## EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

### REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>Tír na nÓg Montessori School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>Copperfield House 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clermont</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Douglas Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cork City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>09CY0038</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Date of Inspection: 10-01-2020**
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 | 10-01-2020
--- | ---

Inspection activities undertaken | Observation of interactions during a number of sessions
• Meeting with setting manager | • Interaction with children
• Meeting with practitioners | • Review of relevant documents
• Observation of interactions during a number of sessions | • Feedback to setting manager and practitioners

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Tír na nÓg Montessori School AMI is a privately owned, urban preschool. Eleven practitioners provide early years education and care for ninety-eight children in total, during three morning sessions and two afternoon sessions. The inspection took place over the course of two days and all five sessions were observed. 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 very caring ethos is evident. The atmosphere is peaceful, warm and affirming. The practitioners show sensitivity and a positive regard for the children and their parents.
• The daily routine consists of a long indoor Montessori work time, during which free snack-time is facilitated. All rooms are fully equipped with high-quality Montessori materials. In some rooms a broad range of free play toys is freely available at all times. This good practice needs to be extended to all rooms. This time is followed by a short circle time, a short toy time and a short outdoor play time.
• Tidy-up time is announced ahead of time and the children engage eagerly in sorting, pairing, matching and organising the materials and resources. They also have special tasks, such as feeding the fish, which they are proud to carry out.
• It is evident that the children are supported very well to establish good habits for life, such as organising their own work and carrying it out autonomously from the beginning to the conclusion and tidy-up time. Recognition, appropriate praise and encouragement are a regular feature of the responses to the children.
• A small number of instances of unwanted behaviour were observed during the inspection. The setting has a well-developed positive behaviour policy and all practitioners are fully aware of it.
• The children’s sense of identity and belonging is nurtured well. Child-made family wall displays, family photo displays, photos above the coat hooks and some birthday displays are amongst the ways in which the children and their families are visually represented in the setting.

Actions advised
• A change of the daily routine is advised. In the interest of implementing an emergent curriculum and to enable the children to follow their intrinsic motivation, all free play toys need to be freely available to them at all times in all the rooms. The outdoor play time needs to be equal in length to the indoor work/play time. Once a revised daily routine is established, it needs to be displayed at child-height in picture sequence for the children to follow.
• The practitioners are advised to consistently implement problem-solving and conflict resolution strategies, which enable the children to become more self-efficient in this area.
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.
• A three-year cycle Montessori curriculum is documented and implemented. The curriculum is linked to Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. There is good evidence, that children’s interests are followed and extended during daily Montessori practice. There is good evidence that a Montessori curriculum is followed, however the practitioners are not fully familiar with the development of an emergent, enquiry-based curriculum.
• A variety of assessment approaches is used to gather information about the children’s learning and development. These include individual art collection folders, the Montessori record keeping journal, an academic diary, developmental checklists, and some anecdotal observations.
• Some good-quality interactions during work/play times indoors were observed during the inspection. During outdoor time the practitioners supervise; they converse with the children, but do not engage with them as play partners during this time.
• Play is recognised as a medium through which the children learn and develop. In some cases, the indoor environment affords a broad range of concurrent play opportunities, using Montessori materials and other resources and materials. The majority of practitioners use appropriate interaction strategies during the indoor work and play time to utilise teachable moments and co-construct knowledge with the children. Overall, child-initiated/led, practitioner-framed, active and interactive free play with an even broader range of free play equipment could be utilised more throughout as the main medium through which the children learn and develop.
• Very good opportunities are provided for autonomous mark-making, such as free drawing and painting, stencil and insets work and using scissors. The children are competent in strategically organising their painting activity; they put on their apron, peg up the paper, complete their painting and tidy-up everything when finished. Songs and stories are used at circle time and the children have access to high-quality books. There is some evidence of the use of didactic teaching methods to teach academic knowledge. The setting has an extensive library built up, which enables the children to explore topics of their interest autonomously.

Actions advised
• Information documented about children’s learning and development needs to reflect their achievements in a range of connected learning experiences, with due regard to their individual interests, needs and learning dispositions. Practitioners are advised to develop an emergent curriculum, based on assessment outcomes. The use of the ‘Planning and Assessing’ pillar of the online Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide is advised.
• The setting is advised to utilise the in-house expertise of some practitioners, to enable all of the practitioners to consistently implement appropriate interaction strategies to co-construct knowledge with the children during work and free-play times, both indoors and outside. Collaborative work with the ‘Interactions’ and the ‘Play’ pillars of the online Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide is advised.
• The setting is advised to work on raising the play value of the environments, to offer an even broader variety of play options. The ‘Learning Environment’ pillar of the Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide offers valuable information and self-evaluation tools in this area.
• There is room to extend activities such as collaboratively acting out songs, rhymes, whole-body movement games; and the interactive exploration of high-quality stories extended through role-play and puppet-shows, as a means of fostering the children’s language, literacy and numeracy skills.
AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is good.
- The majority of children are demonstrating enjoyment in their activities. They are motivated, interested and engaged, showing positive learning dispositions, such as initiative, self-reliance, resilience and persistence. In particular the afternoon groups consist of a very diverse cohort of children in terms of languages, cultures, age and ability. Several children were new in the class and therefore relationships and bonds were still forming.
- At times, the children explored and worked with the materials and resources provided in an in-depth manner and with great concentration. The self-correction within the Montessori material offers and supports the children’s autonomy when using the materials.
- During the inspection, the children and the practitioners engaged in some lovely discussions about their drawings and art work. The children showed pride in their work and used language competently to describe their intentions and ideas.
- The majority of children understand the rules and boundaries of acceptable behaviour. Some meaningful active and interactive play episodes were observed, where the children developed and refined their personal and social skills, such as self-regulating, problem-solving, co-operating and negotiating.
- There is scope to further develop the outdoor area to include more natural, manipulative, versatile materials and resources.
- The setting offers a movement/sports programme once a week.

Actions advised

- Given the particular context of the diverse group of children in relation to age, language, culture and ability, further support for language development and helping the children to form friendships and bonds, a relaxed, family-type, communal meal-time, conducive to small group conversation could be established. Developing an emergent curriculum and extending the play options within the environment will further provide stimuli to the children. This will also provide further opportunities for the children to develop and refine their personal and social skills.
- The practitioners are advised to recognise the outdoor space as a valuable teaching space, and to take steps to further develop and utilise it as another learning environment. In particular, it needs to be developed into a play space which offers natural, manipulative, versatile, sense-rich objects and materials.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- Some effective strategies for professional reflection and mentoring of staff are established. These include a formal whole-staff meeting at the beginning of the year; informal, regular group-internal meetings and two formal staff appraisal meetings per year. The outcomes of staff meetings are well discussed and all staff acknowledge the importance of documenting them, however they are currently not formally documented.
- There is an ethos of professionalism, teamwork, collaboration and partnership within the setting.
- It is evident that practitioners and management avail of some continuous professional development options, such as the Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years programme; courses on Inclusion and Equality; and some training on the implementation of Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. The new insights gained from these courses and any personal engagement with professional development options, need to be utilised more effectively throughout the setting.
- Effective two-way channels of communication between the setting and the parents are established. These include monthly newsletters, a parent information evening at the beginning of the year, formal parent-practitioner meetings twice a year, informal daily chats, a website and a social media page.
• Transitions into and from the setting are managed sensitively and effectively to ensure continuity of experiences and progression in learning.

**Actions advised**

• Management is advised to organise regular, formal staff meetings to enable the sharing of expertise; setting self-evaluation through collective review to further develop practice and procedures. The outcomes of these meetings need to be documented, so they can be shared, acted upon and reflected on.

• Management is advised to use the varied skill sets of staff more effectively. The practitioners are further advised to work with all the areas of the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide.*
### 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>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>
APPENDIX

SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection report

Management and staff at Tír na nÓg Montessori School are happy to receive and act upon any advice from the Department of Education and Skills.

In 2012 the management at Tír na nÓg put together a file matching the Síolta and Aistear Curriculum Framework with the Montessori Method of Education. This process, which has been documented comprehensively, is always available to staff.

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

Since the inspection on January 10th, 2020 Tír nÓg Montessori School has implemented the following:

1. The grassed area of the school garden has been refurbished.
2. We have extended the outdoor play time for all classes, which allows for even more social interaction and play between the staff and the children in the garden.
3. The outdoor area programme has been extended to include natural, versatile and sense rich objects and we have also developed an outdoor art area for the children to further explore their creativity. An outdoor water play area has also been installed.
4. We have extended our free play toys indoors and outdoors. These toys are available all day.
5. The daily routine is displayed in all classes at child height.
6. Large group and small group snack times are held every day.
7. Our musical movement and circle time programmes have also been extended to include more acting out of stories, songs and poems.
8. All staff meetings, both formal and informal are now documented.
9. Management and staff have adopted the Síolta and Aistear programme from the outset and we are happy to engage with the emergent enquiry-based curriculum and any other initiatives from the Department of Education and Skills. Staff freely discuss the above, so as to have shared learned experiences.