooth running of the session. It is very evident that the practitioners have a clear vision and direction for provision.
• There is a strong ethos of professionalism and teamwork among the practitioners in the setting. They are highly motivated and demonstrate shared leadership for quality learning.
• Informal team meetings are held on a weekly basis. These meetings focus primarily on planning experiences and progressing learning for individual children. A real sense of individual and team reflection is embedded in practice to support ongoing improvement. The use of daily diaries supports these team reflections and improvement practices.
• The manager is highly committed and passionate about improving learning experiences and outcomes for children. She is a really good role model for the staff. She encourages and facilitates continuing professional development and has long established links with the local county childcare committee and attends the St Nicholas Montessori network meetings.
• Many informal and formal opportunities are successfully utilised to share the children’s learning with their parents. Parents receive a detailed handbook with information on the policies, procedures, and the ethos and curriculum approach. Newsletters and observations are shared regularly as well as children’s learning portfolios. Parents are invited to attend meetings to discuss their child’s progress, to share their skills and talents, and to participate in a variety of events throughout the year.
• The setting has established close links with a number of the local primary schools. They talk about school with the children and they read stories about school. The formalisation of a transition policy and the advancement of further strategies to support children to experience a smooth transition to school are in the early stages of development.

Action advised
• The practitioners are advised to utilise the self-evaluation tools, the tip-sheets, the podcasts and the templates available in the ‘Supporting Transitions’ pillar of the Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide. These will be a great help in developing a transition policy and in extending the range of effective transition strategies in use to support a smooth transition for children as they move to primary school.
CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the setting to implement the action advised above is very good. The manager and practitioners demonstrate a commendable interest in, and commitment to, the continuous improvement of education provision in the setting.

Summary of Overall Inspection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Quality Level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of context to support children’s learning and development</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of processes to support children’s learning and development</td>
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<td>Excellent</td>
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<td>Quality of management and leadership for learning</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
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Language used in Early Years Education Inspection reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provision</th>
<th>Quality Level</th>
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<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>
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