

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	Drysdale Montessori School
Setting Address	8 Drysdale Close Firhouse Road West Dublin 24
DCYA number	09DS0080

Date of Inspection: 12-12-2018



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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	
Inspection activities undertaken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of relevant documents • Feedback to the owner and practitioners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with the owner and two practitioners • Observation of interactions during a number of sessions • Interaction with children • Review of educational resources and facilities 	

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Drysdale Montessori School, a private setting, was established in 2002. It is located in a residential estate in Dublin and it provides a morning pre-school play-based learning programme for children enrolled in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. During the inspection seventeen children, the owner/practitioner and two practitioners 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 very good.
- A positive and caring atmosphere is evident in the setting. On arrival, parents and children are warmly welcomed and greeted in a friendly and upbeat manner. Information is exchanged with parents and careers in a relaxed and open manner.
- Relationships between children and the practitioners are gentle and respectful. The practitioners demonstrate positive and sensitive regard for the children in their care and know all the children well. A key worker system is in operation in the setting.
- The current daily routine provides opportunities for the children to actively engage in a balance of free-play and adult-directed activities. The children move freely within the environment and are encouraged to choose activities according to their interests. On the day of inspection, it was noted that the daily changes to the setting's routine resulted in some uncertainty among a small number of the children. In addition, the group size for circle-time activities was too big and it was difficult to hold all the children's attention.
- Advance warning is given to bring the children's attention to an impending change of an activity. A bell, song, verbal instruction and praise and encouragement are all used to support the children's transitioning between activities. During the inspection, some children seemed unaware of the daily sequence of events and the number of transitions throughout the session resulted in a few children becoming a little distracted.
- Snack time is a social occasion and is used as an opportunity to promote healthy eating. Some children help prepare for snack and pass out cups and plates to their peers. During snack time the practitioners assist children with their lunches, before they sit and openly engage in conversation with the children.
- The uniqueness of each child is represented in the many discussions linked to individual children and their families. In the environment there are photographs, a birthday chart, samples of each child's art work and a hand print friendship tree; mirrors are also effectively used to bring children's attention to their own facial features.
- The setting provides opportunities for families and community members to come together. For example, parents attend graduation and Christmas events. People working in the locality, such as the local dentist, lollipop lady and carpenter, visit the setting and share their cultural and work experiences and knowledge with the children. The children also go on some local walks and attend the local craft fair.

Actions advised

- To support the children's understanding and expectations of the daily routine and to ease transitions between activities, the practitioners are advised to review the current routine. This is with a view to developing a routine that outlines the main sequence of events and reducing the number of daily transitions. It is also advised that the routine be documented and visually displayed at the children's height.
- To support the development of the children's attention levels, the practitioners are advised to divide the children into smaller cluster groups for circle time and group activities using the established key worker groups.

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.
- Provision for the children's learning is informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. The practitioners use the Montessori Method, combined with a play-based approach to inform the curriculum.
- The practitioner regularly engage in planning for the children's learning. Long-term, medium-term and short-term planning is in place. Plans incorporate themed activities based around Montessori work, seasonal events, children's interests and some of the parents' ideas. The promotion of children's formal letter and number formation are also included in planning. Individual learning plans are completed for children four times a year.
- Information on the children's learning and development is recorded using Montessori checklists, anecdotal notes, observations, as well as group and individual learning journals. At the time of inspection, written observations did not provide sufficient detail on children's interests to effectively inform planning for the next steps in children's learning. The information documented in the group learning journal provided detail on a broad range of the children's learning experiences; the information on each child's learning experiences and interests in his/her individual learning journal was limited. Currently, the children are not involved in the completion of their own journals.
- The learning environment is safe, bright, and well maintained. It consists of the pre-school room and outdoor play space. Both indoor and outdoor environments are used effectively to promote the children's physical, sensory, creative, pretend, gross motor and social skills. The environments are generally well-resourced and materials are freely available to the children; there is scope to develop the creative area.
- Interactions between the practitioners and the children are positive and reciprocal. The practitioners enthusiastically engage with children at their physical level.
- The practitioners offer ongoing support to the children as they actively listen and respond to the children. They use soft tones and make good eye contact to openly chat with the children and to convey messages in a respectful manner. Many discussions between the children and the practitioners were observed. During these discussions there were some instances of the practitioners' extending the children's ideas and interests through the use of strategies, such as open-ended questions. There were very few opportunities for the children to discuss their learning within a group context.
- Children are regarded as competent, confident and active learners. The practitioners view play as central to children's learning and development and from time-to-time they interact with children as play partners. For example, during the inspection the children played in the shop and sold ice-cream to one practitioner, while another practitioner was served by the chef in the café.
- The practitioners are effective in fostering the children's emergent language, numeracy and literacy skills through the print-rich environment, high quality books and mark-making equipment, and through the modelling of language and the effective use of songs, and rhymes.
- The setting adopts an inclusive approach to promoting all children's participation. This includes linking with parents and support agencies. The practitioners are currently participating in the Demonstration Project on Early Years Speech and Language Therapy Support.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to observe and record additional information on the children's emerging interests, their strengths and their approaches to engaging in activities. Such information can then be used to inform planning for the next steps in children's learning. It is further advised that the practitioners, in collaboration with the children, record more detailed information on the children's learning, their achievements and interests in each child's individual learning journal.
- In order to further support the children to explore and experiment with a range of creative materials, it is advised that resources, such as natural, recycled and art materials, be made freely available to the children.
- The practitioners are advised to further extend the children's learning and thinking skills through the use of more open-ended questioning during discussions. It is also advised that they encourage children to reflect on and share their learning with others throughout free-play activities and in small groups.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is very good.
- Throughout the session, the children demonstrate enjoyment in their learning and appear comfortable and secure in their environment.
- Most of the children display high levels of engagement and concentration skills as they participate in the various learning tasks and experiences.
- The children display natural curiosity and the capacity to make decisions as they initiate and lead their own learning. For example, some children had a tea party, while others became builders and chiefs. The children also choose where they want to sit and which materials they wish to use.
- The children are developing appropriate social skills. Many friendships were observed; the children chose who they wished to play with and worked in groups, pairs and alone. The majority of children displayed the ability to effectively share and turn take. A small number of children demonstrated dependence on the use of a timer to encourage others to share with them; they showed the timer to their peers and informed them that they had completed five minutes at the activity and that they now needed to share.
- For the most part, the children demonstrate positive behaviour. The self-regulation skills of a small number of children are evolving and they found it a little difficult to express their opinions and feelings as small disagreements arose. During the inspection it was noted that, on occasion, more than one practitioner dealt with the same minor conflicts that arose between the children.
- The children demonstrate very good language and communication skills. They confidently initiate conversations, ask questions and on a small number of occasions they share information with others about their learning.
- The children's fine and gross motor skills are developing well. This is evident in their effective use of table-top and mark-making equipment and their engagement with the outdoor equipment.
- The children demonstrate good independent, personal and hygiene skills; they wash their hands and put on and take off their coats independently.
- The children demonstrate a good awareness of self and others. During the inspection, they made frequent references to family, shared news from home and used a mirror to identify themselves. Some children inquisitively enquire about people missing from the group.

Action advised

- Practitioners are advised to place a greater focus on promoting the children's use of conflict resolution strategies, their self-regulation skills and their abilities to express their opinions and feelings when small disagreements arise. It is further advised that generally one practitioner at a time is sufficient to deal with any minor issues that may arise.
- The practitioners are advised to strengthen the children's negotiation skills. In so doing, consideration should be given to the development of the children's abilities to share without the use of the timer.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is excellent.
- A professional ethos with positive and very respectful teamwork are evident in the setting. The practitioners and owner know each other well and are highly supportive of each other.
- The ongoing commitment of the owner and the practitioners to ensuring a high quality service is provided for the children is clearly evident. The owner leads by example as she works alongside the participants. There is clarity around the roles and responsibilities and each practitioner has the opportunity to lead learning throughout the day.
- Monthly meetings with a set agenda are used as opportunities to reflect on, plan and discuss the curriculum, children, issues and concerns. Reflections on practice and self-reviews are carried out using the *Aistear, Sólta Practice Guide*.
- The owner provides ongoing support to practitioners to ensure they are relaxed and content in their roles and provides informal and formal supervision as required.
- The setting has established links with the local childcare committee, Montessori Ireland, St Nicolas Montessori and other national and private early years consultants. The owner networks with other early years providers for support and advice.
- The practitioners demonstrate ongoing commitment to continuing professional development; they attend courses provided by external providers and in-house Montessori training provided by the owner.
- The setting has developed detailed policy and procedures. These are shared with parents through a parents' handbook. The setting has an open-door policy and parents are welcome to visit at any time. Parents are formally and informally kept informed of their child's progress through parent meetings and verbal feedback at arrival and collection times. General information is shared with parents through newsletters, the notice board and regular notes.
- A commendable transition policy has been developed to aid the children's transition from home to the setting and from the setting to primary school. Information is sought from parents about their children's interests, likes and needs prior to the children starting in the setting. Parents and children are invited to visit to the setting before the children start and a home visit is also offered. An information pack is shared with parents; it contains information on the setting, photographs, a story book and information on play and the Montessori Method.
- As the children prepare to move to primary school, links with the school are made. These include meetings with the school principal, children's visits to the school yard and the sharing of uniforms and photos of the classes with the children.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The owner and practitioners attended the post-inspection feedback meeting and actively participated in professional dialogue. The capacity of the setting to implement the actions advised above is excellent.

Summary of Overall Inspection

Area	Quality Level
Quality of context to support children's learning and development	Very Good
Quality of processes to support children's learning and development	Good
Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements	Very Good
Quality of management and leadership for learning	Excellent

Language used in Early-Years Education-focused Inspection reports

Excellent	Provision that is excellent is exemplary in meeting the needs of children.
Very good	Provision that is very good is highly effective in meeting the needs of children.
Good	Provision that is good is effective in meeting the needs of children but with some aspects to be developed.
Fair	Provision that is fair requires practice to be improved to meet the needs of children.
Poor	Provision that is poor is inadequate and requires significant improvement to meet the needs of children.

APPENDIX

SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

- Our setting provides morning Montessori and play based learning. In addition to free play areas in our outdoor class room, free play activities in large and small groups are encouraged inside. We have a home corner, a construction area, a dress up area and a library.
- We found the inspection and the report useful in supporting our practice and have made changes as suggested during the inspection.

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

Area1

- Following consultation and collaboration with the staff and the children, a child appropriate visual routine schedule outlining sequences of events has been implemented within the setting. It is positioned at the children's eye level. This implementation is working well.
- Our key workers have adopted smaller groups for developing children's attention levels.

Area 2

- Children's emergent interests, strengths, weakness and approaches are now recorded within our curriculum books for planning, in addition to recording this information within their learning journals.
- We have joined Re-Create which gives us ample access to natural, junk and art material for development of exploring and thinking.
- Although open-ended questions were only seen on some occasions during the inspection, we widely use these during discussing with the children. As this was our first DES inspection staff were very nervous.

Area 3

- Though our timer is used as a means to support some children's engagement in activities, since the inspection we have reduced its use.
- Within our setting we use the Highscope conflict resolution method, this is displayed and actively used with the children.
- Through collaboration and consultation at our staff meetings, it was agreed that it is sufficient for one practitioner at a time to deal with minor conflicts between children.