An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION - FOCUSED INSPECTION

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Name</th>
<th>Explore the World Montessori</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service Address</td>
<td>Kilmaloooda,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Balinascarthy,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Co.Cork</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>09CC0318</td>
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Date of Issue: 20-09-2018
WHAT IS AN EARLY YEARS EDUCATION-FOCUSED INSPECTION?

The Early Years Education-focused Inspection (EYEi) model is used to provide evaluative information, advice and support in relation to education provision in a pre-school service 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 service.

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 service’s provision in each area.
Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

Date of inspection 09-03-2018

Inspection activities undertaken
- Meeting with service owner/manager
- Meeting with practitioners
- Observation of interactions during one session.
- Interaction with children
- Review of relevant documents
- Feedback to service owner/manager

CONTEXT OF SERVICE

Explore the World Montessori is a privately owned service located in an extension to a private dwelling in a rural area. It was established in 2009. It provides a morning Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, twelve children were present together with the owner, who is the lead practitioner, and one other practitioner. On the day of inspection the children were celebrating and fundraising by taking part in the Early Childhood Ireland Pyjama Day. Accordingly, there were some alterations to the daily routine. The setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised in this report, and the response submitted on behalf of the setting can 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 very good.
- A warm and welcoming conservatory greets all on arrival at the service. This is a natural light-filled space that has a large couch, the curriculum statement and information on Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. In addition, information on both practitioners is visible for all parents.
- The lead practitioner greets families on arrival welcoming children into the environment. Children sign themselves in by moving their photograph to a display on the door and in turn they see who has arrived before them.
- The ethos of the service recognises the importance of children seeing themselves as competent learners and the practitioners share a view that children need to be active agents in the learning.
- Snack time is seen as a rich social occasion. The practitioners value this element of the routine and spend time preparing the environment with the children before they all sit to eat. The table is laid, children are provided with ceramic plates and napkins and they all sit and enjoy their meal in a relaxed manner.
- The routine supports social and individual development. Children are given agency and freedom to move around the environment with a routine that allows time for sustained free play and involvement in activities. Small group time is offered and children are free and welcome to join if they wish. A more consistent approach to supporting transitions would be a valuable addition to this well-established routine.
- The practitioners share a vision for the children’s learning and development and they both demonstrate attentive, secure and supportive approaches in how they interact with the children.
- The practitioners provide opportunities for the children to learn about their local community and the people in it through outings and discussion in play. Introducing more visual representations of the local community would benefit the consolidation of this learning.

Actions advised
- Practitioners are advised to introduce more consistent visual and auditory cues to support times of transition in the routine.
- It is advised that practitioners provide children with rich visual representations of the local community. This will support their identity and belonging as individuals and their view of themselves as part of the wider rural community.
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 play-based and Montessori pedagogical approach programme in place in the service is underpinned by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*.
- The practitioners share a suitable vision for the service that translates through the medium and short-term plans. The weekly plans take account of the children’s emergent interests and links to *Aistear* are apparent throughout all planning and review.
- Practitioners reflect back on the week and complete ‘Our story of the week, reflection back’ sheet. The lead practitioner recognises that this approach helps the practitioners to reflect on how they have met the needs of the children, and that it supports the service in making improvements in the future.
- Exemplary interactions strategies are used to support the children’s self-directed learning. Practitioners are active in children’s engagement and discovery of materials. Throughout the inspection, the lead practitioner demonstrated her strength and ability to be in the moment with the children. She is highly reflective in her interactions with the children and she effectively scaffolds their learning and development.
- Practitioners complement each other in their approach, pace and involvement with the children. A strong, supportive and well established team-work approach was evident throughout the morning session observed.
- The service has been very proactive in developing methods of sharing information with parents: observations are shared on a monthly basis, a service/home notebook for is used for sharing information and practitioners send sheets home that support parents to reflect on topics of the week to consolidate learning. One recent example was a nature treasure hunt sheet.
- The indoor and outdoor environments are welcoming, inviting and well maintained. Resources and materials are accessible and developmentally appropriate, and effectively support and extend children’s learning. Efforts are made to introduce new and varied materials with thoughtful considerations that link them to the emergent interests.
- Many natural, sense-rich and open-ended materials are made available for open-ended exploration and imaginative play. Materials are presented in an aesthetically pleasing way to entice children.
- Children have daily access to the outdoor area but have freedom to choose whether to go outside or stay inside. The outdoor environment is well-resourced featuring a mud kitchen, facilities which promote water play, sand and a climbing frame.
- Practitioners successfully support and promote children’s emergent language skills. Children are encouraged to explore books and to explore words in songs and rhymes.

AREA 3
QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is very good.
- Children display high levels of enjoyment in their learning; they are confident and expressive throughout the morning session. They demonstrate strong abilities in turn-taking, extending one another’s learning and they support each other to gain understanding of concepts through exploration and discovery.
- Children exhibit the ability to solve minor conflicts through negotiating and sharing ideas in pairs and small groups. They are confident in expressing thoughts and ideas and they are not afraid to offer alternative views in group conversations.
- The children effectively look after their own personal care needs and they share responsibility in caring for the play environment. Children demonstrated advanced skills in wiping down the table, placing one hand underneath to gather the crumbs, laying the table for snack and ensuring there is a plate and glass for each child.
The children are very expressive, demonstrating a sense of wonder about the world asking questions and listening attentively to the responses.

Children display positive learning dispositions such as persistence and concentration as they work together to solve problems encountered in play. Practitioners provide support in a balanced manner, and they are aware that too much involvement would remove children’s sense of ownership and autonomy.

The children are learning and appreciating the power of mathematical language. The older children are making connections with prior learning and sharing this knowledge with the younger children; they are heard for example to say: ‘that shape has four sides, it can’t be a triangle, try another shape.’

Many children display excellent fine motor skill. They carefully select small bits of playdough and they mould them into different ‘pasta’ shapes, including linguini, spaghetti and even ravioli.

Children are developing knowledge on how to care for and respect the natural environment. The rural location offers many opportunities for self-exploration in nature including regular walks in the woods adjacent to the pre-school with the assistance of parents.

Children actively take part in the tidy-up routines, they share with each other and they play together very well. Two children wash the dishes and dry them after snack, another sweeps the floor with a big brush while a fourth follows with a dustpan and brush. This helps build independence and self-help skills.

**Actions advised**

- Practitioners are advised to plan and introduce into the routine, opportunities for children to reflect on and celebrate their learning and development experiences. This will support children in developing a stronger sense of themselves as competent learners.

**AREA 4**

**QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is excellent.
- The service operates in a very professional manner. Practitioners are committed to the ongoing development of the service
- The ethos of the service is characterised by the warm and supportive approach that both practitioners offer one another. The morning session runs smoothly with clarity around roles and responsibilities.
- Practitioners have developed strategies that support their communication with parents. This is achieved through the use of social media, a notebook for each child, group text and the availability of a quiet room close to the play space that allows for one-to-one confidential discussions.
- The manager and practitioners avail of many external supports. These include engagement with the County Childcare Committee. The lead practitioner has also completed the Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) programme and is striving to incorporate all she has learnt into small adaptations to the environment. The continued professional development of both practitioners is supported.
- Connections with primary schools have been established, particularly with the local rural school. The lead practitioner has met with the local school principal to share information on children’s learning dispositions with parental agreement.
- Transitions into the service are supported through open days for parents and for children. The lead practitioner is transparent with parents ensuring they are making a well-informed choice in placing the children in her service. This approach establishes strong, honest and open communication from the beginning.
- Practitioners meet formally to discuss practice and to complete planning which supports the children’s learning and development.
- Practitioners organise regular outings within the local community. Parents support these outings with many attending. Children spoke joyfully about a walk in the woods that was scheduled for the coming week.

**CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE**

The capacity of the service to continue to implement the actions advised above is excellent.
### 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>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of processes to support children’s learning and development</td>
<td>Excellent</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>Excellent</td>
</tr>
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### Language used in Early-Years Education-focused Inspection reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</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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APPENDIX

SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT
SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection report

We are currently taking steps to improve and implement more detailed medium term goals in our setting. We are working on a project to help children feel more connected to their local community.

Area 2  Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

We have installed a white board for parents to unite notes about their child and feel welcome in to the classroom. We have established an effective key worker approach and have implemented a weekly gathering of each group to help enrich our emergent curriculum. We are very happy and excited about making such improvements to our service. We have also introduced more visual cues for the children and a visual schedule.

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