An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	Cherry Blossom Grove Montessori School
Setting Address	23 Corbawn Drive Shankill Co. Dublin
DCYA number	13DR0266

Date of Inspection: 14-02-2019

An Roinn Oideachais
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	14-02-2019
Inspection activities undertaken • Meeting with setting manager/practitioner • Observation of interactions during the pre-school session • Interaction with children	• Review of relevant documents • Feedback to manager/practitioner and a practitioner

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Cherry Blossom Grove Montessori School was established in 2013. It is a private setting located in a residential area in Shankill, Co. Dublin. The setting provides a morning sessional service for children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, the manager/practitioner, two practitioners and eighteen children were present. The manager/practitioner and one of the practitioners 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, 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.
- The children and their families are greeted warmly on arrival and it is evident that the practitioners know the children well. The relationships between the practitioners, children and their families are very positive and respectful.
- The atmosphere is relaxed and inviting. The children enter the setting with enthusiasm and confidence.
- The environment is bright and airy and clearly-defined play areas support the children's selection and organisation of their play activities. The children choose freely from a range of activities and resources. These include sticking and gluing, Montessori materials, free-play in the home corner and puzzles. A creative area where children can work with open-ended art materials is also provided.
- The practitioners provide very effective guidance towards positive behaviour; warm and even tones are used consistently in their interactions with the children throughout the morning.
- The children are developing their independence and social skills; some of the children assist with small tasks during the morning and at snack time. On the day of the inspection, there were some instances where the practitioners provided the children with high levels of support, thereby limiting the opportunities for children to be self-sufficient.
- The children's identity and belonging are very effectively supported through the displays of photographs, birthday charts and a family wall. The children's own words and ideas are captured and displayed throughout the setting. Currently, there is limited representation of the local community.

Actions advised

- Practitioners are advised to further promote the children's independent and personal care skills.
- The practitioners are advised to reflect the local community in the setting, so as to support the children's awareness of their wider community. This could include displaying photographs of the local schools, landmarks and places of interest.

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.
- A broad based curriculum is in place and links are made to *Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. Play is the central medium through which the children learn in the setting. The curriculum is also underpinned by the principles of the Montessori Method.
- Planning occurs on long-term, medium-term and short-term bases. The long-term plan is based on a number of pre-determined themes, such as the solar system, the seasons and dinosaurs. The medium-term plan provides further detail on the selected themes. The practitioners have gathered a number of props and resources to support the children's learning across different themes.
- There is some evidence that the short-term plans are informed by the children's interests. An interest board is displayed in the classroom where the practitioners note the children's interests.
- A range of assessment methods is in place, including records to track children's progress in using the Montessori materials, individual learning journals and copybooks with the children's mark-making and drawings. Learning journals are sent home with the children at the end of the year.
- The children's group learning experiences are documented through the use of photographs and the children's words. The children's thoughts and ideas are actively sought and there is some evidence that this information is used to inform their learning and plan for future learning experiences.
- The children generally have ample opportunities to engage in free play during the session.
- The children have daily access to a natural outdoor space. This space provides sheltered areas for play. It also includes a mud kitchen, sand pit, wooden blocks, tyres, a blackboard and water play.
- Transitions between activities are signalled in advance by the practitioners. On the day of the inspection, the transitions were overly adult directed and, in some instances, the children had a lengthy waiting period between activities.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to build on current assessment practices to consistently use the information gathered from assessment to inform the next steps in the children's learning. The 'Assessment and Planning' pillar in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* may assist in this regard.
- The practitioners are advised to review the balance between adult-led and child-led activities so as to increase the children's autonomy and to reduce inactive waiting times, particularly during transitions. The use of the key-person approach, where a practitioner works with a small group of children, may assist in this regard.

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 real enjoyment and are deeply engaged in their learning.
- The children express their ideas confidently and articulately. During the 'Show and Tell' activity, each child proudly described the item which he/she had brought from home and responded to questions from the practitioners and his/her peers.
- The children play alone and co-operatively in pairs and small groups. They invite other children to join them in their play and express delight in sharing their ideas and experiences.
- This children are developing their literacy and numeracy skills through the use of songs and rhymes and their engagement with the variety of resources available in the indoor and outdoor environments. The children's use of Montessori materials, such as sandpaper letters and numbers, is particularly effective in supporting their early literacy and numeracy skills.

- The children demonstrate curiosity, creativity and imagination in their play conversations and engagement in activities. This curiosity is effectively supported through the range of resources provided. On the day of the inspection, one child used a magnifying glass to take a closer look at the features of a dinosaur in a book and then invited his friends to examine the book.
- The children ask many questions and are motivated to learn. During the inspection, the practitioners extended some of the children's learning through discussions and their use of open-ended questioning.
- The children are developing an awareness of their local community. The local lollipop lady visits the setting each year to talk to the children about road safety. There are plans in place to develop further links with the community.

Action advised

- Practitioners are advised to develop additional strategies to extend the children's thinking and their abilities to reflect on their learning. This will support the children to make connections between past, present and future learning. This may happen in a number of ways, including during discussion and conversations at small group time.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- The team present as caring and professional and are committed to providing quality experiences for the children in the setting.
- Continuing professional development is valued in the setting. The practitioners have completed training on *Aistear* and *Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education* and Documenting the Early Childhood Curriculum. The manager/practitioner plans to undertake training on the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Guidelines in the coming months.
- Parents are provided with information on the setting through a parents' handbook. Parent-practitioner meetings are scheduled once a year. Information on the children's learning is also shared on a more informal basis through a class media application.
- Parents are invited into the setting to share their interests and talents. In recent times, a paramedic, a member of an orchestra and a chef have visited the setting.
- Reflection on practice currently happens informally through daily discussions between the practitioners. The decisions made during these discussions are not currently documented.
- Team meetings are conducted a number of times during the year. Some staff appraisals are carried out. Support and supervision of individual practitioners occurs informally and formal support and supervision meetings are generally not conducted.

Actions advised

- Practitioners are advised to plan regular team meetings. Documenting the actions from these meetings will help to identify clear goals for ongoing improvements and to track progress.
- The manager/practitioner and practitioners are advised to conduct regular support and supervision meetings and to document the findings of these meetings. This will provide an opportunity for regular professional dialogue between the manager and the practitioners,
- The practitioners are advised to use the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* to support their ongoing reflection on practice.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the setting to implement the actions advised above is very good. The manager/practitioner and practitioner engaged openly and reflectively throughout the post-inspection feedback meeting. They demonstrated their clear commitment to the provision of high quality learning experiences for children.

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	**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.

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APPENDIX

SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT
SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report.

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

AREA 1:

- The manager has implemented a nose blowing station to encourage more independence for children.
- The children are in the process of creating their own 'Community Wall' with photos and paintings of places and people in our community.

AREA 2:

- Planning and Assessment is done regularly by staff.
- Transitions between activities are now more child-led, the children are active in our tidy-up and preparation for activities. They are more independent in getting themselves ready for the next activity, such as toilet trips and putting on their own wellie boots and coats for garden time.

AREA 3:

- The use of small group time has increased to facilitate children's reflection and discussion on their learning.

AREA 4:

- Staff meetings are scheduled monthly.
- Support and Supervision meetings are scheduled on a termly basis.