

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

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	Woodhill Montessori
Setting Address	Rossmore Moate County Westmeath
DCYA number	10WH0103

Date of Inspection: 29-11-2019



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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(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	29-11-2019
Inspection activities undertaken	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interaction with children• Review of relevant documents• Feedback to setting manager and practitioner
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with setting owner/manager• Meeting with practitioner• Observation of interactions during a morning session	

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Woodhill Montessori is a privately owned, sessional setting in operation for nine years. It provides one morning session for children partaking in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. On the day of the inspection twenty children, who are in their first year or second year of the ECCE programme, the owner/manager and one practitioner were in attendance. The owner/manager 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 excellent.
- The atmosphere at the setting is very affirming, friendly and nurturing. The practitioners use even tones throughout the morning and their relationships with the children are very secure and supportive. Parents and children are greeted individually on arrival and the children self-sign in.
- A visual routine is displayed for the children and they are fully aware of their daily routines. To prepare for circle time the routine includes the children holding hands to create a circle.
- Times of transition within the setting support positive learning experiences for children. The practitioners use a bell, a minute countdown and verbal reminders as transition strategies. The children move between activities with ease.
- The children are highly responsible. They take off their shoes and put on their indoor slippers and they move the tables and chairs to make room on the floor for circle time. The helper system ensures that all children have a daily helper role to play.
- There is an excellent balance between adult-directed and child-directed activities.
- The visual class rules which the practitioners developed in conjunction with the children promote positive behaviour. The children revisit these rules at the beginning of circle time.
- The practitioners sit with the children at snack time and use it as an opportunity for open-ended, friendly and relaxed conversations. Healthy eating is promoted.
- The children's sense of identity and belonging is nurtured very well. Individual and group photos are displayed well in the room and group photos are evident in the group learning journal. Parents visit the setting to share their talents, skills and jobs and photos of these visits are displayed to provide children with a visual connection. Parents attend events such as a family evening at Christmas and a setting graduation.
- There are very strong connections with the community. Pictorial maps of the local town are available to the children and a map of the local townlands is on display. The children take part in charity events such as the Christmas shoebox appeal. They have been involved in green school initiatives and have created a community booklet visible in the book corner.

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 setting's curriculum has been informed by the Montessori Method and by the principles of *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. Short-term, medium-term and long-term planning has been developed. Currently the short-term planning is not displayed for parents.
- The practitioners' documentation of the children's learning is very good. They compile a memory book for each child which is sent home at the end of the year. A group learning journal is also in place. Strengths based observations are carried out on a monthly basis and emailed to parents. Parents are invited in to the setting to discuss these further.
- The attractive indoor environment is very well organised providing for varied learning experiences. The Montessori resources afford very good opportunities for the children to engage in experiences such as practical life, sensorial, mathematical, language and culture exercises. There is an art area, a home corner and a nature area. Books are rotated and reflect the themes of *Aistear*. Currently books do not reflect diversity in culture, gender or ability.
- The outdoor environment is well resourced. It consists of an enclosed garden with grass and a bark area, seating area, a ball run and a water wall, musical chimes and a blackboard. A mud kitchen and growing area support the children in their wallowing play. Resources from indoors are brought outdoors to enable the children to have varied play experiences.
- The interactions between the practitioners and the children are very effective and practice is inclusive of all children.
- The practitioners use a wide range of prompts to support the development of children's emergent language and literacy skills including songs, rhymes and specific tailored strategies. They model Irish and mathematical language and encourage an expanded use of vocabulary during interactions.
- The setting works in conjunction with parents to support children with individual needs. It develops specific plans for these children, and it has positive links with external agencies which assist the setting to further support children with needs.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the weekly curriculum plans be displayed for parents, so that they can support their child's learning and development.
- It is advised that books that reflect a range of diversities be made available to the children.

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 content and motivated in their playful learning experiences.
- The interactions between the children are of a high quality and rich child-to-child conversations are evident. In a discussion about the Toy Show, one child discussed how he would stay up late to watch it. When he was questioned about how late it was on and asked would he not fall asleep another child reminded him that he could record it instead and watch it later.
- The children take turns and negotiate well with each other. Peer learning is very evident; the older children help the younger children to use their Montessori materials. The children engage together in pairs, small groups and as a large group. Some children engage happily in activities independently. The children present as competent and confident.
- The children engage in deep breathing exercises to support their own self-regulation. Emotion displays are currently not on display.
- The children show great respect for their environment, they handle their Montessori materials with great care and they tidy up after themselves without prompting. They present as highly independent.
- On the day of the inspection the children enjoyed a variety of musical rhymes and games which included musical statues.

- The children have ample opportunities to engage in environmental activities. The setting encourages recycling, it uses a watt watcher and there is a litter warden programme. Currently the children are engaged in a scientific environmental project; they collect rainwater and they measure the amounts collected. This is very good practice to support the children's learning in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).
- The children have engaged in planting activities indoors and outdoors. They have grown hyacinths which they will take home for Christmas. Outdoors they have in the past grown garlic and onions and made soup from the vegetables which they planted. This supports their understanding of the food cycle.

Action advised

- There is additional scope to recognise and affirm emotions on a continuous basis in the print environment, by providing additional visual displays.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- The owner has established organisational systems to ensure efficiency in the settings day-to-day functioning.
- Daily meetings occur each day and a weekly planning meeting is held. These meetings are documented and support the setting to self-evaluate. The *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* is not yet used as part of this process. The practitioners share their reflective thoughts through the use of a messaging application.
- Induction procedures, appraisals and support and supervision practices are in place.
- The practitioners engage in continuous professional development. Most recently this has included equality and diversity training, a *Síolta* introductory course and a music course. The owner has completed the Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) Programme.
- The setting is a member of organisations that support the children's learning and development and the practitioners engage with the local county childcare committee.
- An open-door policy is in place at the setting so that the parents can visit the setting at any time.
- Transition year and early years' students are welcomed at the setting.
- The setting has very good communication practices which support formal and informal communication with parents. These include verbal communication on a daily basis, email and termly newsletters. Information about the children's learning is regularly shared with parents and families through individual learning journals and a group learning journal. Policies and procedures are available to parents and a comprehensive parent handbook and noticeboard are used to disseminate information.
- The respect for the voice of the child is very evident at this setting, in conversations, in planning and in specific practices. The children's ideas are recorded.
- The practitioners support the children to transition into the setting and to primary school. An 'All About Me' Form is completed at the beginning of the year. There are links with a local primary school. An infant teacher visits the pre-school to talk with the children about primary school.
- School uniforms are added to the dress-up area and there are photographic displays of the local schools. For children moving on from the setting the practitioners complete a '*Mo Sceál*' transitions template at the end of the year; parents can share this with the primary school. A transitions policy has not yet been developed to document the very good transition practices at the setting.

Actions advised

- Building on the current very good practices which support setting self-evaluation it is advised that the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* be used regularly to further inform self-evaluation.
- The practitioners are advised to develop a transitions policy to document the setting's transition practices and procedures.

Summary of Overall Inspection

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

Language used in Early-Years Education Inspection reports

Excellent	Provision that is excellent is exemplary in meeting the needs of children.
Very good	Provision that is very good is highly effective in meeting the needs of children.
Good	Provision that is good is effective in meeting the needs of children but with some aspects to be developed.
Fair	Provision that is fair requires practice to be improved to meet the needs of children.
Poor	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

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 2.

Initially our weekly curriculum was displayed in the classroom. However, in order to support the children's emergent interests we found at times it was necessary to make changes to it. We now record the curriculum on a white board in the staff room, it is then documented and filed.

Parents are made aware of the curriculum through our Monthly Themes which are displayed in the cloakroom area. The children's monthly observations also inform the parents of the upcoming theme. They are invited to contribute to the curriculum thus having an input into their child's learning and development.

We are in the process of sourcing age appropriate books on diversity.

Area 3.

Due to the young age of the majority of the children this year, we are finding role-play, group chats, music and movement, prop boxes and Trace Moroney books on Emotions, have greatly appealed to the children. This has been ongoing since September.

We take on board the suggestions and plan to introduce more visuals to the classroom.

Area 4.

In order to build on our current self- evaluation practice, we will use the Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide more regularly.

We are currently developing a transitions policy to document our transition practices and procedures.