EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name | Bright Sparks Montessori
Setting Address | Muskerry Estate
| Ballincollig
| County Cork
DCYA number | 09CC0085

Date of Inspection: 27-11-2019
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of inspection</th>
<th>27-11-2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inspection activities undertaken</strong></td>
<td><strong>Observation of interactions during two session</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meeting with setting owner</td>
<td>• Interaction with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meeting with practitioners</td>
<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Feedback to setting owner and lead practitioner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CONTEXT OF SETTING**

Bright Sparks Montessori is a private setting that was established in 2003. The setting has two sessional pre-school rooms which provide for children participating in the first and second year of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. These rooms are divided by age range with the younger children attending the Playschool room and the older children attending the Montessori room. There are two access and inclusion model (AIM) practitioners, and one of the practitioners is the owner. On the morning of the inspection, eleven children and three practitioners were present in the Montessori room, while eleven children and two practitioners were present in the Playschool room. The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the report, and the response of the setting will be found in the appendix of this report.

**AREA 1**

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

- The quality of the context to support the children's learning and development is good.
- A welcoming and affirming atmosphere is evident, particularly at arrival time. Children and their families are greeted warmly by all practitioners and they are received into the large play space. Children then move to their designated room.
- The relationships between the practitioners and the children are very secure. Practitioners are consistently respectful of each child and they regularly provide affirming and encouraging feedback in their responses.
- The daily routine on display, features a long period of active free play, circle time, outdoor play and snack time. Transitions from one activity to the next are signposted by verbal reminders and the use of a timer.
- Snack time is an enjoyable and relaxed, home-like occasion. Children and practitioners sit together and share information with one another.
- The children are effectively supported to manage their own hygiene and personal care needs. They independently use the toilet, wash their hands, put on and take off their jackets.
- The children’s sense of belonging as individuals is reinforced through the use of a birthday wall in the environment. The setting is at an early stage of providing recognition for the identity of each child and their family through visual displays; this aspect of practice has been identified by practitioners as an area in need of further development. There are some connections between the setting, the children’s families and the local community; it would be beneficial to strengthen these connections.

**Actions advised**

- The setting is advised to progress plans to extend the visual representations of the children and their families within the learning environment.
- The owner and practitioners are advised to strengthen the connections between the setting, the families and the local community. In doing so, parents and members of the community could be encouraged to visit the setting to share their skills, interests and/or professions. This will support the children's awareness of the various members in the locality.
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 good.
- The practitioners implement a play-based curriculum which is informed by the Montessori Method of education and *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*.
- Curriculum planning is organised on long-term, medium-term and short-term bases. Currently, a thematic approach is mainly used and there are some links to the children's emergent interests.
- Information on the children’s learning and development is recorded using checklists and the *Aistear* learner record template observations. Information on the children’s likes and strengths is occasionally used to inform planning.
- The environment is clean and maintained well. The children have daily access to an outdoor space that enables them to engage in group games and gross-motor activities. Opportunities are provided for the children to engage in a range of table-top, small world and Montessori activities. During the inspection, it was noted that resources and materials available to the children for socio-dramatic play, sensory and creative activities were limited.
- Significant progress has been made by practitioners in promoting play as the central medium through which children learn. The daily routine provides an extended and uninterrupted time for open-ended, purposeful play.
- The practitioners effectively foster the children’s emergent literacy and numeracy skills through the Montessori activities, their modelling of language, and the use of stories, rhymes, songs, and word displays.
- An inclusive approach is successfully promoted and equitable opportunities are provided to engage all learners. The owner and practitioners liaise closely with the Better Start AIM specialist with regard to progressing the learning experiences of children with additional needs.

**Actions advised**

- The practitioners are advised to develop their planning practices to ensure that they are responsive to the children’s current and emergent interests. Using the pillar, ‘Planning and Assessing’, from the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* will support this process.
- It is advised that practitioners use a broader range of approaches to gather information on children’s learning. In particular, it would be beneficial to compile all of the observations within an individual learning folder, and to make this folder available to parents and children to reflect and engage with.
- It is advised that the owner and practitioners carry out a review of the indoor learning environments using the ‘Learning Environment’ audit tool in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide*. It would be beneficial to expand the interest areas and to include more socio-dramatic and pretend play activities. They are further advised to purposefully engage in the children’s pretend play to a greater degree and to use more open-ended questioning to scaffold and extend children’s interests, knowledge and higher-order thinking.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is good.
- The children display very effective communication skills and the capacity to express their experiences, thoughts, ideas and feelings. They are competent communicators who use language to articulately share information, to negotiate with their peers and to resolve problems. Opportunities to reflect in small groups on prior learning would be a welcome introduction to the daily routine.
- During the inspection, the children showed great enjoyment as they played with the sand. There were a small number of opportunities for children to develop their creative skills or to express themselves through creative exploration.
- The children demonstrate confidence in their co-ordination, fine and gross motor skills. This was evident when they participated in the movement and music in the outdoor environment.
• The children are developing appropriate personal and social skills. They demonstrate the ability to turn take, share and to build relationships with their peers. During the inspection, their capacity to play co-operatively in pairs and in small groups was noteworthy.
• Children display positive learning dispositions such as persistence, self-reliance and concentration as they play with one another during extended active free play.

Actions advised
• The provision of freely available equipment and resources to encourage the children to explore process led creative art and to enhance their creative skills is advised.
• To support the children to develop a stronger sense of themselves as competent learners, it is advised that the practitioners plan opportunities for them to reflect on their learning and achievements. The outcomes of this self-reflection could be incorporated into their learning journals.

AREA 4
QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING
• The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
• A professional atmosphere, is evident in the setting. Respectful communication between the owner and the practitioners supports the smooth operation of the daily routine. The practitioners’ roles and responsibilities are clearly defined.
• The practitioners and owner demonstrate ongoing commitment to continuing professional development. They have participated in accredited training and some have completed the Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years (LINC) training.
• The practitioners value open communication with the parents and an open-door policy is in operation.
• Information on the children’s development is regularly shared with parents through informal daily chats. Formal meetings take place once a year and additional meetings are arranged at the request of parents.
• Informal discussions to reflect on practice and to discuss matters arising take place each day; currently, formal reviews or reflections on practice do not take place.
• The children’s transition from pre-school to primary school is supported. The setting has made connections with teachers in the local school and information about children’s learning, development and experiences is shared with the permission of parents.

Action advised
• The practitioners are advised to formalise their self-evaluation practices and to develop more opportunities to reflect on and review practice, policies and procedures in the setting. The tools in the online document, Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide would assist to identify areas in need of further improvement and to record the actions which are necessary to support this improvement.
### 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>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of processes to support children’s learning and development</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of children’s learning experiences and achievements</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of management and leadership for learning</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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

SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection report
We are happy with the report in general and are always happy to accept recommendations on how to
give the children the best experience they can have while attending Bright Sparks Montessori School.

Area 2  Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection
activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection
The recommendations are being introduced and plans are plans are being developed to
accommodate these issues.

A family tree has been put on the wall and the children have drawn a picture of their family and has it
attached to the tree.

Arts and crafts materials are available on a shelf for the children to freely take and use whenever they
wish.

Parents of the children who work in different areas are invited to the school to explain about their work
to the children. We have had a Garda, a nurse, a carpenter and an electrician visit the school.

Each child will have a scrapbook and their art and drawings will be recorded in these.

We will keep developing and looking for new ways for the children to express themselves as
individuals