An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)
Final Report

Setting name	Discoveries Creche & Montessori Ltd
Setting address	Olcovar Shankill Dublin 18 D18 W2X2
TUSLA registration number	TU2015DR008
DCEDIY number	09DR0007
Date of inspection	14-06-2023
Date of issue of report	05-09-2023

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(s) 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	14-06-2023
Inspection activities undertaken • Pre-inspection meeting with the setting manager • Review of setting documentation and records of children's learning and development • Review of the education resources and facilities • Observations of interactions during a two sessions • Interaction with the children • Feedback meeting with the setting manager, assistant manager and lead educator	

Context of setting

Discoveries Crèche and Montessori is one of three privately-owned full day care settings in South Dublin. The setting provides a morning and afternoon pre-school session through its participation in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, a total of eighteen children and five educators, one of whom was the assistant manager, were present across the two sessions. The manager, assistant manager and lead educator 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; 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 was good.
- A welcoming atmosphere prevailed in the setting. While the majority of the children attended the setting on a full time basis, educators were observed warmly greeting some children and parents as they arrived into the learning environment for the ECCE session.
- The routine of the morning provided children with time for freely chosen play both indoors and outdoors, a large group circle time and snack time. The educators had also prepared planned activities in both the morning and afternoon session. Children were given the choice to participate in one of the activities or engage in outdoor play.
- The educators viewed snack time as a social occasion and an opportunity to promote independence, build relationships, and focus on well-being. Conversations centred on healthy eating and educators encouraged the children to try new food.
- Transitions between learning activities were managed by educators using some strategies such as songs and verbal prompting. Children had some waiting time between activities.
- A key person system was in place whereby, each key educator had responsibility for documenting the significant learning and development moments and emerging interests for a key group of children.
- The children's identity and belonging was supported through displays and imagery of the children and their families including a group learning journal that documented past curriculum learning experiences. Their individual art work was also displayed around the learning environment.

Actions advised

- Educators are advised to review the daily routines to facilitate greater movement and freedom for the children. They are advised to increase the time allocated to freely chosen play and introduce opportunity for small group time between the key educator and their key group of children.
- Educators are advised to enhance the transitions within the daily routine by implementing a consistent, child-centred approach involving the use of visual and auditory prompts. This will provide important structure, consistency and security and reduce waiting times for children.
- Educators are encouraged to model and provide guidance and encouragement towards positive behaviour and use strategies for interactions that foster positive and respectful relationships.

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 good.
- The educators implemented a play-based curriculum approach that was informed by *Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. Elements of the Montessori Method of education were included in the environment.
- Curriculum planning was organised into long-term, medium-term and short-term plans that were informed by both thematic, seasonal topics and the children's emerging interests.
- The educators planned detailed and fun activities related to the children's emerging interests. A large whiteboard was used to record children's interests and plan activities.
- Assessment information relating to the children's learning was gathered through monthly observations and photographs of the children's playful learning experiences. These observations were shared with parents via a software application.
- Individual scrap books of children's artwork were collected and at the end of the year a graduation book was compiled containing photographs and notes about the children's individual learning and development.
- The educators had created a well-resourced indoor and outdoor environment which offered a broad range of play options that inspired curiosity and provided space for physical development. The children were observed particularly engaged in the available water, sand and other sensory play activities.
- The direct access to the outdoor environment provided ample time for children to play outside. The outdoor space included climbing frames and bikes for physical exercise as well as sensory and mark making materials. The children also brought out tables and chairs, dolls and books.

Actions advised

- Educators are advised to develop their long-term curriculum plan ensuring that it outlines, in broad terms, the long-term aspirations for children's learning and development. Emphasis on children's dispositions, skills, knowledge and understanding is recommended.
- Educators are advised to enhance their current assessment practices to include identification of the next steps for learning in children's observations. These next steps for learning should then link to the short-term curriculum plan. The *Aistear* learner record template will assist educators in capturing this information.
- Educators are encouraged to introduce to the children, their individual learning journals at the beginning of the year. This will provide children with the opportunity to celebrate and reflect on their learning and achievements throughout the year and see themselves as capable and confident learners.

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

- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements was very good.
- The children demonstrated many positive learning dispositions. This was particularly evident through sustained engagement in child-led play, while in the indoor learning environment and during the planned group movement activity.
- The children were developing a good sense of their own abilities and confidence in making decisions about their learning experiences. Children individually decided whether to participate in the educator led activities and they chose whether to bring home their art work or save it in their personal drawer.
- Snack time provided some opportunity for children to practice self-help and serving skills. The educators reported that children also serve themselves at later meal times.
- The children had ample opportunity to express themselves through freely available mark-making materials including paper and crayons, a painting easel, chalk and a large outdoor chalkboard.
- Children demonstrated developing personal and social skills. They worked well together and were building relationships with many friendships forming. One child was observed running over to her peer to hug her goodbye when it was time to go home.
- Some children had compiled a detailed story book about their recent holidays. The educators recorded the detailed account of the child's holiday and the children added photographs shared by their parents. These story books were read during circle time and were available to the children in the book corner.
- The children's knowledge of nature and the natural environment was supported through planting activities. The children had direct access to a small terrace that was used for sensory play and growing a selection of plants.

Action advised

- Educators are advised to recognise and represent the local community in the learning programme and the physical environment. For example, by including a photographic display of local landmarks and the community at children's eye level.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was very good.
- A sense of teamwork was evident amongst the educators and manager. Educators had clearly defined roles and responsibilities which supported the smooth organisation of the sessions.
- Effective systems were in place for setting manager and educators to meet monthly. The educators used a messaging platform to share ideas more regularly.
- The manager and educators recognised the importance of engaging in continuing professional development and upskilling. Professional learning programmes completed included the Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years (LINC) programme.
- A staff newsletter circulated every two months across all three settings included a "share my learning" section for educators to share their experience of recent training courses.
- There was evidence of some engagement with the self-evaluation tools and action planning resources available on the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide*. The manager reported that engagement is being encouraged during non-contact time.
- The manager availed of support from external agencies for advice and training regarding the inclusion of all children; they have established links with the local county childcare committee and previously received support through the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM).

- Communication with parents occurs through formal and informal daily informal chats, the use of a software platform for daily updates, and the manager shared a parents' handbook and any updates with parents via email. Parents are also invited at times to participate in the curriculum. For example, a recent project on occupations included a visit from two parents who came in to discuss their occupations.
- The educators supported children's transition to primary school by incorporating discussions about school into the curriculum. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment's *Mo Scéal* reporting templates were used to transfer information on children's learning and development to the relevant schools.

Action advised

- The manager is advised to pursue plans to re-introduce a formal approach to support and supervision with the educators to actively promote educators' reflective practices and promote their individual learning and development.

Summary of overall inspection

Area	Quality level
Quality of context to support children's learning and development	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	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.*

The following resources can be used by ELC settings in their quality improvement:

Aistear Siolta Practice Guide

Department of Education Insights – Quality in Early Years Education webinars