An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)
Final Report

Setting name	Geri's Montessori
Setting address	61 Beechdale Drive Dunboyne County Meath A86NY89
TUSLA registration number	TU2015MH062
DCEDIY number	10MH0231
Date of inspection	29-09-2022
Date of issue of report	17-04-2023

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	29-09-2022
Inspection activities undertaken • Pre-inspection meeting with the setting owner/lead early years educator • Review of setting documentation and records of the children's learning and development • Review of the education resources and facilities • Observations of interactions during a session • Interaction with the children • Feedback meeting with the setting owner/lead early years educator	

Context of setting

Geri's Montessori is a sessional early learning and care (ELC) setting. It was established in 2006 and is located in the town of Dunboyne in County Dublin. The setting provides a three-hour morning session for children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education programme. On the day of the inspection the owner/lead educator and six children were present. 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 was excellent.
- There was an extremely warm and welcoming atmosphere in the setting for the duration of the inspection.
- Relationships in the setting were commendably positive and responsive. The educator responded in ways that were tailored to each child's personality and their individual needs. Interactions were calm and consistently strengths-focused, throughout the session observed.
- A predicable daily routine had been established and the children were fully aware of it. This supported them to predict what was happening during the session and engage proactively in transitions. There are times allocated daily for extended and lengthy periods of child-initiated play, both indoors and outdoors.
- Transitions during the session were minimal and very well-organised, ensuring that the children were fully active and engaged at all times.
- Snack time was a very relaxed and social occasion providing the children with opportunities for free flowing conversation and sharing of information. The educator has begun to explore healthy nutrition in a highly effective way with children and their families. The children chatted, with knowledge and confidence, about their food preferences and healthy food choices.
- The development of the children's self-care skills and independence has been given high priority in the setting. On the day of inspection, the children did many things for themselves and asked for assistance to support them to do some things, such as connecting both parts of a zip so that they could then close it by themselves.
- The children's sense of identity and belonging has been prioritised in the learning programme. Numerous conversations about family life, experiences outside the setting and places and events in the local community were initiated by the educator and by the children.

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.
- There was a well-established, play-based curriculum in the setting. This curriculum incorporated aspects of the Montessori Method of education. It was fully aligned to the principles of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and was clearly documented in a curriculum policy. This policy also specifically highlighted the central importance and value of play in young children's learning.
- The educator has recorded narrative observations of the children, accompanied by photographs, at regular intervals in the pre-school year. These observations focused on particular areas of developmental achievement.
- Planning for the programme was completed each week and focused on both adult-selected topics and the children's interests. Some effective links have been made to *Aistear* in planning.
- The indoor and outdoor learning environments provided rich opportunities for play and learning. Both learning environments were well structured, maintained and resourced. The indoor environment provided for manipulative, small world, creative, imaginative, numeracy and literacy play. The outdoor environment provided for gross motor, sensory, socio-dramatic play and exploration of nature.
- The educator provided notably effective support for the children's communication, language and early literacy development. There were songs, rhymes, actions songs, storytelling, and storybook reading throughout the session.
- The educator has introduced the children to the Irish language by using words and phrased directly related to the children's activities and actions. All of the children understood some Irish words and phrases and some children used them during the inspection.
- The educator has also effectively introduced and used sign language with the children. All of the children took great delight in using signs to communicate.
- The children have benefited from being in a highly inclusive environment. Specific attention is paid to the learning of children with additional needs and those who speak English as an additional language. Each child's individual needs have been accurately identified and effectively supported.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the educator begin to regularly photograph and record brief observations of each child's individual learning and achievements and to create a personal story of each child in their journal.
- To illustrate the children's learning and development captured in the written observations, it is advised that the educator makes links to the aims and learning goals in *Aistear.*

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

- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements was very good.
- The children were highly motivated and actively engaged in all activities observed on the day of inspection.
- A very strong sense of group identity existed amongst the children. They were heard to refer to 'their school' and comment 'it's our snack time now'.
- There were indications that some very good friendships were developing. Children sought others out to join in their play activities and others invited another child to help them to build a structure together.
- All of the children were very eager to share their experiences and communicate in their own personal way, some with gestures and body language, and others in conversation. Each

child was supported, by the educator, to successfully do so in accordance with their varying levels of communication and language development.
- The children engaged in many activities to support early mathematics, such as, sorting, matching, grouping and classifying play materials.
- During outside time, the children were actively engaged in self-chosen activities that promoted their gross motor skills development. These included, scooting, throwing a basketball into a hoop, and climbing steps to a slide.
- Many children displayed their developing capacity to play co-operatively. Some children worked for a lengthy period of time and used wooden blocks to build 'a museum with many doors'.
- The children had many opportunities to express their creativity and imagination during the session observed. One child opened the window of the wendy house to declare 'McDonalds is open!' and proceeded to make enough sales to 'buy lots of toys in Smith's'. Other children spontaneously sang and recited rhymes with actions during the session.
- All of the children were very eager to take responsibility to care for the environment and displayed pride in achieving these tasks.
- On the day of inspection, the children were experiencing joy and pride in their achievements and learning in the setting.

Actions advised

- To further support the children's emergent writing skills and developing understanding of the function of writing, the educator is advised to develop a permanent writing/mark making space with a variety of tools and resources freely accessible to the children.
- It is advised that the educator invites the children to review and reflect on their learner journals and that their comments and assessments are added to the journal.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was excellent.
- The pre-school session observed was very well-organised and ran very smoothly.
- The owner/educator is a qualified Montessori educator and through reflection and planning, over time, has successfully integrated aspects of the Montessori curriculum into a play-based programme which is fully aligned with *Aistear*.
- The owner/educator has maintained continuing professional development. She is a long standing member of a local informal network of ELC educators. Prior to Covid-19, this network met regularly for support, sharing updates in the sector and engaging in reflective practice.
- The owner/educator is linked to local ELC agencies for support and information.
- Notably strong links with parents have been established. The owner/educator hosts a parent evening before the academic year begins. At this evening there a strong focus not just on building relationships with families, but also connecting parents with each other. A parent handbook is provided.
- During the year, the owner/educator regularly sends videos and photographs of the children's activities and achievements to their parents through a social media application. Monthly newsletters share information about the curriculum, new songs and rhymes introduced and information about *Aistear* and aspects of the children's learning and development.
- A very good relationship with the local school has developed over the years. Pre-covid-19, the principal visited the setting and the children were invited to visit the junior infants' classroom. Information about the children's learning experiences has been shared more formally on a transition report which has been designed by the school.

Action advised

- The educator is advised to explore using the *Mo Scéal* transition templates, developed by the NCCA, to share information about the children's learning experiences as they transition from the setting to primary school.

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	Excellent

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.*