EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>The Cottage Montessori</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>Harbour Road</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Banagher</td>
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<td></td>
<td>County Offaly</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>09OY0038</td>
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Date of Inspection: 09-10-2019
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(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 setting’s provision in each area.
Early-Years Education Inspection

**Date of inspection**: 09-10-2019

**Inspection activities undertaken**

- Meeting with setting owner
- Observation of interactions during the morning ECCE session
- Interaction with children
- Review of relevant documents
- Post-inspection feedback meeting with setting owner and ECCE practitioner

**CONTEXT OF SETTING**

The Cottage Montessori is located in Banagher, Co. Offaly. The setting has been in operation for seventeen years. The setting is purpose built with one main pre-school room where the local children can avail of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. There were eighteen children and two practitioners present on the day of the inspection. The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the report; a response was not received from the setting.

**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 welcoming atmosphere is evident as parents and children are greeted warmly and with respect at arrival and departure times. The relationships between children and practitioners are reciprocal and respectful.
- The children are active agents in the well-planned daily routine which offers them extensive choice in their learning. The practitioners plan individual learning moments for the children and invite them to participate in these experiences.
- Transitions between activities are signalled using verbal prompts and timers. Children are given time to finish their tasks and tidy up the materials.
- Snack time promotes healthy eating and self-help skills. The practitioners sit with the children and support them to set the table and clean up afterwards.
- There are very good displays which support individual identity and the local community. The setting is involved in fundraising events and there are annual visitors to the setting. There are generic posters on display which to some extent promote an awareness of cultural diversity. Additional supports to promote cultural awareness would be beneficial.

**Action advised**

- It is advised that the practitioners increase the supports to promote the children’s awareness of different cultures within the pre-school environment. The content should be purposeful and relevant to the children in the group. The parents’ knowledge about their own cultures could be drawn on to further enhance this aspect of provision.

**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 curriculum in place is an effective blend of the Montessori Method and play-based learning. The practitioners are currently introducing an emergent curriculum and they ensure the curriculum is informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*.
- Play is the main medium for learning with time given to children to allow them to pursue their interests. The environment is well defined with a blend of Montessori materials and play equipment in various areas. All areas are labelled and include real home life items to support the children’s play experiences.
The setting has a written curriculum statement which links to the medium-term and short-term plans. The plans currently provide detail about academic skills and themes; the children’s emergent interests are not included. There are specific academic plans which are focused on learning goals.

There is a group journal and individual journals which document learning moments and artwork. The practitioners’ observations of the children provide detail about the activities completed and these observations are linked to Aistear. The next steps in learning which the practitioners plan as a result of these observations are not reflected in the short-term plans. The practitioners support the children to challenge themselves and to extend their learning. The practitioners use a manual signing system with children who experience challenges with communication, and the children have access to support through the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM).

**Actions advised**

- It is advised that the practitioners review short-term planning to ensure it captures the children's individual emergent interests. Short-term planning should name the specific steps that will be taken to support the interest.
- The practitioners are advised to extend the use of the observations so that there are clear links between the observations and next steps in the children’s learning, as set out in the short-term plans. The children need to be given opportunities to self-reflect on their own learning experiences.

### 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 have open access to mark-making and creative resources. The practitioners have focused on moving from product-oriented creative work, to process-oriented work and individual art over the past number of years. This supports each child’s unique creativity and self-expression.
- The children are developing their confidence and they enjoy demonstrating their skills and discussing their interests. On the day of the inspection, the children created a village and explored various roles and personalities within the play experience.
- The children are developing their social skills and most of the time they work cooperatively together. The small group and large group activities which are supported by the practitioners aid this practice. The practitioners encourage children to discuss how they are feeling and they use the child’s home language to support problem solving. The children do not independently discuss and develop solutions.
- The setting has an outdoor environment which offers children a variety of experiences including sensory play, gross motor development and exploring nature.
- The practitioners plan the environment and activities to ensure that the learning experiences support the development of early literacy and numeracy skills. They introduce and explore these concepts using a variety of approaches and there is currently a formal focus on mathematical concepts. There are some planned play experiences which include mathematical concepts including restaurant play and aeroplanes.
- Songs and rhymes are used throughout the morning to support transitions, during clean-up time and in the course of the various learning experiences. The practitioners read stories to the children on a regular basis.
**Actions advised**

- The practitioners are encouraged to extend the support given to children to resolve their own conflicts. They are advised also to engage in further discussions with the children about their feelings and emotions, and to encourage the children to come up with their own solutions when minor problems arise.
- The practitioners are advised to extend the children’s awareness of literacy and numeracy to a greater degree, through their play experiences. The introduction of further resources and visual displays will support this practice.

**AREA 4**

**QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- The practitioners are very open to change and they share the various roles and responsibilities throughout the session. It is evident that there is good communication and teamwork between the practitioners. They keep up-to-date with sector developments and informally review their practice. These reviews, and the subsequent developments in practices are not yet recorded in the setting.
- The owner values the importance of continued professional development and since attending training she has blended the Montessori Method with play-based learning.
- The owner has very good links with the local county childcare committee and the setting accesses support and training through this committee.
- Communication with parents is facilitated through an open-door policy, newsletters, the notice board and a parent handbook. Parents visit the setting to support fundraising events and they support the local annual parade. Child development and observations are informally shared with parents.
- The children’s transitions into the setting are supported through gradual settle-in periods and regular visits to the setting. The transition to primary school is supported; there are some links with local teachers and schools and the practitioners add resources which represent the primary school to the environment each year. The practitioners and the children complete ‘an all about me’ booklet which they give to parents, and previously they completed reports and shared them with schools.

**Actions advised**

- It is advised that the practitioners record their reviews and the subsequent developments in practices, on an ongoing basis. The Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide will support this action.
- To further enhance the supports for children as they transition to primary school, it is advised that the practitioners re-establish the practice of sharing an end-of-year report with the local school via the parents.

**CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE**

The capacity of the setting to continue to implement the actions advised above is very good. The owner and practitioner are dedicated to providing high quality care and education to the children in the setting.
### 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>
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### Language used in Early-Years Education 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>
</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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