

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	Lorraine's Montessori School
Setting Address	Cobh Community Centre Cobh County Cork
DCYA number	11CC0402

Date of Inspection: 25-11-2019



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agus Scileanna
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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	25-11-2019
Inspection activities undertaken	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of interactions during a number of sessions• Interaction with children• Review of relevant documents• Feedback to setting manager and practitioners

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Lorraine's Montessori School is an urban, privately owned early years setting on the second floor of the Cobh Community Centre. Three practitioners provide early years education and care for a maximum of nineteen children during the morning session. One of the practitioners is employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM). On the day of the inspection sixteen children were present. 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 good.
- The practitioners are friendly and welcoming and they create a warm atmosphere. A caring ethos prevails. The practitioners show sensitivity and a positive regard for the children and their families.
- A daily routine plan is not followed; such a plan has not yet been developed. On the day of the inspection, indoor free play was followed by outdoor free play, snack time and more indoor free play. The last ten minutes were used for the children to recite songs. There were no adult-initiated/led activities.
- During the free play periods, the children are active agents in choosing and organising their learning and development activities.
- Snack time is utilised as a social occasion, with all the children sitting, eating and chatting together. There is scope to utilise this time more for the promotion of well-being, a healthy lifestyle and generally for learning.
- The relationships between the practitioners and the children are responsive, respectful and reciprocal. Caring and respectful child-to-child relationships are fostered, with practitioners providing meaningful guidance and encouragement towards positive behaviour.
- As the pre-school is situated in a community hall, which is regularly used by the public, displays need to be kept to a minimum. There are some photos and symbols above the coat hooks in the lobby area of the children's bathroom.
- A range of opportunities is provided for family and community members to visit the pre-school and share their expertise and interests with the children. These opportunities are also used to explore cultural diversity with food tasting sessions during culture week.

Actions advised

- Practitioners are advised to create a daily routine, which offers a long, uninterrupted free-play period indoors and a long uninterrupted free-play period outdoors. It is advised that these child-led times be interspersed with short adult-initiated/led activities, based on the children's interests. These activities could be arranged during circle time, story time, and at snack time. Art and craft activities need to be offered as options, parallel to free play. Once a well-balanced plan is developed, it needs to be displayed for the children in picture sequence.
- Practitioners as role models of good habits are advised to sit, eat and communicate with the children during snack time. Creating a relaxed family type mealtime, conducive to small group conversations and language acquisition/development is advised.

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 good.
- A broad curriculum, based on the Montessori method and informed by *Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* is documented and implemented. There is evidence that the children's interests and dispositions are followed in daily practice. The implementation of the curriculum is monitored and reviewed on a regular basis.
- A range of assessment approaches, such as some learning stories, some developmental checklists and skills reports is used to gather information about the children's learning and development. The manner in which the outcomes of assessment are informing curriculum planning is not clear.
- The practitioners skilfully engage with the children during the indoor play times, encouraging and facilitating play and using appropriate interaction strategies to promote learning. This needs to be replicated outside as well.
- The indoor environment is situated in a vast hall and all the equipment and play areas are arranged along the walls. It is well resourced to inspire a range of play options. The Montessori mathematics materials provide good scope to explore mathematical concepts. The children have regular access, weather permitting, to a little fenced-off play area outside. This area offers some lovely play features, such as a raised balancing and car track, a little wooden tower for climbing and sliding and a wooden mud kitchen with no earth and a lot of fake grass, covering earth areas. There is good scope to raise the play value of this area.
- Child-initiated/led, active and interactive free play both indoors and outdoors is recognised and utilised as the main medium through which the children learn and develop.
- The children's emergent language, literacy and numeracy skills are fostered by utilising teachable moments during play. Some songs are sung at the end of the morning and there is some lovely individual, as well as group art on display. Some children engaged with great concentration in mark-making and art work. Some Irish words are used very naturally for everyday things and situations.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to develop and implement an emergent, enquiry-based curriculum, using the outcomes of assessment to plan further individual and group curriculum. The children's interests and learning dispositions need to be reflected in the curriculum plans. Succinct links to learning need to be made on all the observations. Working with the 'Planning and Assessing' pillar of the online *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* is advised.
- Practitioners are advised to re-structure the indoor area, by providing clearly designated areas, such as a big home corner, a big construction area, a messy play area, a cosy library area and an art and craft area. The play value of the outdoor area needs to be raised, to provide more scope for the children to make sense of the world around them, especially the natural environment and its features. They need to be enabled to work with sand, earth, water, loose, open-ended, manipulative, and versatile materials. The 'Learning Environment' pillar of the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* offers practical advice and a self-evaluation audit to support this action.
- The practitioners are advised to utilise daily circle time to enable the children to share their news, have discussions and act out songs, rhymes and finger-games. Interactive exploration of a high-quality story needs to be part of the everyday curriculum. This activity can be extended through role-play, puppet-shows and story sacks.

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 display enjoyment as they engage in activities and they show positive learning dispositions, such as persistence, resourcefulness, creativity, self-reliance and competence. During the different play times, lovely pockets of interactive, exploratory play develop. During the inspection, some periods where the children engaged in individual art work and table top work in a highly concentrated manner, were observed.

- It is evident, that the children understand the rules and boundaries of acceptable behaviour. They show an understanding of and regard for the rights and views of others.
- The rich free play options, provide a broad range of opportunities to the children to develop and refine their personal and social skills. They learn to self-regulate, problem-solve, co-operate, negotiate and turn-take.
- The children creatively represent their ideas, feelings and thoughts through a variety of media and play activities. These include making art, mark-making, role play and construction play.
- Both verbal and non-verbal communication strategies are used effectively by the children. Language is used to define and re-define roles, organise play situations, share information and discuss and negotiate ideas.

Action advised

- The practitioners need to take steps to ensure that the children have more opportunities in the outdoor area to get actively engaged in exploring and experimenting in the environment, and to use their developing physical skills to manipulate objects and materials.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- Management and staff regularly reflect, review and plan together. Every practitioner keeps a daily diary for individual reflection. On a weekly basis, more formal team meetings are utilised to reflect on practice and to plan as a team. The outcomes of those meetings are documented, so that they can be shared, acted-upon and reviewed again.
- An ethos of teamwork, collaboration and partnership is evident.
- Practitioners engage in some professional development, such as courses on 'messy play' and 'Diversity, Equality and Inclusion' in the early years.
- Effective two-way channels of communication between the setting and the families are established. These include an informative parent handbook, parent-practitioner meetings, newsletters, informal daily chats and the use of electronic media to share information.
- Transitions into and from the setting are managed sensitively and effectively. Gradual, family friendly settling-in procedures are in place. Good working relationships with the local primary school are established. The infant class teacher comes to visit the children in the setting and the children in the pre-school visit the primary school.

Action advised

- The practitioners are advised to avail of additional continuous professional development options, such as the Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years (LINC) programme. The systematic use of the online *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* is advised, to support the practitioners to collaboratively develop a shared vision and direction for the work of the setting.

Summary of Overall Inspection

Area	Quality Level
Quality of context to support children's learning and development	Good
Quality of processes to support children's learning and development	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 1:

Regarding the plan, we do follow a plan- we follow Montessori Curriculum as well as free play, art and outside time. On the day of the inspection, the children were mostly playing due to the positive and fun time they were having and having a different person in the room changed the routine.

We are now sitting with the children during snack time and see a positive change by doing this.

Area 2:

We have changed the room structure to the best we can as advised- home corner, play area etc.

We have a daily Circle Time which we sing songs, speak about news etc.

Area 3:

We have added new items to the outdoor area.

Area 4:

We are using and studying Aistear and Síolta in our practice.