EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>Guardian Angels Montessori</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>Guardian Angels Pastoral Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Newtownpark Avenue</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Co. Dublin</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>09DR0078</td>
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Date of Inspection: 12-09-2019
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

Date of inspection 12-09-2019

Inspection activities undertaken

- Meeting with setting owner/manager
- Meeting with practitioners
- Observation of interactions during a session
- Interaction with children
- Review of relevant documents
- Feedback to setting owner/manager and practitioners

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Guardian Angels Montessori is a privately-owned setting. It was established twenty years ago and has been located in the current building since February 2019. The setting provides a sessional service using the Montessori approach to education with elements of play. The setting was inspected at the start of the school year. On the day of the inspection, eighteen children who were in their first and second years of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme were supported by the owner/manager and two practitioners. The owner and two practitioners attended the post-inspection feedback meeting. 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.
- There is a warm, welcoming atmosphere in this setting. Parents bring their children into the room and settle them at an activity before leaving. It is evident that practitioners know the children and their families well and time is taken to chat to them at arrival and collection times.
- A free-flow routine is in place and children are offered opportunities to be active decision makers; they choose the activity and the area in which they wish to play. Transitions for snack time and outdoor play are signalled by the practitioners reminding children to tidy up.
- Snack time is valued as a social occasion and the practitioners sit and chat to the children about their interests and their lives outside the pre-school.
- The children display very secure relationships with the practitioners and seek them out for comfort, guidance and support. In previous years, the setting had availed of a key-person approach; this approach is one in which the key person builds secure relationships with a small group of children. In addition, this assigned practitioner is responsible for recording information on her key group of children and sharing this with the children’s parents.
- The practitioners are sensitive to children’s needs, in particular those children who are new to the setting. The practitioners actively support them into the group by staying close to them and offering them the activities they enjoy. They promote positive behaviour by modelling calm tones and supporting children to negotiate their minor disagreements.
- The uniqueness of each child is reflected in the displays of their handprints and their art work. The children’s awareness of cultural diversity is reflected in the celebrations of different festivals, such as Chinese New Year, and the annual theme week when parents are invited to visit the setting in their national costumes and to bring the symbols of their countries.
- Parents visit the setting for the Christmas play and the annual outing. Parents, including a parent who helped with planting flowers in the outdoor area and a parent who is a dentist, have shared their work experiences and expertise.
- The children are learning about their local community and they have had visits from the local Garda. The owner has plans to invite the people who visit the pastoral centre, such as the yoga teacher, to come and visit the pre-school.
Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to develop a visual daily routine and to display it at child height. The addition of clear strategies to support the children’s movement from one activity to the next, such as the use of a bell, timer and songs, is also advised.
- The reintroduction of a key-person approach is advised. The identification of a designated person to work in small groups with a key group of children will strengthen the practitioners’ knowledge and understanding of children’s learning needs.

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.
- Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework is evident in the setting’s curriculum statement and in the long-term planning. Planning is based on seasonal topics and theme-based activities. The long-term planning is divided into monthly and weekly topics. In previous years, the setting included the children’s group interests, such as the group topic on dinosaurs, into plans. At the time of the inspection, the children’s individual emergent interests had yet to be incorporated into plans.
- The owner keeps a daily record of the children’s engagement in activities and undertakes regular observations, linked to Aistear, on the children’s learning. At the end of the year, an observation checklist that focuses on children’s physical, intellectual, language, emotional and social development is also used. The observations do not include the next steps planned for the children’s progression.
- Practitioners engage the children in positive and respectful interactions using calm, positive tones. They consistently use open-ended questions and prompts to support the children’s thinking, problem-solving and language skills.
- The bright, airy room provides a range of specific interest areas, such as a mark-making area and an area for Montessori materials. The Montessori materials are used purposefully and effectively by the practitioners. The room offers children opportunities to engage in Small World play, construction and imaginary play.
- A quiet book corner contains a large variety of books and children have access to a construction and small kitchen area. At the time of the inspection, the play resources did not provide children with a variety of sensory and play experiences.
- Children are provided with opportunities to explore the Sciences. They have previously engaged in experiments, such as dancing raisins, and they have made a tornado and volcano.
- Children access the outdoor area on a daily basis. There is potential to provide additional play experiences in the outdoors.
- Children’s emergent literacy and numeracy experiences are promoted through the use of everyday songs and activities. The Montessori materials are used effectively and there is occasional use of more formal literacy activities if children show an interest at the end of the pre-school year.

Actions advised

- To assist in incorporating children’s individual emerging interests in the planning process, the practitioners are advised to explore the resources, self-review templates and short-term planning templates available in the Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide.
- The practitioners are advised to adapt their current observation templates and to include the next steps for progression in children’s learning. The addition of the children’s learning dispositions is also advised. The use of a key person approach will support the recording of observations.
- To enhance the children’s play experiences indoors and outdoors, the practitioners are advised to make available sensory play materials, such as sand, water and painting. The ‘Creating and Using the Learning Environment’ document in the Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide will guide the extension of children’s play indoors and in the development of a play environment outdoors.
AREA 3
QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is very good.
- The children are enthusiastic, interested and very engaged in the play activities and explorations that they initiate and lead themselves, as well as in the adult-guided learning activities.
- The children who are there for a second year are very confident in making decisions about their learning experiences; children who have just started are developing a good sense of their own abilities and are learning to make choices independently.
- Each child has an individual workbook that includes photographs of their engagement in activities and samples of their art work.
- The children tidy away the activities they have completed and the majority of children take part in the tidy-up routines. A number of different approaches are effectively used to support children’s sense of well-being, their self-help skills and independence. These include the selection of two children to act as librarians when children are choosing books to bring home and the use of snack helpers.
- Children who have recently started in the setting were observed accessing their comfort toys when needed.
- Children are given the opportunity to bring a small toy cat from the pre-school home every weekend. The parents write down what happens over the weekend and at circle time each Monday the child discusses his/her adventures with the toy cat.
- The children are learning to play co-operatively. Children who are there for a second year have made strong friendships and on several occasions were observed comforting children who were new to the setting.
- The children are developing a positive sense of self and are eager and confident to converse and engage with visitors. They are developing an awareness of their connection to the group and their identity as members of a family. A friendship tree and the development of a family wall with photographs of the children and family members promote children’s sense of identity and belonging.
- Children have access to free mark-making, gluing and sticking activities. Adult-planned art and craft activities, linked to themes, are evident in examples of previous workbooks and on the walls.

Action advised
- To further develop children’s sense of identity and belonging and their uniqueness, practitioners are advised to reduce the use of templates during creative activities and to provide more open-ended experiences that focus on process art rather than a product. In addition, the regular use of small group activities led by the key practitioner will encourage children’s concentration and engagement levels and support differentiation in line with their ages and abilities.

AREA 4
QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- The practitioners chat informally every day and discuss their plans and upcoming events.
- The practitioners have worked together for a number of years and there is a strong sense of team work and collaboration. There is equal sharing of the leadership role. For example, one practitioner led the play activity outdoors and another practitioner led the storytelling activity.
- The owner accesses support and information from the local childcare committee.
- The practitioners have completed training in First Aid. The owner has completed training on Inclusion and Diversity training and as part of this training had availed of the self-evaluation templates in the Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide. One of the practitioners and the owner have recently commenced the Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years (LINC) programme.
- There is an open-door policy and practitioners share information on the children’s learning with parents informally at arrival and collection times. At the start of the year, a digital copy of the setting’s policies and procedures and a parents’ handbook are sent to parents. A newsletter is also sent to parents each month. The owner keeps in regular contact with all parents by telephone, especially parents who do not drop off and collect their children.
• At the start of the year, reduced hours are provided to support children to settle and parents are invited to stay if they wish during the initial days.
• The practitioners use books and discussions when preparing children for their move to primary school. The setting has not yet made formal links with the local adjacent primary school.

Actions advised
• It is advised that regular formal staff meetings are introduced in order to undertake planning for children’s learning and to plan for upcoming events and topics. As part of this process, it is advised that the decisions and agreed actions of these meetings are documented.
• The practitioners are advised to avail of the self-evaluation templates in the Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide to support them in their reviews of their professional practice.
• The practitioners are advised to develop a policy and procedures to support children’s transition from pre-school to primary school. The introduction of the Mo Scéal transition document and the building of links with local primary schools will support the practitioners in this regard.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE
The owner and the two practitioners attended the post-inspection feedback and actively engaged in the co-professional dialogue that occurred. The capacity of the setting to implement the actions advised above is very good.
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>
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<td>Good</td>
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<td>Good</td>
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</tbody>
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Language used in Early-Years Education Inspection reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Provision that is excellent is exemplary in meeting the needs of children.</th>
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<tbody>
<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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