An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	Huntsfield Montessori
Setting Address	1 The Meadows Huntsfield Dooradoyle County Limerick
DCYA number	09LK0026

Date of Inspection: 07-09-2018

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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	07-09-2018
Inspection activities undertaken • Meeting with setting manager • Observation of interactions during a session • Interaction with children	• Review of relevant documents • Feedback to setting manager/ practitioner

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Huntsfield Montessori is a privately managed service which has been in operation since 2006. It is located in a room in a private dwelling. It provides a morning and an afternoon Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme, On the morning of the inspection, six children and the owner/ practitioner were present. The majority of the children are attending the setting for the first time and at the time of the inspection it was week one of the first term. The setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised in this 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.
- A very warm and welcoming atmosphere is evident along with a real sense of calm and order.
- Praise and encouragement are a regular feature of the practitioner's responses to the children. Although it is only the first week for the majority of the children, they appear comfortable in the setting.
- The organisational procedures and the daily routine very effectively support the children's learning and development. A visual of the daily routine is displayed in the room. There is potential to utilise this further to support the children to become familiar with the routine and in predicting what happens next.
- The children have agency and independence in choosing and organising their own learning experiences within a purposefully prepared learning environment.
- Child-child relationships are very successfully fostered by the practitioner. During the inspection, there were many fine examples where children were encouraged to work and play in pairs and teams.
- The promotion of positive social interactions between the children and their independence are very positively advanced during the programme of activities.
- During the inspection, transitions were minimal and, in the main, unhurried for the children. They received a verbal reminder when change was imminent and they were supported to participate in tidying away the materials.
- Supporting children to develop a positive sense of their uniqueness is prioritised in the setting. Photographs of the children with their names are displayed on their coat hooks and in their individual books and their free drawings are displayed in the room. Gathering family photogrpahs and areas of interest in the community has commenced.

Action advised

- The practitioner is advised to use the visual of the daily routine more purposefully with the children to support them in becoming familiar with what happens every day and to respond to possible changes. Introducing a wider range of transition strategies such as timers, soft music or visual cards will further support all children as they move from one activity to the next.

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 broad-based curriculum which is underpinned by the Montessori principles of early education and *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* has been developed.
- Planning processes demonstrate some flexibility in the practitioner's approach to incorporating the Montessori cycle of activity with the current and emergent interests of the children.
- Various methods of assessment are being utilised successfully. These include detailed individual handwritten observations, developmental checklists and notes on the progress children are making with the Montessori materials.
- The practitioner skilfully engages with children as a play partner and fosters positive peer interactions. A wide range of very effective interaction strategies and teaching methodologies that facilitate and support children's learning and thinking is used. These include asking timely open-ended questions to extend children's thinking and conversation using gentle prompts to support children to stay on task, and demonstrating specific skills and steps that facilitate children to complete tasks successfully.
- Many opportunities are provided for a variety of types of play such as imaginative play, socio-dramatic play, creative play, physical play and language play.
- While the indoor learning environment is small, it is well laid out. A wide variety of Montessori materials and play objects are accessible, available and presented on labelled shelves and containers. The outdoor learning environment offers many opportunities for children to develop their physical and social skills and to engage with the natural environment.
- The development of children's early literacy skills and mathematical thinking is well supported through engagement with the materials, songs and rhyme, and purposeful vocabulary extension by the practioner.
- A responsive inclusive approach to supporting children's learning and development is adopted in the setting. The owner/practitioner has recently completed the Leadership for Inclusion programme (LINC) and the setting engages with external agencies to support children with additional needs.

Action advised

- The utilisation of the self-evaluation templates, resources and assessment tools in the 'Planning and Assement' pillar of the *Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide* is advised. This will support ongoing reflection and improvements to the planning and assessment processes.

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 exhibit a positive sense of well-being and they demonstrate high levels of enjoyment and motivation in their learning.
- The children are developing the ability to play co-operatively in pairs and small groups.
- The children have ample time to initiate natural conversations with each other and the majority of them communicate confidently. On the day of inspection there was limited opportunity for the children to engage together as a group with the practitioner to talk and listen to each other and reflect on their learning.
- The children demonstrate many positive appropriate learning dispositions such as being absorbed and purposeful in their play; they are independent and confident in making their own decisions.
- The children can express their ideas and creativity through a variety of play activities and different types of art and mark-making opportunities.
- On the day of the inspection, the majority of the children demonstrated a very good understanding of the rules and boundaries of acceptable behaviour during this very early stage of the pre-school year.
- The children are developing increasing co-ordination over their gross and fine motor skills.

- Commendable teamwork and co-operation between the children on shared tasks and group games were evident during the inspection.
- Many children demonstrated good knowledge of early mathematical concepts along with a keen interest in decoding symbols, counting and categorising play objects on the morning of the inspection .
- Children have access to books and on the morning of the inspection they demonstrated a keen interest in looking at books and re-telling stories.

Actions advised

- The practitioner is advised to provide more opportunities for the children to come together as a group to talk and listen to each other and reflect on their learning.
- There is potential to harness and promote childrens interest in books further by giving them more time to look at books and by placing books of interest in various areas of the room.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- Very appropriate and orderly systems are in place to ensure the smooth running of the programme. The owner/practitioner demonstrates a keen awareness and capacity to evaluate her practice. A weekly review sheet is used purposefully to support reflection on practice in order to improve learning experiences and outcomes for all children.
- The owner/practitioner prioritises on-going professional development and has long established links with the local county childcare committee and St, Nicholas Montessori association. She has recently completed the Leadership for Inclusion in early years (LINC) programme and diversity and equality training.
- The parents are provided with very clear information about the setting's policies and procedures, and the vision and aims of the Montessori method of early education.
- Parents and families are consulted and involved as partners in their children's learning and development. They receive regular newsletters to update them on the children's learning and the topics and themes being explored. A communication diary has also been developed which successfully supports two-way communication between parents and the setting. Formal meetings between parents and practitioners are facilitated annually.
- Transitions into and from the setting are very well supported.

Action advised

- To further support the good practice of self-review and parental involvement, the owner/manager is advised to systematically utilise the self-evalaution tools available in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide.* In particular, the use of the 'Partnership with parents' pillar of practice and the professional development section entitled, 'Curriculum foundations' are advised.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the setting to implement the actions advised above is very good.

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-focused 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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