

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

**EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION**

**REPORT**

<b>Setting Name</b>	Sharon's Playgroup and Montessori
<b>Setting Address</b>	1 Florence Terrace, Leeson Park Avenue Dublin 6
<b>DCYA number</b>	10DY0380

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



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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>	09-10-2019
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meeting with setting owner/ manager</li><li>• Observation of interactions during a session</li><li>• Interaction with children</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Feedback to setting owner/manager and practitioners</li></ul>

### CONTEXT OF SETTING

Sharon's Playgroup and Montessori is a long-established, private setting which currently provides a morning pre-school service. The setting uses a play-based learning programme underpinned by *Aistear; the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*, with elements of the Montessori approach to education. In the main, the owner works as a sole practitioner with some support from an assistant practitioner. On the day of the inspection, the owner/practitioner and seven children, aged between two years and three years, were present. The assistant practitioner was in attendance at times. A small number of the children are in their first year of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. The owner 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; 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.
- There is a warm welcoming atmosphere in this setting. Arrival and home times are parent and child-friendly. Time is taken for conversations with parents and for the mutual sharing of information relating to children's well-being.
- Once in the room, children place their lunches in the fridge and independently select their own play activities and play partners in an area of their choice.
- The daily routine is on display but not visible to the children. The practitioners ensure that the routine is responsive to children's interests and their engagement in activities. Transitions are signalled by practitioners using a timer, bell and verbal reminders of the time remaining before the pending change in activity. Some children appear unsure of the changes in activities.
- Snack time is valued as a social occasion. The practitioner sits and chats to the children about their favourite fruit and healthy snacks.
- The children have developed close, secure relationships with the practitioners. Throughout the pre-school session, the children hear many positive acknowledgments of their efforts, ideas and achievements from the practitioners.
- The practitioners hold very high expectations of the children's capabilities to be independent; they offer support to enable the children to develop self-care skills, such as preparing for and clearing-up after snack and locating materials needed for play. For example, a practitioner observed a child closely and offered verbal support and encouragement to him as he persisted for quite a while until he found the right piece for his jigsaw.
- The children's sense of identity and belonging is suitably supported through frequent discussions about their families, the celebration of their birthdays and the many photographs of their engagement in activities. An open-door policy is in place and parents also visit for the Christmas party.
- The practitioners' promotion of children's awareness of cultural diversity is reflected in the resources, such as dolls and small world figures. Children are also learning about different languages; they learn greetings and numbers in Irish and other languages.

#### *Actions advised*

- To support all children's sense of involvement during the daily learning programme, the practitioner is advised to create a visual of the daily routine, with photographs of the children engaged in activities, and to display it at child height.
- To enhance the children's appreciation of diversity in both the setting and the wider community, the practitioner is advised to include additional materials that visually represent different cultures, abilities, language and backgrounds.

## **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.
- Planning is undertaken on a monthly basis and details the weekly themes to be covered. The weekly plans include information on the planned activities and learning experiences. The practitioner avails of a resource file to source ideas and materials on the different topics and seasonal themes. There is some evidence of the inclusion of children's interests, such as the topic on the Solar system, in the plans. At the time of the inspection, planning was not underpinned by *Aistear* and did not regularly include children's individual emergent interests.
- The practitioner uses different approaches to record children's learning. These include a development checklist and a learner template. The observations do not clearly identify the planned next steps for the children's progression.
- In the past, the setting used a purely Montessori approach and Montessori materials continue to be available to the children in the play areas. The practitioner logs the children's progression in their use of the Montessori materials.
- The practitioner knows the children very well and differentiates provision to cater for their varying needs, in particular children who are new to the setting. She introduces them to the practical life activities and supports and motivates them to complete these independently.
- The practitioners consistently use a variety of positive interactions, such as open-ended questions and prompts, to extend the children's thinking and problem-solving skills. An example of this was when the children were playing with the construction materials. As the practitioner and children were playing with the blocks, she promoted and encouraged their thoughts, ideas and creativity as they made a garage for their cars. The practitioners use calm, positive tones when interacting with the children.
- The room is small, well organised and supports children's engagement in play; it is divided into play areas, such as a home corner, construction area, table-top activities, and a quiet book area. Each area has a wide range of developmentally accessible resources to support children's play and the book area provides a very good variety of books to suit all interests. Children organise and lead their play; for example, a child playing in the home corner invited the practitioner to eat the pizza he had made.
- Children access the outdoor area every day and a range of play opportunities, such as bikes, scooters and sand play, is available.
- Play is valued and supported by the practitioner. She facilitates children's play by effectively supporting them to collaborate and to work together to complete a jigsaw.
- Throughout the session, the practitioner promoted children's emergent literacy and numeracy skills. The practitioner modelled mathematical language in meaningful contexts for children. This included asking the children to think about how many paintbrushes were needed and she has also developed a game to help children match an object to a sound/letter. The Montessori materials are used purposefully and effectively to support the older children's understanding of symbols, print and numbers.

#### *Actions advised*

- The practitioner is advised to incorporate *Aistear* into her planning and to include the children's individual emergent interests. The templates in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* will support this approach. In addition the development of a curriculum statement underpinned by *Aistear* is advised.
- The practitioner is advised to extend the current template used to record children's learning by clearly adding the planned next steps for their progression. As part of this process, the inclusion of the children's strengths and learning dispositions is advised.

### **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 demonstrate enjoyment and pleasure in their activities. Their positive learning dispositions, such as resourcefulness, self-assurance and perseverance, help them to feel confident in their learning activities. On the day of the inspection, the children were observed mixing colours to get the colours they wanted and some painted their hands to see what it looked like.
- Children have many opportunities to make choices and to organise their own learning. For example, they negotiate additional time for tidying up in advance of their snack and decide if they want to take part in the painting activity.
- The children are confident and comfortable in talking about their families and home lives. They discuss younger siblings, their visits to the park and talk about expected new babies.
- The children are supported by the practitioner to express their feelings; the children discussed being cross or sad as they resolved minor disagreements.
- Children are learning the social rules of the setting. They put away their activities and push back their chairs when finished and they take part in the tidy-up routines. Two children are selected by the practitioner each day to be the snack helpers. On the day of the inspection, children who were in their second year were observed explaining to children new to the setting that 'Sharing is caring'.
- The children's sense of identity and belonging is reflected in the height chart, the photographs of their engagement in activities and in their individual scrapbooks compiled by the practitioner. During the painting activity, the practitioner asked a child if she could take a photograph and, with the child's permission, she recorded her comments.
- The children have developed very good relationships with their peers and strong friendships are evident. They play co-operatively in pairs and in small groups and effectively negotiate the taking of turns during activities. This was particularly evident during the painting activity.
- The children are learning about the natural environment and take part in planting both indoors and outdoors. They enjoy watching the gerbils in their cage and share their crumbs with them at snack time. A well-designed nature table, with suitable books linked to the season, shows evidence of children's walks in the local area and contains leaves, twigs, chestnuts and walnuts.
- The children are developing their early literacy and numeracy skills. For example, some children identified the letters in their names, 'That's the same as me, C'. They also used mathematical language confidently in their play as they counted out the pegs and compared the sizes of the towers they were making.
- The practitioner's effective use of a puppet and a range of voices engaged the children during the storytelling activity. The children showed great enjoyment as they responded to the open-ended questions, such as 'What happens next?'
- Children are developing an awareness of their local community. The lollipop person and a local policeman have visited and children have gone on walks around the local area.

#### *Actions advised*

- To further promote children's sense of well-being and to support their independence and self-help skills, the practitioner is advised to develop a child-helper routine and to display it at child height. This routine could be planned in advance with the children and could include jobs, such as a snack helper, library helper and line leader.
- The practitioner is advised to broaden children's awareness of the local community. This can be achieved by inviting local people to share their experiences and by displaying photographs of areas of interest to the children, such as the local park shopping centre, in the room or in a photograph album in the book corner.

#### **AREA 4**

##### **QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- The owner is committed to developing her practice and has begun to explore different approaches, such as Heuristic Play, to support the younger children attending the setting. She is aware of the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* but has not yet introduced the use of these materials.
- The owner/practitioner accesses support, advice and mentoring from Early Childhood Ireland and the local childcare committee. She has recently attended training in Child Protection and First Aid.
- A number of different approaches are used for sharing information with parents. The owner gives parents a digital copy of the parents' handbook at the start of the year and there is a parents' notice board at the entrance to the room. Social media is used for sharing upcoming events and photographs with parents. The owner/practitioner shares information on children's learning and achievements informally with parents at arrival and collection times.
- Children are gradually introduced to the setting to support their settling in. Before the children start they visit with their parents and a system of staggered hours is facilitated in September. Parents are invited to stay with their child until he/she is settled.
- The practitioners talk to the children about their move to primary school. The owner shares a 'Transition flower' with the parents that they may share with the primary school. The owner has developed informal links with the local primary school.

##### *Actions advised*

- The owner/practitioner is advised to avail of the self-evaluation templates in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* to support her professional reflection and review of practice.
- To support parents' understanding of the setting's curriculum, the owner is advised to further develop the parents' handbook and to share children's learning and achievements more formally with parents.
- The owner/ practitioner is advised to develop a clear policy and procedures to support children's transitions to primary school. The use of a transition box, which includes samples of school uniforms and photographs of the local school and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) transition document *Mo Scéal*, will help in this approach.

### 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>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.