

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

**EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION**

**REPORT**

<b>Setting Name</b>	The Village Montessori School
<b>Setting Address</b>	Skehard Road Blackrock County Cork
<b>DCYA number</b>	16CY0157

**Date of Inspection: 09-05-2019**



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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 inspectors 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

<b>Date of inspection</b>	09-05-2019
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meeting with setting manager</li><li>• Observation of interactions during a number of pre-school sessions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interaction with children</li><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Feedback to setting manager and practitioners</li></ul>

### CONTEXT OF SETTING

The Village Montessori School was established in 1997. This privately-owned Montessori school is located in the village of Blackrock, Co. Cork. The setting, which operates from a purpose-built premises, provides the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme for approximately one hundred and ten children. The setting offers four morning classes and two afternoon classes. The learning programme is underpinned by the Montessori Method of education and this approach is used across all of the pre-school rooms. The owner/manager and seven practitioners attended the post-inspection meeting. 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 very good.
- A very pleasant and inviting atmosphere has been successfully created.
- Children enter the setting with enthusiasm and are greeted warmly by the practitioners. Parents and siblings come into the setting on arrival and they engage in relaxed conversations with the practitioners. This time is also used to share information about the children's learning with parents.
- Interactions in the setting are commendably warm and respectful. The practitioners share many affectionate moments with the children throughout the day.
- The children have developed close, secure relationships with the practitioners. The practitioners consistently offer meaningful praise and encouragement and model positive behaviour using calm, even tones. The children are consistently affirmed and encouraged throughout the morning. The practitioners provide them with very positive feedback, for example, 'That is so impressive' and 'You very cleverly noticed that'.
- The practitioners foster caring and respectful relationships between the children. They remind them to be kind to their friends and to listen to the opinions of others.
- The children's identity and belonging are supported through photographs of the children on their individual coat hooks and through their paintings and mark making, which are displayed in the setting. Birthday charts with the children's names and dates of birth are displayed in all of the rooms and folders with the children's drawings of their families are available in the book areas in each room. There is potential to build on these practices to further support the children's sense of identity and belonging.
- The children's independent skills are effectively supported. They manage the daily care routines with confidence. Many of the children wash their hands, pour their own drinks, wash and dry their cups and sweep the floors. A helper system, whereby children are assigned small tasks, is in place and displayed in some of the rooms.

#### *Action advised*

- In order to further support the children's sense of identity and belonging and their developing awareness of different cultures, the practitioners are advised to provide imagery of the children, their families and the wider community in the classrooms.

## 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 approach is based on the Montessori Method of education. This approach is combined with elements of play-based learning. The curriculum is broad based and is informed by *Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*.
- Planning takes place on long-term, medium-term and short-term bases. These plans guide practitioners in their planning of individual and group learning experiences. The practitioners have developed a range of effective resources to support the children's learning across different themes and areas of the curriculum.
- A range of assessment methods is in place, including records which track the children's progress in their use of the Montessori materials and individual folders with the children's paintings, drawings and tracing templates. Memory books with photographs and samples of the children's work are sent home with the children at the end of the year. Observations that document children's learning and development are completed for each child. In some cases, the observations identify the next steps in the children's learning. There is potential for these observations to provide a richer picture of the children's interests and knowledge, which can then be used to further extend the children's learning.
- The children have access to a range of play materials which are stored in the large communal hall space. Extending the range of play items available will increase the opportunities for rich play and meaningful learning experiences.
- The children's learning and development are well supported through the variety of available Montessori materials. The range and the impeccable condition of these materials are commendable. The children's learning is further supported by the practitioners' use of open-ended questions and meaningful encouragement.
- The children's early literacy and numeracy is effectively promoted throughout the day. The children enjoy stories, songs, rhymes and games. In addition to this, the Montessori materials consistently support the development of the children's emerging literacy and numeracy skills.
- The children have daily access to an outdoor area. A good range of resources is provided, including wall-mounted blackboards, footballs and ride-on toys. During the inspection, the children played happily with their friends and demonstrated enjoyment in their learning in the outdoor area.

#### *Actions advised*

- The practitioners are advised to build on and extend their current assessment practices in order to identify the children's interests and to build a richer picture of the children's strengths and knowledge. The practitioners can then use the children's emerging interests and information gathered from assessment to inform their planning. The 'Assessment and Planning' pillar in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* will assist in this regard.
- The practitioners are advised to expand the range of play resources, to include real-life items and open-ended materials, which enhance and extend the children's learning. In doing so, this will afford opportunities for all play types and a broader variety of learning experiences.

### **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 capable and competent learners. This is particularly evident during the Montessori work cycle. The children take a mat, roll it out on the ground and engage in their chosen activity with interest. They return the materials to the shelf and roll up the mat when they have completed the activity.
- Overall, the children demonstrate enjoyment and high levels of engagement in their learning.
- The children display many positive dispositions for learning. They make decisions, problem solve effectively and negotiate different roles in their play. For example, a child persevered when cutting with scissors and, proudly exclaimed, 'Yes, I'm almost there'.
- The children play alone and co-operatively in pairs and in small groups. They invite other children to join them in their play and express delight in sharing their ideas and experiences. During the inspection, a small group of children worked together to build a sky-scraper. They chatted animatedly during this experience.
- The children are confident communicators. They discuss aspects of their home lives, families and recent experiences.
- The children experience success and mastery. This is particularly evident in their use of the Montessori materials.
- The children are developing empathy. Many of the children show kindness and care towards their peers and are quick to provide support for their friends in instances where it is requested.
- The children's voices are listened to and respected by the practitioners. During the inspection, a child expressed an interest in counting in Irish during the circle-time activity. The practitioner then invited the child to lead the activity, which she did with confidence.
- The children are developing their creativity. Many of the children engage with interest in painting and mark making. During the inspection, some of the children coloured in shape templates in their individual copybooks. There is potential to provide further opportunities for children to express themselves creatively, thereby decreasing the use of template art.

#### *Action advised*

- The practitioners are advised to provide increased opportunities for the children to express themselves creatively using freely accessible, open-ended art materials, including paper in a variety of sizes, crayons, glue and resources for junk art.

### **AREA 4**

#### **QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- The owner/manager and the practitioners present as a caring and professional team and are very committed to providing quality experiences for the children in the setting.
- Reflection on practice occurs during team meetings which are scheduled each month. The outcomes of these meetings are not currently documented. Support and supervision meetings for individual practitioners are provided twice a year.
- The practitioners have engaged in a number of continuing professional development courses, including training on yoga and physical activity. One of the practitioners has recently completed the Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years (LINC) Programme.
- Parents are provided with information on the setting through a parents' handbook. They are invited to attend a parents' education evening, and an open day prior to their child starting in the setting. These provide opportunities for parents to become familiar with all aspects of the setting. Formal parent-practitioner meetings are scheduled once a year, while informal opportunities for discussion in relation to children's learning are provided on a regular basis. In addition, information on activities and areas of the curriculum is provided through regular newsletters and the children's art work is displayed outside each classroom. Parents are also invited to attend an end-of-year school concert in a local hall.

- The owner/manager avails of advice and support from the local childcare committee and an early years support agency.
- There are practices in place to support the children's transition from pre-school to primary school. An information leaflet on the transition from pre-school to primary school is provided for parents and practitioners also discuss this transition with parents. The children transition to a number of local schools. The owner/manager has made links with the principal of one of these schools.

*Actions advised*

- The practitioners are advised to use the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* to strengthen and support their ongoing reflection and evaluation processes.
- The owner/manager is advised to build on the current transition practices in the setting and to develop links, where possible, with other local schools.

**CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE**

The capacity of the setting to implement the actions advised above is very good. The owner/manager and practitioners engaged openly throughout the post-inspection feedback meeting and demonstrated their commitment to the promotion of quality practice.

### Summary of Overall Inspection

<b>Area</b>	<b>Quality Level</b>
Quality of context to support children's learning and development	<b>Very good</b>
Quality of processes to support children's learning and development	<b>Good</b>
Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements	<b>Very good</b>
Quality of management and leadership for learning	<b>Good</b>

### Language used in Early Years Education Inspection reports

<b>Excellent</b>	Provision that is excellent is exemplary in meeting the needs of children.
<b>Very good</b>	Provision that is very good is highly effective in meeting the needs of children.
<b>Good</b>	Provision that is good is effective in meeting the needs of children but with some aspects to be developed.
<b>Fair</b>	Provision that is fair requires practice to be improved to meet the needs of children.
<b>Poor</b>	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*

Overall, the comments and the recommendations made by the inspector are well received and we will work to integrate these into our practices in order to further improve our service.