EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>Fitzkinder Day Nursery &amp; Montessori School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>31 Upper Fitzwilliam Street, Dublin 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>09DY0318</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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of inspection</th>
<th>05-12-2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Inspection activities undertaken | Review of relevant documents  
Meeting with the owner/manager and early years practitioners  
Observation of interactions during the sessions  
Interaction with children  
Review of educational resources and facilities |

### CONTEXT OF SETTING
Fitzkinder Nursery & Montessori School, established in 2010, provides full day care, part-time, afterschool care and one sessional pre-school programme for children enrolled on the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. The inspection was conducted during the morning pre-school session when the owner/manager, two early-years practitioners and fifteen children were present. The setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised in 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 the children’s learning and development is very good.
- A warm, friendly and very relaxing atmosphere prevails. Children are happy and content when they arrive into the setting. Many children immediately get involved in the prepared environment, engaging in child-initiated play experiences, while others help themselves to breakfast, and join in the play at their own pace.
- The practitioners show kindness, respect and a very positive regard for the children and their families. They make substantial efforts to greet and engage them in conversation at arrival and home times. An effective key person system is in operation in the setting.
- Relationships between the practitioners and children are noticeably calm and positive. The practitioners adopt a strengths based approach in their interactions with the children; they focus on what children are achieving and mastering.
- A consistent and flexible routine has been established and is clearly displayed for children. There are times each day for children to be active agents in their play and learning as well as times for practitioner-guided learning activities.
- Transitions are clearly announced by the practitioners and facilitate positive learning experiences for the children. Variations in the transitions are also made to accommodate individual children’s needs.
- A strong emphasis is placed on children’s independence as opportunities are provided for the children to enhance their self-help skills. Those opportunities include getting their aprons and returning them for painting experiences, managing their own personal care needs, and contributing to and engaging in social interactions with their peers at tidy-up time and lunch time.
- The children’s sense of identity and belonging is nurtured through displays in the environment which include the children’s individual art, photographs of children and their families. Images are on display which present a positive sense of non-stereotypical gender roles in the community. There is potential to build stronger links for the children between the wider community and the setting.

### Actions advised
- It is advised that practitioners introduce activities and learning opportunities; photographs, displays, and artefacts which reflect the uniqueness of their local community. These can be used
to create conversations and to share information amongst the children. This will support the children's developing sense of identity and belonging as members of a wider community.

**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.
- The practitioners understand the role of play in the promotion of learning and healthy development. They are using *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* to support their practice.
- The setting had previously implemented the Montessori approach to early education. Over the past year, the owner and practitioners have begun to adapt the curriculum programme to strengthen play-based emergent approaches. These approaches embrace opportunities for indoor and outdoor child-initiated play while maintaining some aspects of Montessori provision. A clear curriculum statement has been documented which outlines appropriate, broad based aims for children's learning.
- The daily planning system used by the practitioners to support the implementation of the curriculum is robust. It very clearly and effectively outlines learning activities for the day, which are linked to *Aistear*. The children's emerging interests are observed and recorded by the practitioners and are frequently incorporated into short-term curriculum planning.
- Information about the children's learning experiences and achievements are recorded by the practitioners in a variety of ways. These include narrative observations, group learning stories illustrated with photographs, and photographic displays of the children's current interests. These are captured in the pre-school and individual learning portfolios for each child.
- The indoor learning environment is bright, spacious and well maintained. The pre-school room provides a wide range of Montessori equipment and materials. Natural and recycled sensory materials are used in an open-ended way to support play opportunities. There is scope to provide more distinct interest areas to support a greater variety of play and active learning experiences. These could be integrated with the Montessori equipment and resources.
- An accessible, enclosed outdoor space provides for a small range of activities to promote the children's physical and gross motor development. Provision for sensory exploration and challenging gross motor play and learning is limited.
- Effective interaction strategies promote the children’s learning and development. Practitioners maintain a positive focus on children for the entire session. They play at the children's physical level, following their play ideas, and gently extending the children's thinking through the use of open-questions and prompts.
- Commendable supports for early literacy, numeracy and scientific skills are effectively offered in concrete play situations and are matched to each child's individual need. The children are also encouraged to bring in a book of their choice every week to explore, discuss and share with their peers.
- The children are learning in an inclusive environment. The service has established links with professionals to access assessment and support for children with possible additional needs. The practitioners very effectively adapt their interactions and support to match each child’s developmental level.

**Actions advised**

- The practitioners are advised to continue to develop the indoor and outdoor learning environments. Interest areas need to be logically located indoors; and equipment and materials need to be provided outdoors which promote more gross motor play. Use of the ‘Creating and using the learning environment’ self-evaluation tool in the Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide will support this action.
- It is advised that practitioners continue to progress the development of their emergent, inquiry-based curriculum. The potential of the project approach could be explored to support children's inquiry learning over time. This will provide greater insight into children's thinking and interests. It will enable practitioners to better plan for and respond to what children want to learn.
AREA 3
QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is very good.
- Daily opportunities are provided for children to make choices and decisions and to follow their intrinsic motivation during free play. There were examples of children engaging in superhero games, and re-enacting trips to France. One child used the writing area to explore the number of roundabouts between her home and the setting.
- The children are very familiar with the daily routine and participate well in free play and practitioner guided activities. The small group activity observed on the day was well matched to children's developmental levels. There is potential for practitioners to build on the children’s interests during free play to further inform the planning of practitioner- guided small group learning activities.
- The children engage in large group discussions at circle time. This provides an opportunity for many children to contribute, listen, respond and take turns.
- Many children displayed dispositions of confidence and persistence in their play. They regularly drew attention to their activities and achievements. This was exemplified in one child’s comment “I can make a big Lego house all by myself” during free play.
- The children understand and comply with the play room rules. Many examples of children engaging in pro-social behaviours were observed. This included helping out at tidy up time and sharing materials and spaces. A play room rules chart is on display at their physical level. There is potential to develop additional strategies to enhance children’s self-regulation and problem solving skills further.
- The children are beginning to form strong friendships and many are engaging in play in different social groupings.

Actions advised
- It is advised that practitioners deepen their own knowledge of the steps to conflict resolution. They need to introduce increased resources, activities and interaction strategies which support children to express emotions and become more competent in the development of their problem solving skills.
- It is advised that practitioners structure small group learning activities further. They need to establish consistent groups by utilising their key person system. It would be helpful if they stated the purpose or origin of the activity and related the activity to the children’s previous experiences or current interests.

AREA 4
QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- There is an ethos of professionalism and collaboration in the setting. The staff team demonstrate passion and commitment to the role and are well trained in early years’ education and in Montessori Methods.
- The owner / manager reports that the setting has recently undergone a major recruitment and staff restructuring process. The owner/manager demonstrates a strong awareness of the change management process and the need to provide leadership and support to the full staff team through this transition period.
- The two practitioners are a newly established team and they demonstrate strong team working and partnership. Roles and responsibilities between the practitioners are shared very equitably and they take on pedagogical leadership roles at different times during the session.
- The pre-school session observed was well-organised and ran smoothly.
The owner/manager is effectively leading a major programme of review, reflection and development in the service. The setting is currently engaging in an on-site mentoring and quality improvement programme with Better Start; the National Quality Development Service.

The owner/manager and full staff team have begun collaborating to improve practice and the quality of the children’s learning experiences across the service. There is scope to include the views of the children and their families further in the review process to inform plans for quality improvements.

The staff team is actively engaged in continuous professional development and in maintaining their current understanding of effective practice. Currently opportunities for regular practice support and supervision are being developed.

The practitioners are linked to local and national agencies for advice and professional networking.

Information about the children’s learning and development is shared with parents informally in the playroom, by newsletter and through displays in the hallways and in the playroom. There is potential to enhance communication between home and the service further.

Some effective strategies are used to support the children’s transitions to primary school such as, information leaflets for parents, and discussions with the children. At the time of inspection, the service had no formal links with the local primary schools.

**Actions advised**

- It is advised that the current management structure in the setting be further developed to establish a leadership for learning role. This will support practitioners to maintain and improve their pedagogical practices. It will strengthened team working and collaboration and it will ensure consistency in the settings ethos and curriculum.

- It is advised that more detailed information about the children’s interests, prior learning and life experiences be gathered. Parents need to be regularly consulted on their comments, feedback and views for their children’s learning and development.

- It is advised that the service develop a transition policy for children to progress from pre-school to the local primary schools. This will facilitate the sharing of the practitioner’s knowledge on individual children’s learning and achievements.

**CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE**

The capacity of the owner / manager and practitioners in the setting to implement the actions advised above is very good. This was evidenced by their collective openness to reflecting on practice and their professional engagement during the post- inspection feedback meeting.
### 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>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>Good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Language used in Early-Years Education Inspection reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Excellent</strong></td>
<td>Provision that is excellent is exemplary in meeting the needs of children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Very good</strong></td>
<td>Provision that is very good is highly effective in meeting the needs of children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Good</strong></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><strong>Fair</strong></td>
<td>Provision that is fair requires practice to be improved to meet the needs of children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Poor</strong></td>
<td>Provision that is poor is inadequate and requires significant improvement to meet the needs of children.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>