An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna  
Department of Education and Skills

**EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION**

**REPORT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>Woodlawn Montessori</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>Woodlawn House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clara Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kilbeggan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>09WH0064</td>
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</tbody>
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**Date of Inspection: 18-11-2019**
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 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>18-11-2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meeting with setting owner/manager</td>
<td>• Interaction with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Observation of interactions during a number of sessions</td>
<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Feedback to setting owner/manager</td>
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CONTEXT OF SETTING

Woodlawn Montessori is a privately-owned and operated setting. The facility is located on the outskirts of Kilbeggan town. The setting provides a morning and an afternoon session for children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, there were twenty children and three practitioners present, one of whom was made available through the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM). The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the report; a response for publication 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 very warm atmosphere is evident in the environment. Practitioners individually welcome each child on arrival. Children are encouraged to independently hang up their coats and to put away their bags.
- The practitioners facilitate the provision of a generous amount of time and space to children to allow them the freedom and autonomy to make decisions about their learning experiences.
- The daily routines are flexible and children are empowered to make decisions about whether to engage in small and large group experiences. On the day of the inspection, circle time included a review of the letter, shape and colour of the week, as well as songs and rhythms. A small number of children became restless and disengaged during this experience.
- Relationships between children and practitioners appear secure. Practitioners are consistently respectful and responsive in their engagements with the children. These positive relationships are further enhanced through the implementation of a key person approach where each practitioner oversees the learning and development of an assigned group of children.
- Practitioners regularly use very effective and meaningful recognition and encouragement in their responses to children. The practitioners’ naming of the children’s positive achievements and behaviours supports the children’s awareness of their changing and developing abilities.
- Children’s sense of belonging is nurtured throughout the physical environment. For example, displays of the children’s photographs and their individualised drawings help them to develop an appreciation of themselves as individuals and as members of groups.
- The practitioners have established connections with the local community and its members. Members of the community, some of whom are parents, have visited the setting to share their skills, interests and professions with the children. Photographs of these visits and the diversity within the setting are acknowledged and celebrated through the use of attractive visual displays.

Action advised
- Practitioners are advised to review the purpose of circle time to ensure that this large group activity aligns with children’s interests, skills, dispositions, attitudes and development. This will further support children’s interest and motivation levels during the experience.
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.
- A broad-based curriculum, informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*, is used to support children’s learning and development. The learning programme comprises a blended approach of strongly play-based learning combined with the use of a variety of Montessori materials.
- Practitioners demonstrate a sound knowledge and understanding of the development and implementation of an emergent curriculum. They extensively record and plan for children’s interests. Some of the documentation used to guide planning for curriculum implementation is repetitive and lacks purpose.
- A variety of assessment approaches are used to gather information on children’s experiences and achievements and to develop a rich picture of their learning and development. These consist of individual and group learning journals that include regular observations by practitioners, samples of the children’s individual drawings and photographs of recent learning experiences.
- The practitioners use many effective interaction strategies to facilitate a broad range of learning experiences. Practitioners playfully engage and motivate children in their learning and development. Some effective use of open-ended questioning supported children to give further consideration to their investigations and explorations.
- The indoor environment is structured into many defined interest areas. A rich variety of literacy and mathematical resources, including both play and Montessori materials, were particularly popular with the children.
- Practitioners and children have daily access to the outdoor learning environment. Wooden structures include a treehouse, tepee and boat. The small variety of resources available limits the opportunities to develop children’s curiosity, imagination, creativity and desire for exploration.
- The manager and practitioners understand the importance of play in supporting children’s learning and development. This is particularly evident in the indoor environment where a variety of well-resourced play types are available. Practitioners also effectively facilitate and scaffold play in order to promote children’s learning.
- Commendable efforts have been made to provide an inclusive environment for all children. The setting maintains links with external agencies to optimise support for children with additional needs. A practitioner has engaged in specialised training around how best to recognise and celebrate all children and all practitioners benefit from mentoring through the AIM.

*Actions advised*

- Practitioners are advised to review the purpose and effectiveness of their plans. By streamlining the planning processes, practitioners could use this time to strengthen how the learning programme can be further developed to be more reflective of individual children.
- Practitioners are advised to review the outdoor learning environment to include a broader variety of sensory, open-ended and real materials. This will further strengthen the play opportunities and possibilities for children in this environment.
AREA 3
QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is very good.
- Children present as settled and happy in the setting. They confidently choose where and with whom they wish to play throughout the session.
- The children are provided with opportunities to make many decisions about their learning. This contributes to the high levels of interest and engagement observed during their play.
- Children experience success during their learning experiences; they review and engage with their individual scrapbooks and received positive and affirming feedback from practitioners.
- Many children effectively use both non-verbal and verbal communication to express their likes, dislikes, ideas and queries. In particular, older children are very articulate in using language to give and receive information, to ask questions and to recreate roles. On the day of the inspection, use of the children’s home-languages was not evident in either of the sessions.
- Children are developing personal and social skills appropriate to their ages and stages of development. While some children were overheard using key phrases, such as ‘caring is sharing’, a small number of children demonstrated some difficulty in resolving minor conflicts; they required support and assistance from nearby practitioners.
- During their play, the children make connections between new learning and what they already know. This was illustrated in the outdoor environment as children made links between the ice they found in the outdoor environment and the iceberg that they had previously discussed when exploring the ship, the ‘Titanic’.

Actions advised
- Practitioners are advised to review and augment how children’s home languages are acknowledged and celebrated in the learning programme. For example, the use of books, songs, rhymes and key phrases in children’s first languages will further support and strengthen children’s awareness and understanding of language and communication.

AREA 4
QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- The manager and practitioners recognise and value the importance of regular communication. Many very effective strategies are in place to promote the sharing of information between practitioners. For example, the use of a daily communication diary by each member of the team and fortnightly team meetings ensure that all staff are kept informed of developments within the setting.
- The commitment of the manager and practitioners to the ongoing review of practice, policies and procedures is highly commendable. The manager and practitioners are actively participating in the Síolta Quality Assurance Programme and are using this experience to inform their planning, review and improvement processes.
- The manager and practitioners demonstrate a strong ethos of professionalism and teamwork. Their commitment and motivation to continuously improving children’s learning experiences and outcomes are noteworthy.
- Various channels of communication are used to communicate with parents. These include the sharing of children’s scrapbooks, a texting system and informal daily conversations. A ‘parent month’ initiative is also in place. This initiative involves inviting parents each month to spend some time with the children during the ECCE session. Documented information about individual children’s learning and development is shared with their parents twice a year.
- The manager and practitioners have engaged in professional development opportunities. They have participated in the nationally accredited pre-school health promotion training programme; Healthy Ireland Smart Start. More recently, a practitioner has completed the Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) Programme which focuses on the promotion and delivery of an inclusive learning programme.
• Commendable links have been established with the neighbouring primary school. Many highly effective tools are used to facilitate this transition, including a questionnaire prepared by the children and shared with the teacher. The teacher responds by answering the questions and showing photographs of the classroom and school to help the children to become familiar with their new environment.

*Action advised*

• The manager and practitioners are advised to increase the frequency with which documented information is shared with parents. This will support parents to develop a greater awareness and appreciation of their child’s learning abilities and achievements. In doing so, the manager and practitioners could also encourage parents to share their thoughts on their child’s learning and development.
## 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>
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<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 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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