An Roinn Oideachais

Department of Education

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	Collooney Montessori School
Setting Address	Churchview Collooney County Sligo F91 X6W7
DCEDIY number	11SO0100
TUSLA REG NO.	TU2015SO006

Date of Inspection: 13-10-2021

This inspection took place in the context of public health restrictions necessary to limit the spread of Covid-19

An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

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	13-10-2021
Inspection activities undertaken • Meeting with the setting owner/manager • Meeting with practitioners • Observation of interactions during one pre-school session	 • Interaction with the children • Review of relevant documents • Feedback to setting manager and practitioner

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Collooney Montessori School is a privately owned, sessional pre-school setting located in Collooney, County Sligo. The setting provides one pre-school session daily, offering the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme to participating children. Given the Covid-19 context, the pre-school children are encouraged to wash their hands frequently and parents wear face coverings at arrival and collection. During the inspection, the owner/manager, assistant practitioner and eight children were present. The manager and assistant practitioner attended the feedback meeting. The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the report; a response 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.
- The atmosphere and organisation of the setting nurtures the children's learning and development through timely, warm, responsive practitioner-child interactions.
- There is a visual daily routine in place to support the children to recognise the structure of activities each day. The children are very familiar with the sequence of the session.
- Snack-time is provided as a choice for the children, which promotes self-sufficiency. The children obtain their lunch from the fridge and eat snack if they choose. Personal hygiene is promoted using verbal cues, reminders and a mirror is used to develop individual skills.
- Transitions during the session are very smoothly managed. The transition to outdoor play is staggered which minimises waiting times. Children are provided with verbal cues and ample time to process the subsequent transition.
- Elements of a key-person approach are observable in the support given to implicit groupings of children during the Montessori activities.
- The pre-school has made many links with the local community over the years. A rich resource of photographs with descriptions demonstrates the engagement of many community members and parents prior to Covid-19. The *Gardaí* and a story teller have engaged with the children outdoors this year to support ongoing involvement with the community.
- A photograph of the pre-school mascot 'Travelling Jack' is sent to the children's families abroad to make meaningful links with the wider world. A story of Jack's adventure is returned for the children to learn about each family and the country that he visited.

Action advised

- It is advised that a more explicit key-person approach be implemented in the setting. This will support relationships between the children, their peers and the practitioners during designated small-group time, providing additional opportunities for practitioners to observe the children's holistic learning and development.

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 Montessori curriculum approach is implemented in the setting. Planning incorporates a range of topics and areas over the long-term that are linked to *Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. The short-term planning template outlines general activities or events taking place on a week-to-week basis. Whilst a few of the children's interests have been noted, these are not explicitly highlighted or connected to the current planning structure.
- The children's learning is assessed by observing and noting their progression in the Montessori materials. Individual pupil profiles as well as class progress reports are used to document learning. There is scope to supplement these approaches further by using the learner records to highlight a broader range of information relating to a wider range of learning dispositions, incorporating the child's voice and interests.
- The practitioners use rich, playful and supportive interactions that are central to the children's experiences and encourage them to develop higher-order thinking skills. The practitioners effortlessly develop the children's understanding of mathematical concepts and promote language and problem-solving skills as they interact with them during activities.
- The practitioners encourage the children to interact with their peers during Montessori time in games such as Bingo and when creating with stickle bricks.
- The indoor environment is well-defined into the various areas of the Montessori curriculum. The children are very familiar with where the various exercises and activities are stored. The order of the environment positively promotes their levels of engagement during the session.
- Literacy and numeracy is richly resourced in the indoor environment whereby the children have access to a wide genre of books. Song and story-time are facilitated on a daily basis which supports the children's vocabulary development and communication skills.
- The art area is well-presented and the children have access to a variety of open-ended resources to encourage creativity. The children independently access the easel during the session.
- The outdoor environment is currently under review and development. A newly constructed pergola, chalk board and pallets often become a backdrop to the children's performances on stage. A beautifully erected house provides opportunities for the children to explore socio-dramatic role play.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the practitioners develop explicit links to the children's emergent interests and inquiries, including those noted during outdoor play in planning. Regular reflection on how the planned activities have impacted on the children's learning and evolving interests, in line with *Aistear,* will further benefit this process.
- It is advised that the approach to assessment is extended by utilising *Aistear* learner records to record the children's learning, interests and next steps in learning.

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 purpose, engagement and enjoyment during self-selected activities such as art, spooning and weaving. A bingo game provided playful and sustained participation for many of the children.
- Most of the children display strong initiative and demonstrate positive dispositions such as self-confidence and perseverance.
- The children are very capable of resolving minor conflicts independently and can express their thoughts and feelings in a very competent manner.
- The children experience success and proudly share their accomplishments with the practitioners. Currently the child's voice is not strongly represented in the planning and assessment documentation.

- The children demonstrate an awareness of their identity and have a strong sense of who they are. They are developing valuable social skills such as kindness and co-operation which supports them to build relationships with their peers.
- The children's art is currently stored in individual folders in the room. Although some art work is on display and incorporates annotations of the child's voice, the representation of their creations, constructions and play experiences in the environment is limited.
- The children communicate their experiences, thoughts and preferences confidently during the session. They engage in conversations with their peers and the practitioners by listening, responding to and offering their ideas. A few children demonstrate a growing understanding of mathematical language as they describe elements of their play.
- The children are making sense of the world through active learning experiences such as planting trees and learning about the life cycles of animals and plants. These experiences are effectively supplemented with factual books and visual resources to support understanding.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the child's voice becomes more evident in the displays, their learner records and planning documentation to indicate how their views, interests and ideas underpin practice.
- It is advised that the children's creations, projects and photographs of them engaging in play and other activities be displayed throughout the setting to support their reflection on learning.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- The practitioners frequently attend formal networking meetings and participate in continuing professional development with the County Childcare Committee and St. Nicholas Montessori Teacher Association.
- The practitioners have developed a reflection folder which contains many useful resources to support self-evaluation. They are currently engaging in self-evaluation to develop and extend the outdoor provision which supports internal measures for quality improvement.
- The practitioners continuously engage in opportunities for continual professional development. They have completed the Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) programme as well as initiatives regarding diversity, health and well-being.
- The practitioners are very clear on their roles and responsibilities and the manager has adopted a strong vision for embedding high quality practices.
- Parental communication is valued in the setting. The Covid-19 closure resulted in adopting new measures for communicating with the children and their families via an electronic application.
- A bi-monthly newsletter which contains photographs of some of the children's experiences, as well as upcoming events and activities, is distributed to the parents. Parents are usually invited to attend two meetings during the year to discuss their child's learning. Parents receive observations on their child's learning and development occasionally.
- Wonderfully designed transition story books using 'Jack' as a key character are provided to support the children with their transition to primary school. There are eight books in total which showcase photographs of the primary school teachers and describe many characteristics of each school.
- The practitioners collate a variety of photographs to provide the children and their families with a memento of their time in pre-school before they transition to school. Currently, there is no in-depth information provided to the parents or to the various schools regarding the children's rich and holistic pre-school learning experiences.

Actions advised

- To further develop systematic processes for internal self-evaluation it is advised that the practitioners continue to use the available tools from the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* to support reflection on practice. Continuing reflection on the outdoor environment, including the addition of authentic, creative, literacy and numeracy-rich resources will support this action. Involving parents and children in the review of the outdoor play area will capture a variety of perspectives and enhance this process further.

- It is advised that parents receive regular updates regarding their children's learning and progression using *Aistear* learner records. Providing a more holistic picture of their child's learning, would be beneficial prior to the transition to school.

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.

Published May 2022