

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	Anne's Montessori Playschool
Setting Address	Lisanne Hacketstown County Carlow
DCYA number	16CW0079

Date of Inspection: 01-10-2019



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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	01-10-2019
Inspection activities undertaken	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Feedback to settings owner, manager and practitioner
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with setting manager• Observation of interactions during the session• Interaction with children	

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Anne's Montessori is a privately-owned, sessional setting. It was established in 1977 and is located in the rural village of Hacketstown, County Carlow. The setting provides a morning pre-school session for children enrolled on the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, twelve children and two practitioners, one of whom is the manager, were in attendance. The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the report; a response for publication 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 very good.
- There is a very caring and welcoming atmosphere in the setting. On arrival, the children and parents are greeted in a very warm and friendly manner. Conversations between the parents and practitioners are friendly and relaxed.
- Relationships between the practitioners and the children are highly commended. The practitioners know the children well and are attentive to their individual needs.
- A key worker system is in place; key practitioners have responsibility for observing and documenting the learning of a small group of children. Currently, the same groups are not used for small group activities. The flexible daily routine is documented and displayed for the children at their eye level. It provides opportunities for children to be active in their learning and includes free play, circle time, table-top and outdoor activities.
- On the day of inspection, the practitioners gave advance notice to bring the children's attention to an impending change of activity. These announcements were not consistently used with the whole group of children and, as a result, some children were not aware that the countdown to the transition had started.
- Snack time is a pleasant, social and learning occasion. The children help to set the table for snack and the practitioners sit and eat with the children. Healthy eating is promoted through general discussions and the use of a healthy-eating chart.
- The children demonstrate very good independent skills. They independently use the toilet facilities and take care of their own personal care needs. The older children happily discussed and demonstrated their ability to put on and zip up their coats.
- The practitioners support the children's understanding of the boundaries of acceptable behaviour through the use of positive reinforcement. For example, when a child started to climb on the table, she was politely reminded 'Our feet stand on the floor'. Without hesitation, the child got off the table.
- The children's uniqueness is represented in the environment through displayed photographs, a family wall, a handprint friendship tree and samples of their art work. The children's heights are also displayed and their place mats include their individual photographs.
- The practitioners actively encourage family involvement. Family members are invited to attend a mother's day tea party, the annual graduation and Christmas events. They are also invited to share their professions and interests with the children. For example, lambs and puppies were brought in by parents to meet the children.

Actions advised

- To enhance children's understanding and management of transitions throughout the session, the practitioners are advised to consistently use signals and alerts with all of the children to draw their attention to the impending end of an activity.
- The practitioners are advised to review the organisation of small group activities to include the use of the key groups. This will optimise the key worker's role in building relationships with children and provide each practitioner with an opportunity to take responsibility for small-group work, observations and documentation and sharing of information with parents for the one group of children.

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 very good.
- A play-based curriculum with links to the *Aistear; the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* is implemented.
- A thematic approach to planning is organised on long-term and short-term bases. During the inspection, the practitioners effectively responded to the children's emergent interests. The children's interests are not yet systematically used to inform planning of the learning programme.
- Information about children's learning and development is regularly documented using checklists, observations records, developmental reports, spider charts, scrapbooks and photographs.
- The practitioners' positive interactions with the children, such as sitting at their level, and their playful engagement are highly effective in supporting the children's positive behaviour, peer relations and their engagement in activities. The practitioners recognise and praise the children's involvement in activities and ensure there is a balance for children between talking and listening.
- The indoor learning environment is well maintained and inviting. The room consists of two play spaces that are divided into interest areas. There is a good range of materials and resources available; these are well laid out, easily accessible and developmentally appropriate.
- The outdoor space provides the children with many opportunities to engage with a range of natural, socio-dramatic and construction activities. On the day of inspection, the children did not go outside as it was wet and not all children had suitable outdoor clothing.
- The practitioners view children as competent and capable learners. For example, when a child asked for a circle to be drawn, the practitioner informed her 'I know you can draw one, if I draw it, it won't be your picture'.
- The practitioners regard play as the central medium through which children learn. They provide significant time for the children to engage in free-play activities and adult-led activities are offered as a free choice.
- The children's early language, literacy and numeracy skills are fostered through the practitioners' modelling of language in everyday conversations, the print-rich environment and the use of story, books, songs, rhymes and a range of mark-making equipment.

Actions advised

- Practitioners are advised to review and develop their approach to short-term planning to ensure that it incorporates the children's emergent interests. The 'Planning and Assessment' pillar of the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* may be a useful resource in this regard.
- To ensure that, as far as practicable, the children have daily access to the outdoor area, it is advised that provision is made for suitable outdoor clothing for all children.

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 demonstrate a positive sense of well-being and are at ease in their surroundings. They present as happy and content, and show enjoyment in their learning.
- The children display good levels of motivation and persistence and are happy to share their learning experiences and achievements with others. For example, some children took the time to discover why the tap on the sink would not work and enthusiastically shared their success in getting it to work with a practitioner. Opportunities for the children to share information on their learning with the wider group of children are limited.
- The children demonstrate an emerging sense of their own identity and an awareness of others and display highly-effective social skills. Friendships are developing among the children and they play together in pairs and groups. They demonstrate emerging abilities to turn take, share and to help others. They communicate with confidence. For example, they confidentially introduce themselves, discuss items of interests, request help as needed and ask and answer questions in context.
- The children are active agents in their learning. During the inspection, they successfully planned and led activities of interest and freely chose to take part in adult-directed activities, such as 'making playdough'. The opportunities for children to fully explore the materials during this activity were limited, as resources were not provided for all children and the children were given with step-by-step instructions on how to make the playdough.
- The children are confident in their abilities and show good levels of spatial awareness and fine motor skills. For example, they confidently completed still life drawings of pumpkins and apples and happily took part in dancing and action games.
- The children are developing their early literacy and numeracy skills. They demonstrated an understanding of the use of pictures and print to represent items. They sorted healthy and unhealthy food pictures on the food chart. In addition, some children made references to letters, such as 'That letter is in my name', and as they tossed a ball they counted the number of children who caught it.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to give the children more regular opportunities to reflect on their learning in small groups to strengthen their abilities to consolidate their new and previous learning and to share experiences with others.
- The practitioners are advised to provide additional opportunities for the children to explore, discover, experiment and express themselves during adult-led activities.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- The respectful communication and collaboration between the owner and the practitioners contributes to the professional atmosphere in the setting.
- The practitioners meet to plan each week and also discuss their plans and the operation of the setting on a daily basis. The owner provides ongoing daily support to the practitioners and regularly meets with them to discuss their practice, policies and procedures, and any issues or concerns.
- There is a clear vision for the direction of the work of the setting and clarity around the roles and responsibilities of the practitioners. There are opportunities for both practitioners to lead the children's learning during the session.
- The practitioners engage in some reflective practice and occasionally carry out self-reviews. The *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* is not used to support this process.

- The owner and practitioners have established links with the local childcare committee, Early Childhood Ireland and a local provider for support and advice. The practitioners demonstrate ongoing commitment to continuing professional development and regularly participate in professional training and workshops. These include the Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) in Early Years programme and workshops in *Síolta*, *the National Quality Framework for Early Education* and *Aistear*, *the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*.
- There is an open-door policy in operation. Information is shared with parents through the use of social media, text, newsletters and notices. Information on the setting's policies and procedures is communicated through a parents' handbook.
- A settling-in policy has been developed to aid the children's transition from home to the setting. Visits to the setting are facilitated during the summer months prior to children enrolling. A phased settling-in approach is implemented and parents are welcome to stay with their children until they are settled. During the early days, a photo is sent to parents to reassure them their child is settling in well.
- The practitioners prepare the children for primary school through the use of discussions and planned activities. 'Developmental passports' are compiled for each child and are given to parents to share with the child's primary school. The practitioners have recently begun to reflect on transitions using the National Council for Curriculum Assessment (NCCA) *Mo Scéal* resources. On the day of inspection, a transition policy was not available.

Actions advised

- The owner and practitioners are advised to use the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* to support self-reviews and reflections on practice.
- To further progress the work on supporting the children's transitions to primary school, the practitioners are advised to develop a transitions policy. The pillar on 'Transitions' in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* and the '*Mo Scéal*' resources will help support the implementation of this action.

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	Very 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.