An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	Children's Circle Montessori School
Setting Address	33 Thornhill Heights Celbridge County Kildare
DCYA number	09KE0013

Date of Inspection: 27-09-2018

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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	27-09-2018
Inspection activities undertaken • Meeting with setting manager • Meeting with practitioners	• Observation of interactions during a number of sessions • Interaction with children • Review of relevant documents • Feedback to setting manager and practitioners

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Children's Circle Montessori School is a privately owned sessional setting. It provides a morning and afternoon session in delivering the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, two sessions were inspected. There were twenty-six children present together with the owner, who is the lead practitioner, and two other practitioners. The owner and two practitioners attended the post-inspection feedback meeting. 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 excellent.
- The atmosphere is characterised by sustained warm, calm and caring interactions. The practitioners greet the parents and children at the start of the session.
- The children arrive confidently into the setting. They are very familiar with the environment and the routines.
- The practitioners are very effective in providing guidance, affirmation and encouragement towards positive behaviour and the children demonstrate respect and empathy towards each other.
- The routine and structure of the day provide the children with ample opportunity to be active agents in choosing and organising their own learning activities. The children display autonomy and agency as they choose between the play materials in both the indoor and outdoor environment.
- Snack time is a social occasion. The practitioners and the children engage in many natural and authentic conversations as they share this mealtime.
- Transitions between activities are smooth with excellent and consistent use of verbal reminders and reference to a visual cue.
- The setting has established very good connections with the community. The practitioners have previously organised visits from community helpers, and explored the local landmarks with the children. These activities are documented in a community folder for the children to review.
- Children's sense of identify and belonging is actively promoted, with a focus on the uniqueness of each child. This is evident in the environment and through the practice observed that is both child-centred and respectful.
- Parents, children and extended families regularly come together during the year for celebrations and events. These include the annual Christmas and end-of-year celebration, and each term a coffee morning is held in the setting for parents.

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 which is aligned to *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* is in place. There are long-term, medium-term, and short-term plans which are thematic, incorporate seasonal events and celebrations, and have some links to children's developing interests and needs. The group learning journal documents many enquiry and emergent based activities.
- The practitioners are developing individual learning journals that gather information about the children's learning experiences and achievements. They include observations, samples of children's artwork, and photographs of the children completing activities. The next steps for children's learning are identified and noted. Currently these next steps are not being used to inform the short-term plan.
- The practitioners' interactions are often authentic, affirming and encouraging. At times they engage as the children's play partner, and support and scaffold children's thinking and reasoning. During the inspection, these interactions were disjointed due to the inaccessibility of some of the materials to the children and the need for practitioners to access the materials for them.
- The practitioners very effectively support the children's language, literacy and numeracy development, through conversations, songs and rhymes and in the practitioners' discussion with children about writing letters and notes in a meaningful and playful manner.
- The indoor environment is laid out with some defined interest areas, such as a home corner and book area. Montessori materials are provided along with a wide range of resources for children to engage with. Many of the materials are not freely accessible to the children.
- The children have daily access to an outdoor area. It is a rich play space that provides opportunities for the children to engage in a wide range of open-ended play experiences such as digging, climbing, music making, and mark-making. Other items include a play house, a mud kitchen, a construction area, small world play and an outdoor library.
- Play is recognised and valued by the practitioners as the medium through which children learn. The practitioners provide an extended period of the day to support this, with an appropriate balance of adult-initiated activities.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to ensure that they use their records of the developmental needs and interests of the individual child and the identified next steps in their learning to a greater degree consistently and directly to inform their planning processes. When planning to extend learning, practitioners are advised to incorporate the child's voice in the planning and documenting process.
- The practitioners are encouraged to plan how they could scaffold and extend children's learning further. Developing their approach to engaging as play partners with the children is advised.
- The practitioners are advised to audit the indoor environment with a view to providing opportunities for children to select independently their self-chosen resources and activities, and also to develop additional interest areas. The 'Learning environment' pillar in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* is a useful resource in relation to this.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is very good.
- Children display eagerness and enjoyment on arrival and throughout the day. They have autonomy and agency, making many decisions about their activities, the materials, their play partners and where they will play.
- The children are experiencing success and achievement. For example, many of the children write letters and notes to their families and the practitioners and they share accomplishments with the practitioners and each other. This is also facilitated through the documentation of their learning experiences in their individual learning journals and group learning journal.

- The children demonstrate an awareness of their developing abilities and make connections to their past experiences. For example while engaged in free-drawing a child described her drawing as a horse and recalled an event where she went horse riding.
- The children enjoy sharing similar experiences, interests, ideas and opinions with the practitioners and their peers. They often engage in discussions about their play activities and creations.
- The children play together co-operatively in small groups and in pairs. The children are confident and are developing worthwhile skills. They frequently make decisions, solve problems, take turns and negotiate with one another.
- The children display confidence in both their fine motor and gross motor skills. This is evident in their mark-making and in their construction play.

Action advised

- The practitioners are advised to provide additional opportunities for the children to reflect on their learning and activities. It is important for the children to have regular opportunities to review their individual and group learning journals and discuss their recent learning activities.

AREA 4
QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- The team regularly reflect on their practice informally and formally. Each month formal team meetings are held and notes are documented. The team have previously used the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* to reflect on the learning environment.
- There is a professional ethos in the setting. There is clarity around the different roles and responsibilities. Effective teamwork and shared leadership are evident, with a commitment to providing a quality provision.
- The team has identified a clear vision for their curriculum where play is implemented effectively and used as the method for teaching young children.
- The practitioners are committed to continuous professional development and have recently commenced training in the Leadership for Inclusion programme.
- Home-setting links are very good. Settling-in is supported through a parent's information night and an open day, and a parental pack is provided. Parents are encouraged to attend a termly coffee morning.
- The children's progress is formally shared with parents through observations as they are completed and the learning journals are shared at the end of the year. In addition, there are informal chats between parents and practitioners at arrival and collection times. A text message account and bi-monthly newsletters are used to inform parents about the curriculum and upcoming events.
- The children's transition from pre-school to primary school is supported through discussions about the local schools, visits to the school, and information is shared with parents on preparing their child for the transition. The practitioners advise that they are currently developing a transition programme and will be meeting with the principal of the local school in the near future.

Action advised

- The practitioners are advised to optimise their engagement with the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* to enhance their current self-review process in order to inform future action planning and support the overall development of quality in the pre-school.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the setting to continue to implement the actions advised above is very good.

Summary of Overall Inspection

Area	Quality Level
Quality of context to support children's learning and development	**Excellent**
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-focused 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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