An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna  
Department of Education and Skills  

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting Name</th>
<th>Elderdale Crèche and Montessori</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Address</td>
<td>Elderdale House</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Station Road,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Duleek</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>County Meath</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCYA number</td>
<td>14MH0303</td>
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Date of Inspection: 03-12-2018
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

Date of inspection: 03-12-2018

Inspection activities undertaken:
- Meeting with the setting owner/practitioner and early years practitioner
- Observation of interactions and activities during a pre-school session
- Review of educational resources and facilities

- Interaction and discussion with the children
- Review of relevant setting documentation
- Review of records of the children’s learning and development
- Feedback discussion with setting owner/practitioner

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Elderdale Crèche and Montessori, established in 2004, provides a morning pre-school session for children enrolled on the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. The owner/practitioner, an early years practitioner and seven children were present on the day of the inspection. The setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised in this report, the setting chose to accept the report without response.

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 fair.
- The practitioners have established positive relationships with the children’s parents and family members. There is an open-door policy in place and family members were observed to confidently enter the pre-school room at arrival and home times.
- There is a consistent daily routine in place. The majority of the session consists of practitioner-planned and practitioner-directed learning activities. Time allocated for the children to be active agents in choosing and organising their learning and development activities, so becoming competent learners, is limited. The daily routine is not displayed in a pictorial format for the children in the room or for parents to view.
- Relationships between the practitioners and children are often responsive with some positive and respectful interactions observed during the session. The practitioners display a desire to care for and nurture the children. This results in practitioners doing many things for the children which they could begin to learn to do for themselves independently.
- The behaviour of a few children, while within the typical range for pre-school developmental levels, indicated that their capacities and strategies to self-regulate require additional adult support. Practitioners were observed to consistently make judgements and to issue directives to the children around their behaviour. The setting policy describes approaches and strategies which are consist with best practice. On the day of the inspection, the consistent use of these strategies was not observed.
- There is a developing sense of group belonging among the children. The practitioners report that parents attend events once or twice during the year and that sometimes members of the local community visit to share information with the children. Displays, conversations, activities, books and resources to nurture the children’s developing sense of identity and belonging were not observed.

Actions advised
- It is advised that practitioners review the daily routine to ensure that it is responsive to the children’s learning and development needs and that there is a substantial, uninterrupted time allocated each day for play-based discovery and learning. It is also advised that the daily routine is displayed for the parents and for the children in pictures and words in the pre-school room.
- Practitioners are advised to support the children to become confident, capable and independent in managing their own self-help and self-care needs.
- It is advised that practitioners implement the setting’s behaviour management policy, using strategies and approaches that will support the children to develop social and emotional skills to name and express feelings and needs, solve problems and negotiate solutions appropriately.
To nurture the children’s sense of identity and belonging, it is advised that practitioners display photographs of the children, their families, the local community and the children’s individual creative art work in the room. As the preschool year progresses, resources, interactions and activities that will support children to explore identity and diversity within the group and wider society could be introduced.

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 fair.
- The curriculum in the setting is informed by the Montessori approach to early years education and is documented briefly in a curriculum policy. This document is not aligned to Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework and does not describe the broad-based learning to be supported in the pre-school programme.
- The practitioners plan to introduce Montessori equipment, activities and topics to the whole group on a monthly basis. No links are made to Aistear in this planning. Information about the children’s developmental levels and current interests is not used to inform planning for the next steps in the children learning.
- The children’s mastery of use of Montessori equipment is recorded on a checklist by the practitioners. The practitioners report that they begin to compile a learner journal, containing standardised templates and craft work, for each child in January. This current observation and assessment system does not provide an accurate, holistic or detailed picture of each child’s individual learning, development, achievements and strengths.
- The large indoor learning environment is well-maintained. There is a good provision of Montessori equipment which is easily accessible to the children. Space, resources and materials to stimulate and support explorative, playful learning is less well provided for and is only available to the children at certain times in the session. The outdoor learning environment was not used on the day of the inspection.
- The practitioners focus on supporting the children’s learning in a dedicated manner by working with individual children using Montessori equipment. Many of the strategies used during these times were not supportive of positive learning experiences and were not based on a view of the child as a competent, confident learner. A few instances of practitioners effectively supporting the children’s thinking and learning during self-chosen play and exploration were observed during the session.

Actions advised

- It is advised that practitioners establish and document a play-based programme which supports the children’s developing dispositions, values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding as outlined in Aistear.
- It is advised that information about each child’s personal learning and development is regularly documented in a learner journal to create a rich picture of individual progression. Methods such as, narrative observations, anecdotal notes, photographs and samples of the children’s individual creative work with relevant links to Aistear could be used.
- To support the children’s next steps in learning, it is advised that practitioners establish a system of short-term planning which ensures a balance between topics introduced by the practitioners and planned extension and support for the children’s emerging interests.
- Practitioners are advised to further develop the learning environment and to provide a wider range of playful learning opportunities. The development of interest areas and the introduction of open-ended, real and natural materials, resources, props and tools is a priority.
- Practitioners are encouraged to reflect on their role in supporting the children’s learning through play and to interact as a play partners with the children to extend their self-selected play and learning.
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 well-settled in the setting and arrive positively.
- Some children engaged enthusiastically with equipment and activities during the dedicated Montessori time.
- All children were fully engaged during the free play period. They displayed motivation and focused engagement for sustained periods of time in their self-chosen play and discovery activities.
- Many of the children are very eager to engage in individual creative expression and mark-making and displayed innovative ideas for the use of the materials provided by the practitioners to complete a craft activity. There is no space allocated for creative art and mark-making and recourses and materials are not freely accessible to the children.
- On the day of inspection, many children engaged in self-expression and collaborative play as they negotiated role play situations with each other.
- The children are eager to communicate and express themselves. It was observed that there is a wide range of English language acquisition and language development across the group of children.
- The children were observed to experience success in some activities and many of them shared their excitement about this with peers and practitioners.

Actions advised
- It is advised that the children be provided with a dedicated creative space and a wide range of freely available and accessible resources and materials to support independent and imaginative art and mark making.
- To enhance support for the children’s engagement in socio-dramatic play and self-expression, it is advised that props and resources to extend and scaffold the children’s current interests and topics of play be provided.
- It is advised that the children’s communication skills and language development be supported through increased use of songs, rhymes, small-group conversations, storytelling and book use.

AREA 4
QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is fair.
- There is strong and positive team working in the setting. Roles and responsibilities are clearly identified and each practitioner took a leadership role during the session observed.
- The practitioners meet formally once a month to plan and they review informally at the end of each session. Time is not currently allocated to planning for quality improvement measures informed by Síolta and Aistear.
- The setting is linked to local early years agencies and the practitioners access support and advice from them.
- The practitioners attend required training such as first aid and child protection and some general information workshops. The setting has not yet availed of any external mentoring support for overall quality improvement.
- General information about the setting is shared with parents during an open day and practitioners report that they also provide parents with a leaflet outlining key policies.
- Information about the children’s daily experiences is shared in conversation with parents at home time. Parents are offered an opportunity during the year to meet with practitioners to discuss their child’s progression. The practitioners report that some parents attend these meetings.

Actions advised
- It is advised that practitioners establish a system of self-evaluation and planning for quality improvement in the setting using Aistear and Síolta, the national practice frameworks and the online Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide.
- To foster clear communication between setting and home, it is advised that documented information on each child’s individual achievements, learning and development is shared regularly with their parents.
- To begin a quality improvement plan for the service, it is advised that the practitioners attend the *Aistear, Síolta* Training Initiative and access on-site mentoring support from the Better Start Quality Development Service.

**CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE**

The practitioners engaged in the co-professional feedback discussion following the inspection. With continuous professional training and engagement with on-site external mentoring, 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>Fair</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of processes to support children’s learning and development</td>
<td>Fair</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>Fair</td>
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Language used in Early-Years Education Inspection Reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality 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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