## EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

### REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>Usher Montessori Pre-school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>87 Ballyroan Crescent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rathfarnham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dublin 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>09DS0015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Date of Inspection: 05-12-2018
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: 05-12-2018

Inspection activities undertaken
- Meeting with setting owner and practitioner
- Observation of interactions during a number of sessions
- Interaction with children
- Review of relevant documents
- Feedback to setting owner and practitioner

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Usher Montessori Pre-school is a privately-owned sessional setting. It was established in 2005 and is located in a residential area in Dublin suburb. The setting delivers a morning pre-school session for children enrolled on the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, fourteen children, the owner/practitioner and a practitioner were in attendance. 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 excellent.
- There is an exceptionally warm and welcoming atmosphere in the setting. On arrival, the children and parents are greeted in a very caring, friendly and upbeat manner. The parents chat openly and in a relaxed manner with the practitioners.
- The relationships between the practitioners and the children are highly commended. The practitioners know the children well and are attentive to their individual needs. Children respond to practitioners positively and engage well with each other.
- The flexible daily routine is documented and displayed for the children at their eye level. It encourages the children to be active in their learning. Ample time is given for the children to engage in free-play activities.
- The children demonstrate good independent skills. They actively lead and plan activities and they independently use the toilet facilities and take care of their own personal care needs. They also willingly help hand out bags at lunchtime.
- During the inspection, transitions between activities were smooth and calm. With the involvement of the children, an advance warning is given using a visual sign to bring the children’s attention to an impending change of activity. Timers and verbal instruction are also used to encourage the children to tidy up.
- Praise, recognition and encouragement of the children's positive engagement in activities are effectively used by the practitioners to promote positive behaviour and self-resilience.
- In order to nurture the children's sense of identity, the uniqueness of each child is represented in the environment, through displayed photographs, a family gallery, flags, a birthday train and samples of their art work. At the beginning of the inspection, the children were each given a name tag as a means of introducing themselves.
- The practitioners are successful in providing opportunities to promote family and community involvement within the setting. Parents are invited to attend events, discuss their cultures and share their talents. For example, a parent visited and demonstrated her cake icing skills. Links with the community include visits from people working in the locality, such as the librarian, the dentist and lollipop person. Photographs of these visits are displayed for the children.
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 very good.
- *Aistear; the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and aspects of the Montessori approach are used to inform the play-based curriculum implemented in this setting.
- The practitioners organise curriculum planning on long-term, medium term and short-term bases. Plans reflect the setting’s mission statement and ethos, the daily routine and themed events. The practitioners report that the daily planned activities change to incorporate the children’s emergent interests.
- Information on the children’s learning and development is recorded using observation learning records, Montessori checklists and anecdotal notes, and through the compilation of individual children’s learning journal. Learning journals are freely available to the children and are regularly shared with parents. Parents have contributed to information contained in the observation learning records and siblings have also added items to the scrapbooks.
- High quality interactions are apparent. The practitioners engage with children at their physical level during most activities and convey messages in a very respectful manner. For example, a practitioner asked a child if she could interrupt her play before asking a question.
- The children are viewed as capable and competent learners. Play is central to the children’s learning. There is a good balance achieved between adult-led and child-initiated activities. The adult-led art activity was offered as a free choice activity.
- The practitioners effectively scaffold and extend learning. The use of many open-ended questions to help children to explore concepts is commended. For example, when a child drew an aeroplane, questions such as ‘Where is the aeroplane going?’ ‘What would you see in the sky?’ were used to extend the child’s thinking.
- The bright indoor environment is divided into interest areas and is well maintained. The interest areas include provision for creative, sensory, gross motor, table-top, mark making, construction, socio-dramatic and Montessori activities. The variety of resources available are age-appropriate and easily accessible for all children. The owner places great emphasis on outdoor play and provides the children with regular access to the outdoor space where they have many opportunities to engage with the natural environment. On the day of the inspection, the children did not go out as not all children had suitable outdoor winter clothing.
- The practitioners foster the children’s emergent language, literacy and numeracy skills in a highly effective manner. This is achieved through the language-rich environment, high quality books, free access to mark-making equipment in a purposefully designed area, and through the use of songs and rhymes and a dedicated story time. The practitioners’ promotion of meaningful mathematical concepts and language is commended. For example, the practitioner used a plate to describe a circle and a cut sandwich to demonstrate a triangle.

*Actions advised*

- The practitioners are advised to ensure that the next steps for the children’s individual learning and their emergent interests are made evident in short-term plans.
- In supporting children’s pretend and outdoor play, the practitioners are advised to actively engage with the children as play partners in pretend-play activities to a greater degree.

To ensure that the children have daily access to the outdoor area, it is advised that the setting’s outdoor policy be updated to include reference to the provision of suitable outdoor clothing to enable all children to play outside.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children learning experiences and achievements is very good.
- The children demonstrate enjoyment and happiness during the session. They present as motivated and engaged and most display highly developed concentration skills.
- The children demonstrate the ability to actively choose, plan and lead learning. They also display highly developed imaginative skills as they engage in playful activities. For example, while playing in the house area the children rang the doctor for the sick baby, while others helped the doll to crawl.
The children demonstrate a good awareness of themselves and others. They were happy to discuss family photographs and other topics, such as birthday parties and moving house.

The children demonstrate highly developed self-regulation, social and communication skills. They are happy to take on helper roles, and can make requests and seek help when needed. Peer interactions are very positive. Most children displayed significant strengths in their abilities to take turns and share and the practitioners are highly effective in supporting the children in this regard. For example, a small disagreement over cars was effectively solved when the practitioner sat with the children, commented on the number of available cars and asked the child if there were 'enough for two friends to play together', to which the child replied 'Yes'.

The children regularly share their learning experiences and express themselves through creative pretend and mark-making activities. Before lunch, as they waited for all children to wash their hands, some of the children discussed activities they were involved in throughout the morning.

The children display confidence in their fine motor and creative abilities. The confidently made water guns from junk art materials, built towers from blocks and used real tools to unscrew screws from a piece of wood.

Overall, the children’s emergent literacy and numeracy skills are developing well. They freely chose books, used toy catalogues to discuss what toys they would like and regularly used mark-making materials, such as pencils and copybooks for free mark making.

Action advised

To further support the children to consolidate their new and previous learning and to share experiences with others, the practitioners are advised to give the children more regular opportunities to reflect on their learning in small groups.

AREA 4
QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is excellent.
- Regular daily chats and monthly meetings of practitioners are used as opportunities to reflect on, plan and discuss achievements, issues and concerns. Self-evaluations are also carried out using the Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide.
- A professional atmosphere is evident in the setting. There is clarity around roles and responsibilities. The owner demonstrates good leadership skills and has worked alongside the practitioner for many years.
- A key worker system is in place. The practitioners have responsibility for observing and documenting children’s learning. Responsibilities for leading learning are appropriately shared between both practitioners as they mix with children from all groups; both practitioners know the children well.
- The setting avails of external support, advice and training from the local county childcare committee, Early Childhood Ireland and St Nicolas Montessori and has linked with international early years bodies for information. The owner informally also networks with other early years providers.
- The owner and practitioner demonstrate ongoing commitment to continuing professional development and the owner has recently participated in Aistear, Siolta implementation training.
- There are highly effective approaches to communication with parents. These include an open door policy, a parents’ information evening, informal daily chats, a parents’ handbook and notice board and a monthly newsletter. Information on policies, procedures and children’s learning is also regularly shared.
- A settling-in policy has been developed to aid the children’s transition from home to the setting. Visits to the setting prior to children starting are facilitated. ‘All about me’ information is gathered and a phased settling-in approach is implemented where parents are welcome to stay with their children until they are fully settled.
- Transition activities and some links with the local primary school have been established to prepare for the children’s move to school. These include, displaying photographs of schools in the room, discussion, stories and creative activities along with encouraging parents to share children’s scrapbooks with the school.
CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The owner/practitioner and practitioner engaged in very open, informative and professional dialogue during the feedback meeting. The capacity of the setting to implement the actions advised above is excellent.

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>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of processes to support children’s learning and development</td>
<td>Very Good</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>
</tbody>
</table>

Language used in Early-Years Education Inspection reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Level</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>

Published September 2019
APPENDIX

SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT
SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection report

- We wish to thank you for inspecting our service.
- We aim for high quality and excellence in our service we have addressed the actions advised.

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

1. To ensure the next steps in children’s individual learning and emergent interests are made evident in short-term plans, these will be taken from our daily observations of all our children, reflected on at the end of each week and made evident in our short-term weekly activity sheet. We have reflected on Aistear/Siolta and with Professional Pedagogy for Early Childhood Education, a publication from Donegal County Childcare Committee.

2. Outdoor and indoor play are paramount to children’s learning and development. We understand that it is essential to ensure that the child’s play is self-chosen, self-directed and focuses on their individual interests. We understand our role as a partner in play and ensuring that each child owns their play.

3. We understand and advocate that playing in an outdoor environment has huge benefits for young children’s learning and development. Our service has a large garden comprising of bark, grass and cemented areas surrounded by trees. I introduced a tracksuit when I opened in 2005 to support children’s independence and particularly for outdoor and indoor messy play.

Our outdoor area involves:

- pretend play, messy play/mud kitchen being noisy, digging/planting, lifting, carrying, having fun and enjoyment, building, investigating, running, jumping, co-operating, sand, water play, art, reading corner, house play.
- I have reflected on my Outdoor Policy and Enrolment Policy and have updated them to ensure wellington boots and suitable outdoor clothing are provided for children to play outdoors on a daily basis.