An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)
Final Report

Setting name	Daisy Chain Montessori & Childcare Milltown
Setting address	Tower House Milltown Shopping Centre Milltown Dublin 6 D06E8W2
TUSLA registration number	TU2015DY310
DCEDIY number	09DY0276
Date of inspection	18-01-2023
Date of issue of report	08-03-2023

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:

- Quality of the context to support children's learning and development
- Quality of processes to support children's learning and development
- Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements
- 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

Dates of inspection	18-01-2023
Inspection activities undertaken • Pre-inspection meeting with the manager • Conversations with the early years educators • Observation of interactions during three ECCE sessions • Review of educational resources and facilities • Interactions with the children • Review of relevant policies and curriculum and assessment documentation • Feedback discussions with early years educators • Post-inspection feedback meeting with the manager and one lead educator	

Context of setting

Daisy Chain Montessori and Childcare Milltown is one of four privately-owned settings located in Dublin city. Established in 2000, the setting provides sessional, part time and full-time care. On the day of the inspection there were twenty-nine children availing of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. There were six early years educators and the setting manager in attendance. This inspection focussed on the ECCE programme. 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 was excellent.
- There was an exceptionally friendly and inviting atmosphere in the setting. On arrival, the educators warmly greeted the children and engaged in natural, informal conversations with the parents. The children enthusiastically put away their belongings and initiated play experiences from a wide array of well-organised resources.
- The daily routines had set sequences with sufficient flexibility to accommodate the children's interests and needs. Substantial time was allocated to child-initiated and child-led play, alongside complementary individual, small-group and whole-group adult-led activities.
- The educators used highly-effective strategies to inform the children of pending transitions. These included five-minute verbal cues and visual schedules.
- The educators placed great value on meal times as social occasions and as opportunities to promote self-help skills. In preparation for meal times, the children placed vases of hand-made flowers at the centre of each table. They poured their own water and helped to clean up after meal time. The educators sat with the children and talked about family life.
- The educators used consistent strategies to nurture secure and meaningful relationships with the children and their families. These included the key-person approach. They fostered caring and respectful child-to-child relationships by calmly guiding the children to resolve minor peer conflicts through empathetic conversations.
- The educators used a broad range of strategies to value and acknowledge the uniqueness of each child and support their growing sense of family and group identity. They used personalised coat hooks and learning scrapbooks, birthday charts, family displays and many photographs of the children engaged in play and learning experiences.

- The educators used visual displays of local amenities and landmarks to revisit community outings. There were parent and grandparent events at which they shared their professions and cultural heritage. Flags and labelling in different languages were used to celebrate cultural diversity.

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 was very good.
- The educators implemented a highly-effective emergent curriculum approach that was informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the Montessori approach to early years education.
- The educators used curriculum planning boards in different ways to plan play and learning experiences for the children. These experiences were informed by seasonal themes and celebrations, the children's emerging interests and the parents' aspirations for their children.
- The children's learning progress was assessed through monthly learning records, Montessori trackers and group and individual learning journals. Many of the learning records were limited to recording the children's physical skills development and knowledge acquisition. A more holistic approach was required.
- The educators used highly-effective, playful interactions with the children that were authentic, encouraging and supported early language and mathematical skills development. There was a very good balance of child-led and adult-led activities.
- The indoor environments were organised into well-resourced interest areas. They offered the children a wide variety of play and learning experiences. These included home corners, construction and transport areas, art and craft materials, dress-up resources and library corners.
- An array of Montessori materials and experiences was purposefully provided, including practical life, sensorial, mathematical, language and cultural learning areas.
- The outdoor environment complimented the indoors and it incorporated many planting and sensory-rich experiences. There was a variety of loose parts to support socio-dramatic play and apparatus to encourage risk-rich play experiences.
- Play was valued as the main medium for learning. The children engaged in play activities alone, in pairs and in small groups with peers and educators. The educators made a wide variety of play types available to the children such as manipulative, imaginative, construction and multi-sensory play.
- The educators used commendable strategies to support the inclusion of all children in the daily activities. They optimised support for children with additional needs through their engagement with external agencies and they developed detailed support plans, in partnership with parents.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to review their curriculum policy and to explicitly set out the planning and assessment practices. The strategies which are identified to support the next steps in the children's learning need to be consistently underpinned by a plan-do-review approach. The children's learning journals can be used to document this approach.
- The educators are advised to broaden the areas of learning and development that are recorded in the learning records so that they consistently include the children's social, emotional development, and the development of positive learning dispositions. This will result in a more holistic record of the children's learning and development.

Area 3: Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements

- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements was very good.
- The children displayed much enjoyment and a positive sense of well-being. This was most evident during an outdoor child-led experience, where the children laughed together as they explored the sensory-rich play resources.
- The children demonstrated many positive learning dispositions during the Montessori work times. While building a tall block tower, two children exhibited cooperation, problem solving and persistence.
- The children experienced achievement and a growing sense of confidence as learners through their art displays, the content of their learning journals and their conversations with the educators. The children would benefit from additional opportunities to revisit and comment on their learning achievements.
- The children displayed confidence in many self-care skills. They could independently engage in toileting, hand washing and put on and take off their coats.
- The children communicated their thoughts, ideas and feelings very creatively through action songs, mark making, play dough and storytelling.
- The children were making sense of their world through playful investigation and they benefited from the educators' use of inquiry-based, open-ended questioning.

Action advised

- The educators are advised to extend the strategies used to support the children to self-assess their learning progress. This can be achieved by offering them opportunities to partake in recap and recall sessions, revisit their individual and group learning journals, and by adding their comments to their journals.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was very good.
- There was a strong ethos of teamwork and professionalism. The manager supported the educators' practice on a daily basis and scheduled weekly non-contact time for the educators to document the curriculum.
- There was recorded evidence of regular, formal support and supervision sessions and staff meetings.
- The manager and educators conducted intermittent internal evaluations of practice which were focused on improving the quality of the setting's practices and provision. They occasionally used some of the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* self-evaluation tools. A more robust, cyclical approach was required.
- There were commendable strategies used to support the educators' continuing professional development. There were in-setting bespoke training events and community of practice sessions. The educators actively shared the knowledge gained from participation in the Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years (LINC) Plus programme and in the Hanen and *Lámh* training.
- The educators used an electronic application, a social media channel, monthly memos, telephone calls and face-to-face parent-educator meetings to share meaningful information with parents. The children's learning records were not formally shared with the parents.
- The children's transition to primary school was supported. Their learning progress was shared with primary school personnel through the use of the *Mo Scéal* resources, in partnership with parents.

Actions advised

- To assist in planning for future quality developments, the manager and educators are advised to establish a more robust, cyclical approach to internal evaluation. They are advised to use the full suite of self-evaluation and action planning tools in the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* and to centrally document this work.
- The educators are advised to establish a strategy to regularly share the children's learning records with their parents. The parents' comments will further inform the next steps in the children's learning journey.

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 Inspection Reports

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the setting using the language which is shown below.

Level	Description
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.*