An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>Maria Montessori School AMS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>Old Parochial House</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Killeigh</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>County Offaly</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>11OY0082</td>
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Date of Evaluation: 14-09-2018
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of inspection</th>
<th>14-09-2018</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Meeting with setting manager</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Observation of interactions during the morning session</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Interaction with children</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Review of relevant documents</td>
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<td>- Post inspection feedback to setting manager</td>
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CONTEXT OF SETTING

Maria Montessori AMS has been in operation since 2011. There is one large pre-school room which provides care and education for local children availing of the Early Childhood Care and Education Programme (ECCE). The setting has a mixed age group of children availing of the first and second year of the ECCE programme. On the day of inspection, there were two practitioners present, one of whom is the owner/manager. Seven children were present in the ECCE room. 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 warm and welcoming atmosphere and the children and parents feel comfortable in the setting. Relationships are respectful and reciprocal to the needs of children. There is a strong focus on developing manners in the setting and practitioners reinforce this throughout the day.
- The setting is currently developing a daily routine with opportunities for the children to be active agents during the free play period in the morning time. On the day of the inspection there were many long transition periods for the children as practitioners waited for all children to join in all activities.
- The practitioners sit with children during snack time and encourage them to eat their lunch.
- The owner/manager is the key worker for all the children in the group. She and the practitioner discuss their observations of the children.
- Photographs of the children are on display throughout the main room supporting the identity and belonging of the children. There is a strong agricultural background in the setting and this is represented through the materials available to the children. The practitioners sing welcome songs and good bye songs featuring the children's names, to support identity and belonging. There are a few examples of community involvement in the setting, for example, a local bee keeper visits the setting.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the owner/manager and the practitioner review the transition periods which occur during the daily routine to ensure children do not experience long waiting periods. The use of visual aids and resources will support transitions further.
- The practitioners are advised to extend the children’s awareness of their local area and the cultural practices relevant to their community through further representations 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 good.
- The setting has a curriculum which aims to merge Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework and the Montessori Method. Equipment and materials within the environment are
incorporated into the Montessori areas and play areas. The materials offered to the children include a good variety of real life equipment and wooden resources.

- There are long, medium and short-term plans in place in which there are some references to skills, dispositions and attitudes being developed by the children. Medium-term plans focus on annual events and themes and are linked to the short-term plans. Additional references need to be made to planning appropriate activities for the children’s needs over the two-year ECCE cycle, and to the emergent curriculum. The owner/manager completes regular observations and documentation which records the learning experiences and future plans of children.

- The children enjoy an effective play period of uninterrupted learning supported by the practitioners. This period provides appropriate opportunities for the children to explore their own interests before joining group activities.

- The practitioners focus on using formal conversations to support language, literacy and numeracy development. There is potential for further extension and exploration of the children’s skills in these areas.

- The setting offers an inclusive environment and the practitioners are aware of the specific needs of the children. Steps are taken to ensure that the setting is safe and accessible for all of the children attending.

**Actions advised**
- The setting is advised to review the current plans with a focus on supporting the two-year ECCE cycle and to provide explicit plans for the emergent curriculum being developed in the setting.
- It is advised that the practitioners develop additional strategies to promote language, literacy and numeracy skills through the use of commenting, scaffolding and open-ended questions.

**AREA 3**

**QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is good.
- Children are happy and enjoy the free play and outdoor experiences offered to them in the setting.
- The outdoor area is safe and offers a range of experiences to the children including opportunities to develop their gross motor skills. On the day of inspection children persisted with the challenge of cycling a tricycle and other children discussed their interest in tractors and trailers while in the outdoor area.

- The practitioners use songs and rhymes throughout the morning session encouraging children to sing along. Story time is planned for at the end of the day and children can read their chosen book while a group story-telling experience also takes place.
- Children have few opportunities during the day to play alone or in pairs; the only opportunities available are during free play and outdoor play. Children are encouraged to participate in large group activities for a significant period of the day. On the day of the inspection it was observed that this caused conflict both socially and within the activities. These conflicts were resolved through intervention by the practitioners and the behaviour policy was not implemented consistently.

- There is a variety of sensory experiences available to the children; they use playdough, they explore a nature table and they play with suds. The children enjoy these experiences and they are engaged and active especially when playing with suds.

**Actions advised**
- It is advised that the children be afforded further independence, choice and freedom in guiding their own learning and in making choices about participating in activities. They would also benefit from opportunities to develop their self-help skills.
- It is advised that practitioners promote problem-solving skills to support the children to deal with conflict situations. This can be achieved through the consistent use of the behaviour policy to support conflict resolution.
AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- The team are professional and they welcome visitors to the preschool.
- The owner/manager is the key worker for all children and takes on the majority of the roles and responsibilities. There is very limited delegation of responsibilities to the other practitioner in the setting.
- The setting has developed good connections with external agencies and the practitioners regularly participate in continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities. They have participated in CPD provided by Healthy Ireland and in the Leadership in Inclusion (LINC) in the Early Years programme. The owner/manager has completed a Degree in Childcare where she has been introduced to the Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide and is beginning to explore the resource to support self-reflection practices in the setting.
- The owner/manager and practitioner have monthly staff meetings where they focus on discussing the children’s learning and future developmental needs.
- Communication with parents is facilitated through a good range of resources including a social media application and a parent handbook. The owner/manager recognises the need to review and update the partnership with parents’ policy in order to promote further development of the setting.
- The setting has an effective settle-in policy which provides for the children to build up their attendance time. The children bring a home comfort into the setting on certain days of the week.
- The owner/manager has developed supports for the transition to primary school through linking with the local school and sharing information on the needs of the children. The parents are invited to attend an end-of-year graduation celebration.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the owner/manager delegate roles and responsibilities to the practitioner. This will support the wellbeing and professional development of the practitioner.
- It is advised that the Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide be used to support the team when reviewing the setting’s communication processes and its ‘partnership with parents’ policy. The ‘Partnership with Parents’ self-evaluation tool will support self-reflection and improvement.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the setting to continue 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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of processes to support children’s learning and development</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of children’s learning experiences and achievements</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of management and leadership for learning</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Language used in Early-Years Education-focused 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

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

Visual pictures of daily routine will be used to aid children’s transition between activities and transitions will be kept to a minimum.

Sand timer will be introduced to facilitate the children’s transitions as a visual support. We will also use a class bell.

Local pictures of community will be displayed including our Primary School, shop, football pitch, church and holy well.

Area 2

Children’s interests will be heard and observed, through planning curriculum on a weekly/monthly in consultation with children, practitioners and parents.

We will reflect with children and develop their interests through two year learning outcomes for each child.

Area 3

We place great importance on each child’s self-help and independence as an important part of our curriculum, but will continue to reflect and review it.

Management will model the use of open-ended questions through scaffolding and promoting children’s language and vocabulary.

Management will be consistent with the use of positive behaviour and review and update our behaviour policy regularly.

Management will support and encourage conflict resolution between children themselves but would like to acknowledge that the transition takes time for very small children to resolve their self-regulation with just two weeks in preschool and come to terms with new solutions.
Area 4

Owner/Manager has reflected and seen the importance and value of delegation to colleague for shared collaboration learning experiences. Siolta & Aistear are currently practiced and we are completing a Siolta/Aistear programme with Offaly CCC. We continue to work with parents to develop and grow through joint collaborative learning for richer learning outcomes for children, parents and practitioners.