

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	Magic Moments Montessori
Setting Address	Carricknagat Ballisodare County Sligo
DCYA number	12SO0102

Date of Inspection: 10-10-2019



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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 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	10-10-2019
Inspection activities undertaken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with the setting manager • Observation of interactions during one pre-school session • Interaction with the children

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Magic Moments Montessori is privately run, sessional pre-school service, located in Ballisodare, County Sligo. It offers one morning pre-school session to children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. While the overarching curriculum is based on *Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*, the use of Montessori materials is incorporated into the daily provision. On the day of inspection, the manager and eight children were present. The manager 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; a response was not received from the setting.

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 caring, warm and affirming atmosphere in the setting. The children and parents are personally welcomed as the children arrive and settle into the pre-school room.
- There is a routine available in printed and visual format in the room. Currently there is an imbalance between the organisation of adult-led activities and sustained child-led play.
- Snack time is effectively utilised as a social experience whereby the practitioner sits with the children. Naturally flowing conversations are effectively used by the practitioner to make connections in the children's learning.
- Transitions are pre-dominantly managed using a one-minute timer to prepare the children for tidy-up. On other occasions a verbal cue is used. Appropriate lead-in time is not provided for the children to prepare for the change in activity.
- The practitioner sensitively encourages turn-taking and guides the children to act kindly and considerately towards their peers during minor conflict situations. There were some missed opportunities to develop the children's understanding of emotions and to generate independent problem solving skills.
- The children's unique identities are celebrated by creating labelled spaces for their personal belongings, the introduction of a 'Me' box to discuss personal items and an 'Our Family' wall which displays photographs of the children and their families.
- The pre-school makes annual efforts to integrate with the local community. Visits are arranged from the Garda and the dentist. Parents are invited to shows at Christmas and at the end of the year to nurture a sense of belonging and community in the setting.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the routine is reviewed and developed to provide a prolonged period for extended play and to support a greater balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities.
- It is advised that the manager provides appropriate lead-in periods to changing activities and develops additional strategies to adequately prepare and involve the children in the transitions within the routine.
- It is advised that the manager introduces strategies to support the children to develop independent conflict resolution skills, problem-solving and an awareness of feelings during minor conflicts.

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.
- Planning is pre-dominantly adult-led and organised on topical themes such as seasonal changes and cultural celebrations. There are some elements of the children's interests recorded, although this is not consistent practice.
- Some observations have been documented in line with the Montessori areas of learning and the domains of development. A scrapbook is organised and presented to the parents at the end of the year, outlining photographs of their children's learning experiences.
- The manager views the children as competent and confident and supports them to learn alongside their peers. She knows the children very well and is sensitive and responsive to their needs and temperaments.
- The indoor environment has some defined areas of play such as a socio-dramatic area, a book area and the Montessori areas of learning are divided accordingly. There is minimal access and availability to a range of well-resourced, creative, authentic and multi-sensory activities in the environment.
- The manager converses frequently with the children during playful interactions, extending their vocabulary and mathematical language through natural conversations.
- The practitioner provides opportunities for the children to engage in physical exercise and movement during the session. She encourages the use of the socio-dramatic play area to engage the children in a variety of roles which extends their imagination.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the manager develops the planning structures to make visible connections between the learning goals of *Aistear*, the planned activities and the children's learning needs. Consistent evaluation along with regular consultation with the children will support an emergent approach.
- It is advised that the manager develops assessment methods that regularly document a rich picture of the children's learning and that this information is used to inform the next steps in their learning. Continual involvement of the children and parents in this process will develop a partnered approach.
- It is advised that the indoor environment and outdoor experiences are developed in line with the *Aistear, Solta Practice Guide* to provide a wider, well-resourced provision of resources and activities. Providing a greater choice and accessibility to authentic, creative and multi-sensory activities will broaden the children's learning opportunities.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is good.
- The children enjoy sensorial activities such as playdoh, rice and kinetic sand. They are highly motivated during physical activities such as singing and dancing during the session.
- There are opportunities for the children to socialise as the majority of them play co-operatively with their peers. Some children require frequent adult support during minor conflict situations. There were a few missed opportunities to foster responsibility and independence further during the session.
- The children are developing an awareness and appreciation of who they are as individuals and as members of their families. Many share stories relating to their personal experiences and family backgrounds. They are gaining an awareness of community roles through regular visits from professionals, such as the local librarian.
- The children experience success and celebrate their creations and achievements during some play activities. They show pride in their art folders and gather their treasured drawings inside. The information and observations recorded about each child's learning are not utilised to further support their sense of accomplishment.

- The children have opportunities to sing songs, listen to music and to mark-make at the drawing table to encourage language and communication. There are minimal high quality books and mark-making materials provided across a wide range of play areas to nurture these skills further.
- The children have the opportunity to broaden their knowledge of nature through many activities and visuals in the environment. They go on frequent walks in the park to appreciate seasonal changes and to explore natural materials.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the children have regular opportunities to further develop social skills through team activities, an awareness of their feelings and extended opportunities to develop independence and personal responsibility throughout the session.
- It is advised that the information documented about the children's learning includes their annotated voices and that it is shared and utilised to highlight their individual identity and their unique learning achievements.
- It is advised that further opportunities are provided for the children to develop communication skills by accessing a wider range of high quality books and mark-making materials in the various play areas.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- The setting was originally established as a Montessori pre-school. Although the Montessori materials remain in situ, a re-defined setting vision and curriculum statement is required due to the change in management.
- The manager attends mandatory training courses and has previously participated in *Aistear* and *Síolta* workshops with the local county childcare committee. Engagement with non-mandatory training is not undertaken consistently. This would promote reflection and improvements based on current practices and research.
- Some evaluation is occurring informally in relation to the planned learning activities. The manager has previously collaborated with and utilised external agencies to support children with additional needs.
- A warm rapport has been established between the manager and the parents with timely conversations in relation to the children upon arrival and collection. The manager uses an electronic application that shares photographs of the children engaging in a range of play experiences with their parents.
- Parents are provided with an information booklet and are invited to visit the setting with their child prior to the commencement of the ECCE programme. They receive their child's scrapbook at the end of the year which highlights an overview of the children's yearly experiences. There are no formal measures established to promote consistent information sharing about the children's individual learning.
- The manager has developed a strong professional relationship with the local primary school. The principal visits the pre-school before the end of the ECCE programme to support the children's transition to school. Currently, there are no processes in place for sharing a summary of each child's learning with the parents and the junior infant teachers prior to their transition to school.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the manager develops a vision statement along with a curriculum statement for the setting, outlining the principles and values upon which the service is founded.
- It is advised that the manager engages in regular continuing professional development and review using the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* to establish evaluation and improvement practices. Obtaining mentoring support from organisations such as Better Start or the local county childcare committee will further strengthen this focus.
- It is advised that the manager develops formal opportunities for communicating with the parents. The development of an end-of-year summary of learning for each child, which is shared with the parents and the junior infant teachers, will promote a smooth transition process.

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	Good
Quality of management and leadership for learning	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.