An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	Holly Park Montessori School
Setting Address	17 Holly Park Avenue Blackrock Co. Dublin
DCYA number	09DR0083

Date of Inspection: 04-04-2019

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agus Scileanna
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Education and Skills

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	04-04-2019
Inspection activities undertaken • Meeting with setting manager/practitioner • Observation of interactions during the pre-school session • Interaction with children	• Review of relevant documents • Feedback to setting manager/practitioner

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Holly Park Montessori School was established in 2013. It is a private setting located in a residential area in Blackrock, Co. Dublin. The setting provides a morning sessional service for children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, the manager/practitioner, two practitioners and twenty-one children were present. The manager/practitioner attended the post-inspection 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 is very good.
- The practitioners have successfully created a very pleasant and inviting atmosphere. The environment is bright and aesthetically pleasing.
- The children enter the setting enthusiastically and select freely from a range of activities and experiences.
- The children's identity and belonging are very well supported through photographs, birthday chats and their individual self-portraits. The children's names are displayed in the setting and each child has his/her own box to store art work. The practitioners support the children's sense of belonging within the group by welcoming the children by name and naming the children who have yet to arrive. Representation of the children's families and the wider community is currently limited.
- The children's independence is very effectively supported by the practitioners. The children hang up their coats and put away their belongings on arrival. A helper system provides opportunities for children to take responsibility for small tasks. The name of the daily helper is written on a blackboard in the room.
- Interactions between the practitioners and the children are commendably warm, respectful and playful. The practitioners are very sensitive to the needs of the children. They share many warm and affectionate moments with the children during the morning.
- Snack time is viewed as a relaxed social occasion. The practitioners sit with the children and engage in conversations about healthy food choices.
- A visual display of the daily routine is used effectively to inform children of the sequence of activities and promotes a sense of predictability and security for the children.
- Transitions from one activity to the next are generally signalled through the use of a song. On the day of the inspection, advance warning of the transitions was not given.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to consistently use a broad range of visual and audio cues to signal in advance transitions from one activity to the next. This will help the children's management of transitions and provide them with an opportunity to complete an activity or to set aside a piece of work for later.
- In order to further support the children's sense of identity and belonging and their developing awareness of different cultures, the practitioners are advised to provide imagery of the children's families and the wider community in the room.

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.
- The curriculum is based on the Montessori Method, coupled with an emphasis on child-led, free play. Children have ample opportunities to freely engage in activities of their choice.
- Curriculum planning takes place on long-term, medium-term and short-term bases. The long-term and medium-term plans outline broad themes which inform the short-term plans. There is some evidence that the children's emerging interests inform the short-term plans. This is not currently documented.
- A range of assessment approaches is in place, including a child profile, Montessori records which track the children's progress in using the Montessori materials, and individual folders containing the children's artwork. There is potential to build a profile of each child which includes the identification of positive dispositions for learning, such as resilience, perseverance and concentration.
- The children's early language, literacy and numeracy skills are very effectively supported through songs and rhymes, which are a regular feature of the session, and through the print-rich environment. This is particularly helpful for children for whom English is an additional language,
- A very good range of Montessori materials is provided, including an extensive selection of practical life materials which promote children's independence and autonomy.
- The children demonstrate great enjoyment in books. They have access to a spacious, well-resourced library area, complete with comfortable seating. The children sit in small groups, or with a practitioner, to discuss and share their favourite stories.
- The children have daily access to the garden. The available resources include a slide, climbing apparatus and a tunnel. On the day of the inspection, the children expressed their delight when playing with the parachute as a large group. They played happily with the practitioners who listened to their suggestions and incorporated them into the game.
- The practitioners skilfully support and extend the children's learning. They allow ample time and space for the children to engage in in-depth discussion and use open-ended questions and prompts.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to consistently document the children's interests and to use this information to inform and guide the short-term plans.
- The practitioners are advised to build on the current assessment practices to create a richer picture of the children's learning and to use this information to inform the next steps in their learning. This may include photographic evidence, along with the children's individual art work and their comments.

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 present as capable and competent. During the inspection, a practitioner presented the mystery bag to a child and the child then skilfully presented it to the practitioner.
- The children demonstrate real enjoyment and delight in their learning. They engage eagerly in their chosen activities and are motivated to learn.
- The children are very confident and articulate communicators. They discuss many aspects of their lives and recall recent experiences. They demonstrate the capacity to make connections between their previous and new learning.
- The children display many positive dispositions for learning. They make decisions, problem solve effectively and negotiate different roles during their play.

- The children have very positive and caring relationships with their peers. During the inspection, a small group of children worked with Montessori materials. They rolled out the mat together and placed the geometric solids on their corresponding base, while discussing the names of the shapes.
- The children are developing their creativity. On the day of the inspection, some of the children engaged in mark making and a majority of the children engaged in template art.
- The children are developing empathy and an appreciation of how others are feeling. A display in the room documents children's words and ideas and illustrates their understanding of kindness. The children also take part in annual fundraising events for local charities which provides an opportunity for them to explore issues, such as poverty and homelessness.

Action advised

- The practitioners are advised to provide increased opportunities for the children to express themselves creatively using open-ended art materials and to decrease the use of templates.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- The manager/practitioner and the practitioners present as a very caring and committed team.
- There are very effective structures in place for planning, reflection and review. Evaluation meetings are scheduled to identify strengths and areas for improvement in the learning programme. The practitioners complete a programme review form which is used to inform future practice.
- The manager/practitioner provides support and supervision for individual staff on a monthly basis.
- The manager/practitioner avails of advice and support from external agencies and the local childcare committee. Positive links have been developed with relevant professionals, including a public health nurse and a psychologist.
- The team is committed to engaging in continuing professional development. The manager/practitioner and practitioners have engaged in a wide range of training including training on *Aistear, Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education* and the *Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Guidelines*. The manager/practitioner has recently completed the Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years (LINC) Programme.
- Effective communication with parents is evident. A parents' handbook is provided. Information is also communicated through a notice board and an online application. Information on the children's learning is generally shared informally with parents. There is potential to provide more regular, planned opportunities to share the children's learning with parents.
- Positive partnerships with parents are in place. There are opportunities for parents to come into the setting for events, including the teddy bears picnic in a local park, sports day and a family fun day at the end of the year. Parents are also invited to the Christmas concert and a coffee morning. A parent rota provides an opportunity for parents to spend time in the setting and to become familiar with the Montessori materials. Parents, including a postman and a nurse, have also visited the setting to share their interests and to discuss their occupations.
- The transition from pre-school to primary school is well supported. The manager has established links with the principal of a local school. Parents are provided with advice and tips on the transition from pre-school to primary school.

Action advised

- The practitioners are advised to provide more regular opportunities to share the children's learning with parents.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the setting to implement the actions advised above is very good. The manager/practitioner engaged openly and reflectively throughout the post-inspection feedback meeting and clearly demonstrated her commitment to quality practice.

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.

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