An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>The Village Montessori</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>Malahide Yacht Club</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St James’s Terrace</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Malahide</td>
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<td>County Dublin</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>11FL0376</td>
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Date of Inspection: 20-03-2019
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>20-03-2019</th>
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| Inspection activities undertaken | Interaction with children  
Observation of interactions during a session  
Interaction with children  
Review of relevant documents  
Feedback to owner/practitioner and practitioner |

**CONTEXT OF SETTING**

The Village Montessori is a private setting which was established in 2009. It offers a morning pre-school session for children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, fourteen children and two practitioners, one of whom is the owner, 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.
- There is a pleasant, friendly and welcoming atmosphere in the setting. The practitioners engage in social conversations with the children and their parents at arrival and home times.
- The practitioners are responsive to the children and demonstrate positive regard for them and their families. At the time of the inspection, the setting had yet to implement the key person approach. This approach is one in which the practitioner develops a close, secure relationship with a small group of children and acts as a link between the pre-school and the parents of these children.
- Constructive praise, encouragement and affirmative feedback are regular features of the practitioners’ effective responses to children for their efforts in activities.
- The well-established daily routine, which children follow with ease and enthusiasm, provides opportunities for them to make independent decisions in their learning. The session consists of predominantly large-group, adult-initiated learning activities, including work time, circle time, snack time, activity time and outside time.
- The children receive sensitive support from the practitioners towards the development of their self-help needs; many children put away materials when finished working with them.
- The environment fosters the children’s sense of identity and belonging through a variety of displays and activities. These include the children’s individual and family photographs, the displays of their art work and circle-time activities when children share news from home.
- During the pre-school year, trips to places of interest in the locality and visits from members of the community are facilitated. These outings and visitors help to raise children’s awareness of other people and places in their community.

*Actions advised*

- The practitioners are advised to review the daily routine to ensure the provision of a balance of adult-initiated and child-initiated activities that focus on children’s individual interests and development needs. As part of this process, the use of small-group and child-led learning experiences may be beneficial.
- To build on the positive relationships between the practitioners and the children, the practitioners are advised to progress the implementation of a key worker approach.
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.
- The curriculum is informed by the Montessori approach to early education and is underpinned by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. Planning for children’s learning is predominantly thematic and includes seasonal events and the practitioners’ ideas.
- The practitioners record the children’s progress and plan for the next level in their use of the Montessori materials. Once a term, individual learning observations on children’s engagement in activities are conducted. Short-term planning does not include the children’s emergent interests.
- During the inspection, the practitioners’ use of effective interaction strategies to facilitate children’s learning was noted positively. As they sat alongside the children, the practitioners sensitively encouraged and extended the children’s learning; they offered formative feedback on their achievements and on a number of occasions posed open-ended questions to support children’s deeper thinking.
- The indoor learning environment is inviting and spacious. The wide selection of Montessori materials is presented to children in a well-prepared and respectful manner, with due regard for progression in their learning. The children have daily access to an outdoor area that promotes the use of their gross motor skills.
- A small number of opportunities and resources are provided for children to engage in socio-dramatic play, imaginative play, sensorial and manipulative play. There is potential to increase provision for children’s participation in sustained open-ended play.
- The practitioners facilitate suitable mark-making experiences and provide adequate resources to enhance the development of children’s emerging literacy skills.
- The practitioners accommodate the diversity and pace of the children’s learning and development. They provide appropriate opportunities for children to participate in complex and more challenging learning. An example of this was a practitioner’s notable support for a child in her use of the mathematical materials.

*Actions advised*

- The practitioners are advised to further develop their planning and assessment practices to ensure the consistent use children’s emergent interest and learning needs. The use of the information and templates from the ‘Planning and Assessment’ pillar from the *Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide* will assist the practitioners in providing experiences that build on the children’s learning.
- The practitioners are advised to provide more time for children’s participation in uninterrupted child-initiated play, with an increased focus on the provision of more real, open ended and sensorial materials. The use of the environment audit tool from the *Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide* will assist in this regard.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is good.
- The children are interested and motivated in their learning experiences. This was clearly evident in their enthusiastic self-selection of the Montessori and manipulative materials.
- Many of the children present as competent communicators. The children confidently demonstrate their capacity to verbalise their thoughts, ideas and interests with each other and the practitioners. On the day of the inspection, formal opportunities for all children to share their learning were not facilitated.
- Many children are developing positive learning dispositions, such as perseverance and curiosity, as noted in their exploration of the meaningful materials and resources linked to the theme of the week, ‘The Farm’. There is potential for children to be offered more enquiry-based learning experiences.
- Many of the children display a growing understanding of the meaning of mathematical language; they held discussions about who was aged three, four or five and they demonstrated an evolving understanding of shapes, one-to-one correspondence and suitable counting skills.
- Children experience success and are sufficiently challenged; this was evident when they completed puzzles, took on the class helper role and in their mastery of the Montessori materials.
Many of the children are developing appropriate personal and social skills. During the session, children were observed sharing, taking turns, participating in tasks that promote social responsibility and building relationships with others. On a few occasions, a small number of children required the support of the practitioners to help resolve minor issues of social conflict.

The children are provided with a number of effective opportunities to develop an awareness of the natural world. Examples include their recent food planting activity. Plans are in place for the facilitation of ongoing activities for children to observe the life cycle of caterpillars and chicks.

**Actions advised**

- The practitioners are advised to provide additional opportunities for children to reflect on their play and learning activities. The use of children's individual learning books, and small group discussions facilitated by the key practitioner, will assist in this regard. This will enhance the children's abilities to make connections between new and prior learning experiences.
- The practitioners are advised to provide increased opportunities to further develop children’s positive learning dispositions in enquiry-based learning experiences. The provision of more experiences where children can be curious and investigate and where their learning can be scaffold will assist in this regard.
- The practitioners are advised to use a broader range of strategies to support the children in the development of their self-regulations skills and their ability to independently resolve minor social conflicts.

**AREA 4**

**QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- The effective sense of teamwork and collaboration evident between the owner and the practitioner contributed to the smooth and organised pre-school session observed. The practitioners demonstrate commitment to the children and their learning experiences.
- At the time of the inspection, the owner and practitioner informally planned and reviewed their practices. Formal self-review and professional reflection practices had yet to become part of their review procedures.
- Continuing professional development is valued in the setting. The practitioners have participated in training on mandatory topics, such as First Aid and Children First. As part of their commitment to high quality learning and development experiences for children, at the feedback meeting the practitioners demonstrated commitment to sourcing training on *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*.
- The practitioners proactively engage with parents and use a number of appropriate strategies to communicate with them regarding the children's learning activities. These include sharing the setting's Parents' Handbook, policies and procedures and the regular use of group and individual social media apps. Children's art work is sent home regularly.
- Transitions into and from the setting are managed sensitively; there are well-established settling-in procedures. The children visit the setting before commencing to meet the practitioners. Towards the end of the pre-school year, the principal from a local primary school visits the setting to meet the children who will be moving to national school. At the time of the inspection, plans were being advanced to invite principals from other local primary schools to visit the setting and to meet the children who may transition to their schools.

**Actions advised**

- The practitioners are advised to use the *Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide* to develop formal, systematic self-review and professional practices. These will help the practitioners to identify areas in need of improvement and to develop an action plan based on agreed, identified priorities.
- National training support in the use of the *Aistear Curriculum Framework* is to be offered in 2019. Participation in this training may be beneficial to further support the practitioners in their practice.
- The practitioners are advised to share the children’s learning with parents on a more regular basis. The frequent sharing of the children’s learning folders and observations, including the provision of opportunities to comment on these observations and folders, will further promote parents' involvement in their child’s learning and development.
CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the setting to implement the actions advised above is good.

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>Good</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of processes to support children’s learning and development</td>
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<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of management and leadership for learning</td>
<td>Good</td>
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</table>

Language used in Early Years Education Inspection reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</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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APPENDIX

SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT
SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection report
- We found the whole inspection process really helpful and informative on ways to better our Montessori pre-school and to offer the best service possible. We both enjoyed the inspection experience and find the report fair and accurate reflecting all that was discussed on the day of the inspection.

Area 2  Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection
- Both staff members attended a workshop on 1st May ’19 with Fingal County Childcare Committee on Aistear, Siolta and the Practice Guide. We found it very informative and have implemented some of the learning tools into our daily classroom routine.
- We have also started to use learning journals for each child as recommended by the inspector which both the children and the parents find really useful.
- As advised by the inspector we have created larger sensory activities for the children and implemented more play areas for the children to encourage more imaginative play/role play.
- This coming September ’19 we are planning on using a key worker approach and plan to use smaller child led group learning experiences as advised by the inspector.