

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna  
Department of Education and Skills**

**EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION**

**REPORT**

<b>Setting Name</b>	The Mill Montessori School
<b>Setting Address</b>	Caim Enniscorthy Co. Wexford
<b>DCYA number</b>	09WX0032

**Date of Inspection: 08-11-2019**



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agus Scileanna  
Department of  
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## **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

<b>Date of inspection</b>	08-11-2019
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interaction with children</li> <li>• Review of relevant documents</li> <li>• Feedback to setting manager/practitioner and practitioner</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting with setting manager/practitioner and practitioner</li> <li>• Observation of interactions during the pre-school session</li> </ul>	

### CONTEXT OF SETTING

The Mill Montessori School was established in 2008. It is located in the rural village of Caim, Co. Wexford. This private setting provides a morning sessional service for children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, the manager/practitioner, a practitioner and seven children were present. The manager/practitioner and the practitioner attended the post-inspection feedback meeting. The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the report, and the response of the setting will 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 successfully created a very warm and pleasant atmosphere. Parents and carers enter the setting during arrival and collection times. They engage in relaxed conversations with the practitioners and use the opportunity to share relevant information.
- Interactions between the children and the practitioners are caring and respectful. Positive relationships are evident. The practitioners affirm and encourage the children throughout the morning. They provide them with specific, meaningful feedback, for example, 'You are really using your imagination today'.
- The children's identity and belonging are supported through displays of photographs of the children engaged in activities, their individual art work and their birthdays. The diversity of children's differing cultures, languages, abilities and family types is not currently represented in the learning room.
- The practitioners foster caring and respectful relationships between the children. They provide opportunities for them to play collaboratively and to engage in activities in pairs and small groups.
- The practitioners provide clear and regular guidance to the children. They gently remind them to replace activities before moving to another activity.
- The children are making very positive connections with their community. The practitioners had recently planned a project with a specific focus on people and places in the local community. In the past, a farmer has visited the setting with his tractor and has shown the children some lambs. A plan is in place for a *Garda* and a firefighter to visit the setting in the coming months.
- Transitions from one activity to the next are effectively used as learning opportunities. During the inspection, the children took turns to stand on the green traffic light before they went to wash their hands for snack.
- Snack time is viewed as a pleasant, social occasion. The children and the practitioners sit together. They engage in relaxed conversations about their families and their plans for the weekend.

#### *Action advised*

- In order to support the children's developing awareness of similarities and differences, and a variety of cultures and family types, the practitioners are advised to provide additional imagery, books and play resources in the learning 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 very good.
- The curriculum approach combines elements of the Montessori Method and play-based learning. The children have ample opportunities to engage in free play and to use the Montessori materials.
- The practitioners have developed long-term, medium-term and short-term plans. These plans are linked to *Aistear; the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. The medium-term plans cover a broad range of themes, such as the solar system and road safety. The short-term plans provide further detail and identify songs, books and activities to support learning in relation to specific themes. The practitioners regularly adapt these plans to include the children's emerging interests.
- A range of assessment methods is in place, including anecdotal notes that capture significant moments in children's learning, written observations and learning stories. The observations record the children's progress, provide a brief outline of their learning dispositions and identify the next steps in their learning. An individual book with samples of art work is compiled for each child.
- The practitioners use interactive, playful strategies to support the children's learning in a meaningful way. For example, the children practiced road safety by taking turns to cross the road, which the practitioners had painted on the floor. The practitioners used traffic light props to guide the children's decision making.
- The practitioners effectively extend the children's learning. This was evident as one of the practitioners used a book to further a child's interest in animals. She sat with the child and together they explored the characteristics of each animal.
- The children's early literacy and numeracy skills are very effectively supported through use of the songs and rhymes, which are a key feature of the session. Some resources that promote children's early literacy and numeracy development are also included in the play areas.
- The practitioners help the children to make connections between their previous and current learning. They frequently refer to previous projects that the children have engaged in.
- Outdoor play and learning are highly valued and promoted in the setting. The children have daily access to a large, enclosed natural outdoor space. A very good range of resources is provided to support learning, including a sand-pit, wooden blocks and logs. During the session, the children used twigs, leaves and mud to make dinner in the wooden tepee. A sensory path provides opportunities for the children to explore and examine the characteristics, textures and scents of a variety of plants and herbs. A maze, constructed from hedges, creates a rich backdrop for exploration and discovery.

#### *Actions advised*

- In order to enhance the current assessment methods, the practitioners are advised to further elaborate on the children's learning dispositions and to include the children in the process of documenting their learning and progress.
- The practitioners are advised to include additional resources in the learning environment to further support the children's early literacy and numeracy skills. A broader range of resources, such as notebooks, maps, calculators, telephones and weighing scales, will further enhance the play areas.

### 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 present as secure and happy. They appear confident and at ease as they engage in various activities throughout the morning.
- The children demonstrate enjoyment in their learning. This was particularly evident during outdoor play. Many of the children shrieked with delight as they ran through the maze looking for their friends. The children were very energetic and focused during this time.
- The children experience success and mastery. During the inspection, one child built an elaborate train-track with a number of bridges. He proudly shared it with his friends when completed. A number of the children also expressed real satisfaction during a scrubbing activity, where they used soapy water and brushes to scrub wooden boards.
- The children are confident communicators. For example, a small group of children described their plans to make snowmen from playdough. One child told her friends, 'I'm going to give him a big smile', while another stated, 'I'm going to give mine a pair of boots to keep his feet dry'.
- The children's developing creativity is evident in the examples of their very well-developed mark making.
- The children are developing positive dispositions for learning, including creativity, imagination, persistence and concentration. This was evident when some of the children used playdough to create snowmen and another child persisted in cutting card with a scissors. The children's developing imaginations were displayed when a child sat in the wooden car and called to her friends 'This is a submarine and I'm going on a mission to find an octopus!'
- The children are developing their independent skills. One child filled a container with soapy water for a scrubbing activity. He expressed great satisfaction in carrying the full container to the table without spilling any of the liquid. The practitioners complete most of the tasks at tidy up and snack time.
- It is evident that the children are developing close relationships with their peers. Some of the children help each other to replace activities and they invite their friends to play with them.

#### *Action advised*

- In order to enhance the children's independent skills, the practitioners are advised to provide additional opportunities for the children to take increased responsibility for tasks throughout the morning.

### AREA 4

#### QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- The manager/practitioner and the practitioner present as a caring and professional team. Their commitment to the provision of quality learning experiences for children is evident.
- Continuing professional development is valued in the setting. The practitioners have completed a range of professional learning programmes, including the Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years (LINC) programme and training on the *Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Guidelines* and *Làmh*, a manual sign system. The manager/practitioner has also completed an accredited programme on leadership and contemporary practice in early childhood.
- The manager/practitioner and practitioner schedule weekly planning meetings. During this time, they informally evaluate the learning programme and plan for the coming week. Policies and procedures are reviewed and amended on an ongoing basis.
- Very effective partnerships with parents are evident. Parents and children are invited to attend a gathering prior to starting in the setting. There are also many opportunities for parents and families to come into the setting throughout the year. These include their attendance at a Christmas play, grandparents' day, fundraising activities and a graduation event. In the past, parents have visited the setting to share aspects of their cultures, interests and occupations with the children. Recently, a parent brought a pony into the setting.

- Effective channels of communication with parents are very evident. Parents and families can access photographs and detailed information on current projects through a very active social media page. Information on individual children's learning is shared regularly with parents through email and regular discussions. A yearbook, which provides a photographic record of the children's engagement in activities throughout the year, along with a photograph of each child are given to each family at the end of the year.
- The manager/practitioner avails of advice from the local county childcare committee and an external support agency. The practitioners have also engaged with the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) and have made links with external professionals to support the participation of children with additional needs.
- The practitioners effectively support the children's transition from pre-school to primary school. A transition passport with information on the child's strengths and interests is completed for each child. The parents can share this with the school if they wish. The practitioners include a school uniform in the dress-up box and there are many opportunities for discussions with the children and the parents. The practitioners also maintain links with the children who have transitioned to primary school. The practitioners plan to use the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) *Mo Scéal* transition document in the coming months.

*Action advised*

- The manager/practitioner and practitioner are advised to use the *Aistear, Sóolta Practice Guide* to enhance and formalise their current informal self-evaluation and reflection practices.

### Summary of Overall Inspection

<b>Area</b>	<b>Quality Level</b>
Quality of context to support children's learning and development	<b>Very good</b>
Quality of processes to support children's learning and development	<b>Very good</b>
Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements	<b>Very good</b>
Quality of management and leadership for learning	<b>Very good</b>

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

<b>Excellent</b>	Provision that is excellent is exemplary in meeting the needs of children.
<b>Very good</b>	Provision that is very good is highly effective in meeting the needs of children.
<b>Good</b>	Provision that is good is effective in meeting the needs of children but with some aspects to be developed.
<b>Fair</b>	Provision that is fair requires practice to be improved to meet the needs of children.
<b>Poor</b>	Provision that is poor is inadequate and requires significant improvement to meet the needs of children.

# APPENDIX

## SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

### ***Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report***

- The inspection process was very positive and the practical actions implemented have improved the quality of the service across all areas supporting children's learning and development.

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

#### **Area 1:**

- Bookcase has been reinstalled in the classroom with a wide range of books representing diversity and equality. A family tree has been created reflecting the children's families in the setting.

#### **Area 2:**

- Additional material has been added to the learning environment, enhancing the home corner and construction areas to support numeracy, literacy and enquiry.

#### **Area 3:**

- A visual schedule has been introduced along with class jobs and an at home/ at school photo board supporting children's independent choice.

#### **Area 4:**

- Self-evaluation and reflective practice has been documented using the Aistear Síolta Practice Guide as a guide.