An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna  
Department of Education and Skills  

**EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION**  

**REPORT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>Little Angels Montessori</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>Gowerhass</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kilrush</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>County Clare</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>09CE0038</td>
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Date of Inspection: 09-04-2019
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.
Date of inspection | 09-04-2019
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**Inspection activities undertaken** | **Observation of interactions during the pre-school session**
- Pre-inspection meeting with setting manager | **Post-inspection feedback meeting with setting manager**
- Interaction with children |  
- Review of relevant documents |  

**CONTEXT OF SETTING**

Little Angels Montessori is a private setting, located in a rural area outside Kilrush, County Clare. The owner/manager is the lead practitioner in the pre-school and is supported three days a week by a second practitioner. The setting provides a sessional pre-school for children participating in the first and second year of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the morning of inspection, both practitioners and thirteen children were present. The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the report; the setting chose to accept the report without response.

**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 practitioners nurture a welcoming atmosphere as the children and families arrive to the setting. They greet each child and exchange informal information with parents. Each child has individual space for their belongings and the practitioners support parents and children to settle in for the session.
- Free-play is central to the daily routine as the practitioners prompt and encourage children to interact with different materials in the learning environment. They respond well to the initiations of the children and make changes to the environment to suit play preferences. A visual representation of the routine would enhance independence and decision making.
- Transitions and care routines are flexible; the practitioners use songs during times of transition and sit with the children to engage in meaningful discussion during social mealtimes. The practitioners are respectful in their interactions which contribute to the development of supportive and affirming relationships.
- Some of the children’s artwork is displayed in the learning environment along with photographs of learning experiences in the setting. There is scope to better reflect the children’s sense of identity and context in the environment.
- Parents and families are invited in to share special skills with the children during the year. They attend seasonal celebrations in the setting and the practitioners organise a walk to a local greenhouse and an annual pre-school trip.

*Actions advised*

- It is advised that practitioners develop a visual daily routine in consultation with the children. This will promote regular, meaningful discussion about their choices and learning experiences throughout the day.
- It is advised that the practitioners review and develop the extent to which the children, their interests and the community are represented and valued within the learning environment. This can be achieved through the addition of meaningful visual displays, books and play props that depict each child’s individual context and local 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 good.
- The practitioners are in the process of developing a broad-based curriculum that is informed by Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. This curriculum is organised on a long, medium and short-term basis. It needs to be more consistently informed by the children’s developing emergent interests, skills and dispositions.
- The children’s learning and development is mainly monitored from a group perspective. The practitioners document anecdotal notes within a reflective diary. This is based on the events which occur each day and the materials needed for future learning experiences.
- Both the indoor and outdoor learning environments are well-maintained and inviting. The majority of materials and equipment indoors is located on shelving around the periphery of the room. A wider variety of natural, sensory rich materials is available outdoors to support exploratory learning.
- Learning through play and playful activity is organised and facilitated effectively. Structured learning activities are planned for the children to explore letters, shapes and numbers through worksheets and templates. There is scope to develop the learning environment to enhance the children’s explorations of literacy, numeracy and scientific concepts through play.
- The manager has completed the Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) training programme and suitably supports the inclusion of all children in the setting. The practitioners develop group experiences that suit the developmental needs of all children as a mixed age group.

Actions advised
- It is advised that practitioners integrate emerging interests, needs and capabilities into short-term planning for learning and the learning environment. The short-term planning template available in the Aistear Siolta Practice Guide will support this action.
- It is advised that more robust methods for observing the children’s individual learning progression be developed throughout the year. The Planning Pillar of the Aistear Siolta Practice Guide provides useful ideas and examples in this regard.
- It is advised that the practitioners review and develop the range of opportunities for learning through play. The play and environment pillar of the Aistear Siolta Practice Guide provides useful reflective prompts and examples and ideas for practice.

AREA 3
QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is good.
- The children are settled and engaged in their learning experiences. They enjoy coming together and interacting with their peers during play. They gravitate towards those children with similar interests; and positive friendships are forming in this way.
- A few children demonstrate good capacity to initiate and organise play scenarios with their peers. On the morning of inspection, a small group of children were observed discussing and collaborating over their play with dinosaurs. They then collectively decided to develop role-play situations in other areas of the room.
- The children use effective communication skills to describe, discuss and converse with their peers and practitioners. There is scope to enhance self-expression, mark-making and creativity in the various interest areas.
- The outdoor learning environment provides many opportunities for the children to actively explore and engage in physical expression. The children water the vegetables, use the sand area, play ball-games and discuss the on-site chickens in their coop. This develops their capacity to care for the natural environment.
They enjoy group story time and respond well to reflective questions about the characters and storylines. Their thought processes are stimulated by these books and stories. This practice could be further enhanced by allowing the children more autonomy to add individual thoughts and ideas to their own learning portfolios.

The children enjoy using the table-top play materials to create shapes and objects. They use the play-dough to make numbers and objects representing real-life materials. Greater emphasis on mark-making and symbolic representation would be beneficial.

**Actions advised**

- It is advised that practitioners develop the areas of interest within the learning environment to maximise the children's opportunities for purposeful mark-making during play. This can be achieved by adding open-ended materials that prompt symbolic mark-making during free-play.
- It is advised that practitioners develop the open-ended creative learning opportunities available for children to explore and investigate. Greater access to art and craft materials; and more natural and commercial open-ended resources would be helpful in this regard.
- It is advised that children be given more control over their individual learning portfolios. This will give them a greater sense of pride and ownership of their learning. Conversations about the portfolios will facilitate recall and reflection on their learning progression.

**AREA 4**

**QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- The manager is the lead practitioner and this year, she has been joined by a second part-time practitioner. The manager takes a leadership role in the day-to-day organisation of activities for the pre-school. As this is a newly established team, a review of the long-term plan would be helpful to further incorporate the principles of Aistear and Síolta into the curriculum as a whole.
- Planning and discussion between practitioners is completed informally. The daily reflective diary is used to share notes with each other and as a handover tool when the second practitioner is in the pre-school. At the time of inspection, the Aistear Síolta Practice Guide was not used for formal reviews or reflections.
- Both practitioners have engaged in continuous professional development opportunities. The manager has completed the LINC programme while the second practitioner is currently engaged in a level 7 upskilling programme.
- Parents are informed about the settings policies and procedures at enrolment. Regular letters are given to parents with updates on events and important information. Weekly and monthly plans are displayed for parents on a noticeboard. They are able to discuss their child's learning and development progression on request.
- Transitions into and out of the setting are catered for on an individual basis. The practitioners liaise with the parents to facilitate appropriate settling-in procedures to suit the needs of each child. As the children prepare for the significant transition to primary school, the practitioners talk to the children about going to school. The children attend different schools in the area and the practitioners discuss what it will be like when they visit for their open-morning with their parents.

**Actions advised**

- It is advised that practitioners review the curriculum as a whole in light of Aistear and Síolta. This will support the development of a more robust curriculum that reflects progression in learning across both pre-school years. The curriculum foundations pillar of the Aistear Síolta Practice Guide provides useful reflective reviews to support this action.
- It is advised that practitioners develop and embed formal reflective opportunities using the Aistear Síolta Practice Guide. This will facilitate the establishment of action plans for improvement throughout the year.
- It is advised that practitioners review and strengthen methods for sharing children’s learning throughout the year. The self-evaluation tool on building partnerships with parents in the Aistear Síolta Practice Guide provides useful guidance in this regard.
CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the setting to implement the actions advised above is good. The manager demonstrated commitment to the on-going improvement of the children's learning and development.
### 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>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>
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### Language used in Early Years Education Inspection reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<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>
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*Published November 2019*