Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

REPORT

Great Beginnings Montessori
09DY0008

Presentation Primary School
Terenure, Dublin 6W

Date of inspection: 20 April 2016
CONTEXT OF SETTING

Great Beginnings Montessori is a sessional Montessori school set in Presentation Primary Girls School, Terenure, Dublin. The Montessori caters for 22 children with 15 children enrolled on the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. A total of 12 children and 2 practitioners were present on the day of inspection. The setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings of this 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 children’s learning and development is very good.
- The atmosphere of the setting is warm and welcoming, with parents and families bringing children into the classroom, supporting children’s transitions from home to pre-school.
- Practitioners’ tone of voice and pace are very effective in supporting respectful and inclusive relationships with the children and other practitioners.
- Well-established routines support children to develop social and emotional security with children participating in clean up time and snack time. A ‘feeling rug’ and music playing during snack time are very effectively used.
- Practitioners guide, model and encourage children towards positive behaviour within the setting.
- Children’s sense of identity and belonging is nurtured and exemplified through individual photographs of the children displayed linking to the themes of Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework.
- It was observed that no photographs or displays of children’s families or community were available for children to view and discuss.
- It is evident that children are active agents in choosing and organising their learning activities with several examples of children following their interests in small construction, in the home corner and in their use of Montessori sensorial materials.
- The setting has made some connections with the local school and community. These include attending primary school events and visits from grandparents.
- Transitions between activities are managed through adult verbal direction and some opportunities for children to be leaders and helpers.

Actions advised

- To build on this good work, practitioners are advised to extend the range of existing strategies to support the development of children’s sense of identity and belonging to include families and existing community connections.
- It is advised that visual and/or auditory cues be included to further support children in the management of changes in activities.

AREA 2

QUALITY OF PROCESSES TO SUPPORT CHILDREN’S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- The quality of the processes to support children’s learning and development is very good.
- A broad based curriculum incorporating Montessori and play-based approaches, informed by Aistear and Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education, is used in the setting.
- The indoor environment is inviting, richly resourced and purposefully designed to support exploration, interaction, multi-sensory learning experiences and play. Children have regular access to an outdoor yard, a large hall and sports equipment.
A variety of assessment approaches is used to gather information about children’s learning. Assessment records include a weekly individual child’s folder, yearly scrapbook, Montessori observations on aspects of learning and a yearly planning folder.

It is noted that themes and plans are devised and determined by practitioners with no reference to children’s emerging interests or indication of how these inform the next steps of learning.

Interactions between practitioners and children facilitate a broad range of effective learning experiences.

Opportunities for individual, pair, and group work are evident and exemplified in children’s engagement in the use of Montessori and open-ended materials.

A large-group art and craft activity involving the making of a daffodil was observed to be adult-initiated with limited choice in materials.

**Actions advised**

- Practitioners are advised to build on existing good planning practices in order to make greater use of children’s interests and ideas in selecting themes and topics that support the next steps in their learning.
- Review of the practice of large-group activities is advised to ensure a more suitable balance in terms of children’s active participation, choice in materials, and adult-initiated learning.

**AREA 3**

**QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is very good.
- Children enjoy and describe their learning experiences very effectively.
- Children demonstrate natural curiosity and were observed discussing and problem-solving in relation to a flower changing colour experiment.
- Children experience achievement through their chosen activities and equipment.
- Documented information recorded progress in relation to children’s engagement with Montessori materials and some of the children’s free drawings and paintings.
- Very effective story time provides opportunities for children to engage in a meaningful and enjoyable participation in the development of language and literacy.
- Mathematical thinking is promoted through the use of Montessori materials with appropriate adult guidance.

**Action advised**

- Practitioners are advised to provide opportunities for children to have their views and comments about their own artwork and other creative activities listened to and, where possible, recorded to inform future review and planning.

**AREA 4**

**QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- Weekly planning meetings and daily debriefing are scheduled with staff and there is evidence of very commendable partnership and shared leadership within the daily routine.
- Planning folders outline long-term planning with referenced links to *Aistear* and *Síolta*.
- Opportunities are provided for practitioners to take a leadership role through a planned shared leadership approach.
- Practitioners avail of professional development training in relation to *Aistear*.
- Parents are provided with an information booklet, and a variety of opportunities to discuss children’s progress.
- Parents are supported in relation to children with special educational needs and their transitions to primary school.
Actions advised

- Practitioners are advised to include the *Aistear,Síolta Practice Guide* in their collaborative planning and review activities.
- Practitioners in the setting are encouraged to support children in the transition to primary school by extending links established with local primary schools.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of staff to implement the actions above advised is very good.
Summary of Overall Inspection Findings

<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>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>Very Good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Language used in Early-Years Education-focused Inspection reports

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