

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills**

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	Laugh and Learn Montessori
Setting Address	Drumderry Bunclody, County Wexford
DCYA number	14WX0191

Date of Inspection: 14-11-2019



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agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

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	14-11-2019
Inspection activities undertaken	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interaction with children• Review of relevant documents• Feedback to setting owner and practitioner

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Laugh and Learn Montessori is a private setting that is based in Bunclody, Co Wexford. It provides a morning session for children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, there were two practitioners, one of whom is the owner, and seventeen children in attendance. A student on work placement was also present. The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the 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 very good.
- The practitioners have created a very warm, caring and affirming environment. They take the time to engage in social conversations with the parents at arrival and departure times.
- Relationships between the practitioners and the children are notably positive and reciprocal. The practitioners effectively use a key-person approach. This approach is one in which each practitioner develops a secure relationship with a small group of children and acts as a link between the pre-school and the parents of these children.
- The children are familiar with the daily routine, which includes a balance of small-group and large-group learning activities. During the session, children had opportunities to make some decisions in their learning.
- On the day of the inspection, transition times were smooth. The practitioners used a variety of strategies to inform children of upcoming changes in activities. For example, they used verbal reminders and songs to promote children's successful management of transitions.
- The practitioners effectively promote the children's self-help skills. On arrival, children are encouraged to put their lunches away and to hang up their coats. They receive sensitive encouragement from the practitioners as they wash their hands independently.
- The children's sense of identity and belonging is nurtured and valued. There are a number of effective displays, including the evolving family wall and the children's creative achievements, which celebrate their uniqueness. At the time of the inspection, the practitioners had yet to re-introduce the use of displays and imagery of people and places in the community.

Action advised

- The practitioners are advised to progress their goal to reinstate the use of displays of people and places in the community. These can be used as resources during activities to help raise children's awareness of people and places of interest in the locality.

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 *Aistear; the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the Montessori Method of Education. Currently, short-term planning is conducted on a monthly basis. The practitioners take cognisance of the children's emergent interests when planning. In addition, they plan for the children's use of the Montessori materials and exercises.
- The practitioners use *Aistear* learning records to document the children's learning and development. While the findings from assessments are used to progress children's learning, the practitioners have yet to formally incorporate the next steps for children in the short-term plans. The practitioners share their observations on children's learning with parents regularly.
- The practitioners compile individual learning books which include samples of the children's art work. These books are shared with parents at the end of the pre-school year.
- The practitioners' use of effective interaction strategies to facilitate children's learning was positively noted. As they sat alongside the children, the practitioners sensitively encouraged and extended the children's learning through their role modelling of language and some use of open-ended questions and prompts.
- The indoor learning environment is well maintained, safe and inviting. There is a good range of Montessori and manipulative materials for children to enjoy. During the session, there was a small amount of socio-dramatic, open-ended and real materials to promote children's choice and their participation in child-initiated play.
- Children have daily access to the outdoors. This highly commendable spacious learning environment provides ample opportunities for children to engage in a wide variety of gross motor activities. These include sensorial play and experiences where children explore the natural environment. At the time of the inspection, plans were in place to review the outdoor area and to increase the provision of resources, including opportunities for mark-making and creative experiences.
- The practitioners effectively promote the children's early language skills. There is good use of rhymes and everyday discussions to foster these emerging skills. During the inspection, the children also enthusiastically participated in a story-telling activity which clearly held their attention and interest.
- The children are learning in an inclusive learning environment. The practitioners proactively engage with parents to promote children's participation in the ECCE programme.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to extend their planning and assessment approaches. In so doing, the regular inclusion of the findings from the *Aistear* learning record, the children's learning dispositions and their individual needs in short-term planning is advised. In addition, an increase in the frequency and range of approaches to assessment in use is advised.
- The practitioners are advised to use the audit tool in the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* to review and enhance the availability, breadth and variety of socio-dramatic, real and open-ended materials. This will further support children's participation in meaningful free play and give them a greater variety of choice.

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 present as happy and secure. They demonstrate enjoyment and fun in their learning and are keen to participate in learning experiences with their peers and the practitioners.
- Many children demonstrate positive self-esteem and view themselves as competent learners. On many occasions, they experienced success and a few children enthusiastically shared their achievements with others. At the time of the inspection, formal opportunities for children to review their learning was not a regular feature of the daily programme.
- The children are clearly developing positive learning dispositions and demonstrate their sense of enquiry during activities. This was particularly evident during their exploration of the 'craters' and 'space rocks' that they had found during outside play.
- The children are developing very good social skills, such as turn taking, sharing and the ability to interact amicably with their peers. During the inspection, the atmosphere throughout the session was calm and positive.
- The children's early mathematical understanding is effectively nurtured. Children were observed using mathematical language in their everyday conversations; they counted forwards and backwards and engaged in sorting, classifying and one to one matching activities.
- The children participated in learning activities which promoted their curiosity and their ability to make connections in their learning. They demonstrated the capacity to respond to the small number of open-ended questions posed by the practitioners.
- The children have ample opportunities to participate in learning experiences that foster their early creative and expressive skills. During the inspection, they engaged in a variety of mark-making activities. In addition, a group of children organised themselves into a marching band.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to provide further opportunities for children to share and reflect on their learning and achievements. In so doing, the use of small-group activities where children can reflect on their learning experiences or review their learning journals is advised.
- The practitioners are advised to build on their use of the natural exchanges between themselves and the children as opportunities to pose thought-provoking and open-ended questions. This will help to build the children's capacities to respond to 'I wonder why' questions?

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- There is a very strong ethos of teamwork and collaboration between the owner and the practitioner. They demonstrate very good levels of commitment to the provision of a high quality service for the children and their families.
- The practitioners hold formal meetings each week. At these meetings, they plan and review the curriculum, reflect on their practices and identify areas in need of improvement. The practitioners demonstrated an awareness and interest in using the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* as part of their self-review practices.
- The owner is a good role model; high standards are promoted and each person's skill set is used effectively. This practice contributed to the smooth organisation of the session.
- The practitioners' participation in continuing professional development is promoted. At the time of the inspection, one practitioner was participating in further accredited training. The practitioners have also attended workshops on some of the standards from *Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education* and the owner has participated in the Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) programme.

- The practitioners exchange information on the children's learning with parents on a daily basis. In addition, displays and notices are used to highlight the children's learning. Individual meetings of practitioners and parents to discuss their child's progress are facilitated as required. At the time of the inspection, the setting's policies and procedures were being updated. Parents are informed through the Parents' Handbook that the setting's policies are available for them to view if they so wish.
- After Easter each year props, such as photographs and uniforms from the local primary schools, are introduced to the children to support discussions around moving onto primary school. The setting has established links with the local home-school liaison co-ordinator. The practitioners have researched ways in which they can enhance the sharing of information with the principal of the local school and other schools and plan to use the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 'Mo Scéal' transition document for all children.

Action advised

- The practitioners are advised to use the full range of resources over time from the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* to further develop their self-evaluation and professional reflection practices and their ongoing development.

Summary of Overall Inspection

Area	Quality Level
Quality of context to support children's learning and development	Very 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

- From reading the report we are very happy that it is accurate to how our setting is operating. The report is highlighting the positives within our setting. When the report goes live, people will have a good insight into how Laugh and Learn provide a safe, secure and happy childcare setting.
- We are happy to work with the suggestions offered to us through the report and we are delighted with how our first DES inspection has gone. We are thankful for our scores and we will aim to strengthen our service and better our scores for future inspections.

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

- After the inspection we have added photos of our local town to our home corner. We have laminated pictures of local shops, chemists, restaurants and petrol stations in our home corner. They are great conversation starters among the children. "I went here yesterday" and "My grandad brings me in there when we go get petrol for the car"
- We are looking at bringing the community into the service by inviting some people out to our school. We hope to have the local shopkeeper visit us before Easter break.
- Our home corner has tripled in size and there is open access to all children at all time. Before, we had a small home corner for two children at one time the children are really enjoying their time in the new home corner. They have real plates and cups along with real glassware and knives and forks. The children are learning a respect for their new area. They take care with their toys and resources. They have different pastas and grains to make dinner with. There are many open ended resources to explore. For example, they have twigs, pinecones and pebbles.
- The class learning journals are now on a low shelf for easy access for the children. We are currently working with the children in demonstrating how they can add drawings and crafts to their journals. In time the children will be able to do this without help from a teacher. We are also helping our younger children to develop a sense of respect for their friend's books.
- We are yet to begin a self-evaluation tool kit from the Siolta Aistear practice guide. It is our aim to begin one in the next school term. We aim to complete an evaluation and begin implementing any changes we may feel necessary in order to better the service being provided to the children.