EARLY YEARS EDUCATION - FOCUSED INSPECTION

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Name</th>
<th>Orlagh Park House</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service Address</td>
<td>Unit 2 Orlagh Park Shopping Centre, Orlagh Grove, Dublin 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>09DS0224</td>
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</tbody>
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Date of Inspection: 22-02-2018
WHAT IS AN EARLY YEARS EDUCATION-FOCUSED INSPECTION?

The Early Years Education-focused Inspection (EYEI) model is used to provide evaluative information, advice and support in relation to education provision in a pre-school service 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 service.

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 service’s provision in each area.
Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of inspection</th>
<th>22-02-2018</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inspection activities undertaken</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Meeting with service owner and manager</td>
<td>• Interaction with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meeting with practitioners</td>
<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Observation of activities during pre-school session</td>
<td>• Post-inspection feedback meeting with the service owner, manager and lead practitioner</td>
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**CONTEXT OF SERVICE**

Orlagh Park House is a privately-owned full day care service. The service was set up twenty-four years ago and is located in a shopping centre in Dublin 16. The pre-school uses a Montessori approach in its learning programme. The room is divided onto two areas; the senior section contains the Montessori materials and the junior section includes play resources. On the day of the inspection, the lead practitioner, two assistant practitioners and twenty children were present. One of the owners, one of the managers and the lead practitioner in the pre-school room attended the post-inspection feedback meeting. The setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised in this report, and the response submitted on behalf of the setting can 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.
- The practitioners have developed positive, respectful relationships with the children’s parents and extended family members. Time is taken to chat to them at arrival and collection times and to share information on the children’s learning and upcoming events.
- A visual daily routine is displayed in each area of the room and is visible to the children. Transitions are signalled by the lead practitioner using a bell to signal upcoming changes and by moving around the groups to remind them it is time to start tidying-up.
- As children arrive into the room, they move to their group, junior or senior Montessori and select their activity and friends they wish to play with. On the day of the inspection, children stayed on their assigned area. The children come together in a large group for circle time, musical movement and for outdoor play.
- Snack time is valued as a social occasion and the practitioners sit and chat with the children about their lives outside the pre-school.
- Secure and supportive relationships are fostered between the practitioners and the children. They offer the children praise and encouragement using positive feedback that support the children to stay motivated and on task. Practitioners were observed checking in with children who were playing independently, in pairs or in small groups to see if they needed any help.
- The service operates a key person approach where the practitioner is responsible for taking the learning observations for his/her dedicated group of children. The list of the key person and her children is displayed on the wall. In this service the key person in the junior area of the room undertakes observations on the children in her group and the lead practitioner undertakes observations of the children in the senior area.
- The practitioners use calm positive tones when chatting to the children. The lead practitioner encourages children to be kind to each other and supports them to negotiate by giving them words to handle their disagreements.
- The uniqueness of the children is reflected in their photographs on their coat hooks and the individual class photographs. A number of children attending the service come from diverse cultural backgrounds. The variety of cultural diversity within the service was not visually reflected in the displays and resources at the time of the inspection.
• Parents enjoy regular opportunities to visit the service during the year and in particular for the Christmas party and the end-of-year graduation.

**Actions advised**

• Practitioners are advised to create regular opportunities within the daily sequence of activities for the children in the senior room to access the resources in the junior area and for the children in the junior area to experience the materials in the senior area. This will offer children a greater variety of learning experiences.

• It is advised that the practitioners reflect the diversity of the children and their families attending the service in the physical environment. This could be done by using the map of the world to show the different flags, depicting the home language of the children and discussing family celebrations. This will support the children’s awareness of family diversity and assist in the development of a more inclusive environment.

**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 Montessori curriculum is in place and its implementation is supported by a resource file which is used by the lead practitioner. This contains a list of seasonal themes, topics and associated activities. The lead practitioner undertakes monthly curriculum planning and this is divided into weekly topics. At the time of the inspection, planning in the service was not underpinned by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and does not refer to children’s individual emergent interests.

• A large ‘floor book’ is compiled by the lead practitioner. This includes photographs of the children and descriptions of their learning while engaged in the different themes.

• Each child has an individual scrapbook that includes samples of the children’s art work and template-based activities and photographs of the children and this is sent home once a term.

• Practitioners record children’s learning once a month using an observation template. This is shared with parents at the end of each term and their comments are invited. These records do not identify the steps to support children’s progression. The children’s use of the Montessori materials within the senior Montessori section is recorded on a monthly basis.

• Practitioners use positive respectful interactions with the children. On the day of the inspection, the practitioners used a range of approaches to engage the children’s thinking and problem-solving skills, including open-ended questions and prompts.

• The indoor senior area is equipped with a range of resources to support the specific Montessori areas such as the practical life activities, language, mathematical and sensorial learning. The junior area has a variety of table-top activities, construction materials and a good selection of books in the cosy book area. There are opportunities for the children to experience socio-dramatic play through the provision of a shop area with shopping baskets and cash registers and dressing-up clothes.

• Children access the outdoor area on a daily basis and a variety of equipment such as a slide, a basketball hoop, seesaw, and large chalk board. Children were observed using the water tray to play a fishing game. Children’s emergent literacy and numeracy are developed through the use of the Montessori materials such as the spindle rods, sandpaper letters and numbers. The lead practitioner introduces all children to phonics during circle time, although many children are not yet ready for this formal type of activity. The lead practitioner encourages the use of dot-to-dot activities and workbooks with the children who are moving to primary school to reinforce their practise of the pre-writing skills. Providing children with opportunities engage in creative activities that support self-expression and imagination is developmentally more suited to this age group.

• All children’s have access to art and mark-making materials through the availability of pencils, crayons and paper. On the day of the inspection, it was noted that the children are provided with some opportunities to engage in free drawing and that an undue emphasis is placed on colouring-in and template-based activities. These and some examples of children’s free drawings are displayed throughout the room and the practitioners have recorded the children’s comments.
**Actions advised**

- Practitioners are advised to develop long-term, medium-term and short-term plans that are underpinned by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. Including the children’s individual emergent interests is advised.
- Practitioners are advised to record children’s learning regularly by ensuring a cycle of planning, and assessing for learning is introduced, and by identifying the next steps for progression in their learning.
- It is advised that the practitioners reduce the emphasis on the use of workbooks and template-based activities to teach children letters, shapes and numbers. A greater emphasis on providing more open-ended experiences and opportunities for purposeful learning through open-ended process art and mark-making activities will promote children’s creativity and self-expression.

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**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 demonstrate enjoyment and engagement in their activities. The positive learning dispositions, such as confidence and perseverance shown by many children help them to achieve mastery and success within their learning experiences. A small number of children struggled to pay attention during the large-group activity on letters and numbers and during story time. This resulted in them becoming distracted and disengaged.
- The practitioners are attentive to children’s needs and interests. For example, a few children did not want to take part in the playdough activity and the practitioner offered them the Lego instead.
- The children play cooperatively together in pairs and in small groups and they are learning to negotiate sharing and turn-taking. For example, on the day of the inspection, the children who were playing the Bingo game discussed who would spin the wheel and talked about what they have left to cover.
- Children take part in the tidy-up routines, put away the activities they have completed and push their chairs back in when finished.
- Children are aware of their changing abilities and they discuss their newly gained skills such as how they can now pour from one jug to the other and can put on their coat on their own.
- The children show great enjoyment in the musical movement activity and laughter is heard as they practice the different movements.
- A number of children use mathematical language confidently. They count the spindles in the box, using comments such as, ‘There’s only one there’ and identify how many can play at the fishing game. They compare sizes during block play using terms such as bigger, smaller and wider.
- The children are developing an awareness of their identity as members of families and this is demonstrated in the large family wall that contains photographs of family members.
- Children’s sense of identity and belonging is reflected in their photographs on the child-helper display. A small number of jobs are included on the child-helper display, for example, a line leader for going outdoors and coming back in is selected each day
- Children are developing an awareness of the natural environment through the large nature table. Dried leaves and living plants and a magnifying glass supports children to explore and investigate the selection of shells, stones. The children demonstrate great enthusiasm about the daffodils which they have recently planted outdoors.

**Actions advised**

- It is advised that practitioners extend the child-helper routine in order to support children’s independence and self-help skills. This could be achieved by adding further jobs to the list such as snack helper, giving out the placemats, and pouring drinks. These will provide valuable learning experiences for them and create a sense of connection and belonging to the group.
- The practitioners are advised to reduce the length of time allocated to large-group activities. The children will benefit from not having to sit for long periods of time and also from further differentiation of the learning experiences within the circle time. This will enhance children’s engagement in activities which they enjoy and will allow them to experience success and a sense of achievement.
ARE A 4
QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- The lead practitioner talks to the assistant practitioner s informally at the end of each week about the impact of the curricular activities on children’s learning. They discuss the programme for the week ahead and any issues arising.
- The lead practitioner and one of the assistant practitioners have worked together for a number of years and with the new assistant practitioner there is a strong sense of teamwork and partnership in place.
- The lead practitioner provides a good rol e model for the staff and shows clarity around her roles and responsibilities. The two assistant practitioners have recently completed a course leading to the FETAC 5 qualification in Early Childhood and the lead practitioner has begun training in the Leadership for Inclusion in Early Years (LINC) Programme.
- In this service, two managers share the management role. They provide informal support and supervision to the practitioners and formal appraisals are offered to practitioners every six weeks. Any issues are shared with the owners of the service.
- The managers access support, advice and information from Early Childhood Ireland and the local Childcare Committee.
- The service gives parents an information booklet about the service at the start of the year and a newsletter is sent at the end of each month with details of topics covered with the children. A parents’ notice board is at the entrance to the pre-school room and shows photographs of the children engaged in activities and information about the service’s policies. The lead practitioner chats informally to parents on their children’s learning and achievements.
- A staggered settling-in system of reduced hours is offered to parents and children at the start of the year. Parents are encouraged to stay with their child until he/she is settled.
- The practitioners talk to the children about their move to primary school. Last year, the local primary school invited the children and the practitioners to visit the school in advance of starting. The practitioners have not developed any formal links with the primary schools in the area but hope to be invited back to the primary school again.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the service introduce formal staff meetings to review their procedures and practice and to discuss and record planning as a team for the month ahead. The self-evaluation tools and templates in the Aiste ar Siolta Practice Guide will help in this approach.
- Practitioners are advised to develop the existing parents’ handbook to provide information on Aiste ar. This will assist parents in understanding the curriculum and learning programme in place in the service.
- The development of approaches to support the children’s move to primary school is advised. This could be achieved by using a transition box that includes photographs of the local schools, samples of school uniforms, and by building relationships with the local schools.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the service to continue to implement the actions advised above is good. One of the owners, one of the managers and the lead practitioner attended the post-inspection feedback meeting. They expressed a commitment to implementing the actions advised in order to provide a quality learning experience for the children.
## 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>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of management and leadership for learning</td>
<td>Good</td>
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## Language used in Early-Years Education-focused Inspection reports

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

SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

• Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

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

• All the children have access to all the resources on both sides. The junior focus is more of a play area than the seniors as this is where their interests are. Senior focus more of the resources in the Montessori. The children are all provided learning experiences when the child is ready.

• The children are shown The Globe/jigsaws/maps of different continents, the practitioners also discusses the different ways of living and going to school/family, shown Watoto Book that reflects diversity. The practitioners also show the children the different tiny people with disabilities and talk about it.

Area 2

• Long term curriculum has been upgraded. Still working on the medium term planning and some revision on the short term curriculum and individual emergent interest as required.

• We follow the daily routine of the setting. We capture pictures of the children’s learning progress, discuss with colleagues, display on the notice board, show to parents, assess and place in each child’s portfolio for further assessment.

• Senior Montessori are introduced to geometrical shapes, sandpaper numbers letters of the alphabet and each sound when the child is ready.

• Children are provided open-ended resources to explore and the opportunities to experience further learning eg playdough, sand play water play big and small Lego, big and small wooden tension tower, wooden coloured blocks big plastic blocks. For children’s arts and crafts we always provide them resources to create their own process arts to express their feeling, creativity and imagination.

Area 3
• Normally the practitioner assigns 2 leaders in the morning and 2 leaders in the afternoon to help clean table, sweep floor using brush and dust pan, give out crayons, paper and choose books which they like for them to read during circle time. This is part of their responsibilities being leader.

• We do as you advise to reduce the length of time allocated to large group activities during circle time.

Area 4

• We will take your advice to have formal meetings to review policies, procedures and practices and discuss record planning.

• We are organising a plan to meet parents to provide them with more information about our curriculum underpinned by Aistear/ Síolta, some policies procedure and practice.

• Every year we ensure that children are given a head start approach and support for the transition to a big school. We organise visits to primary school we provide parents leaflets with information about making the transition from preschool to Primary school.