An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)
Final Report

Setting name	Laragh Montessori
Setting address	Laragh Village Castleblayney County Monaghan A75T854
TUSLA registration number	TU2015MN033
DCEDIY number	09MN0010
Date of inspection	12-05-2022
Date of issue of report	28-09-2022

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	12-05-2022
Inspection activities undertaken • Pre-Inspection meeting with the setting owner/manager • Meeting with early years educator • Review of setting documentation and records of children's learning and development • Review of education resources and facilities • Observations of interactions during a number of sessions • Interaction with children • Feedback meeting with setting manager/owner • Individual feedback to early years educator	

Context of setting

Laragh Montessori is a privately-owned, early learning and care setting located in the rural area of Laragh Village, County Monaghan. The setting has been established for twelve years and provides one pre-school session daily, offering the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme to participating children. During the inspection, a total of five children were present with the owner/lead practitioner and an early years educator. The owner/lead educator 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; 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 is good.
- There is a warm and caring ethos in the setting. The educators are welcoming and personable to the children and their families upon arrival.
- The routine is displayed in print format and outlines the typical activities that the children experience on a daily basis. The organisation of table-top and group activities resulted in sedentary experiences for the children, for the majority of the session observed.
- Snack is a social occasion with lovely conversations occurring between the children, their peers and the educators. The children are encouraged by the educators to develop self-help skills by managing their lunches at this time.
- Transitions are managed using verbal cues to prepare the children for the change in routine. At times, the transition periods between activities were lengthy which impacted on the flow of the session and engagement of the children.
- The educators encourage the children to be kind to their peers and guide them towards positive behaviour. There were missed opportunities during the session to encourage the children to further understand their emotions and to engage in independent conflict resolution.
- The children each have a space for their personal belongings which is identified using the child's photograph. The educators engage in conversations with the children about their families and the children are made aware of the wider world through discussions about topics such as the continents.
- The educators previously organised a visit from the local *Garda* to promote road safety. On occasions, the children have opportunities to go walking in and to explore the rural countryside in which the preschool is located.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the educators restructure the daily routine so that sedentary, table-top activities are minimised and significantly more time is allocated to child-initiated play.
- It is advised that the educators develop visual and auditory strategies to support the management of transitions within the routine. Creating opportunities for the children to engage in helper roles at these times will support positive learning dispositions such as responsibility and determination.
- It is advised that the educators support the children to identify and understand their own emotions and those of others. Encouraging independent problem-solving during times of minor conflict will support the children to develop stronger relationships with their peers.

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 fair.
- The setting implements the Montessori curriculum. The weekly activities are planned around themes that are conducted each year. The themed resources are stored in individual folders and are used to guide the daily activities.
- Specific areas of the children's learning is assessed informally by observing their progression through the various Montessori activities such as insets, sandpaper numbers and letters. There are no formal records of the children's observed learning and developmental progression.
- Some lovely warm interactions were observed during the inspection and some open-ended questions were used during the session to support the children's reflection and play ideas.
- The small indoor environment is organised with shelves along the walls to store Montessori resources, books and jigsaws. A shelf with resources such as a dolls house, construction blocks, cars and a mat were made available to the children towards the end of the session.
- The outdoor area was accessed during the inspection where children played with sand, bikes, cars and initiated a game of tag. Access to a wide variety of resources and varied areas of play is limited in the indoor and outdoor environments.
- The availability of diverse play opportunities was limited to the children during the inspection due to an overemphasis on structured, adult-directed activities over child-initiated play,
- Emergent language and numeracy is encouraged through Montessori sand paper letters and numbers, daily songs and story time. The children had some opportunities to mark-make using crayons and a unicorn template.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the educators develop an emergent curriculum approach that explicitly identifies and extends the interests and learning needs of the children throughout the year. Use of the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide*, Curriculum Foundations Pillar will support with this practice development.
- It is advised that the educators conduct and record regular, strengths-based observations and assessments of the children's learning and progression. This will build a rich and holistic picture of their learning and experiences during their time in the pre-school setting.
- It is advised that the educators provide an appropriate balance between adult-initiated and child-initiated learning. This will promote active learning and motivate the children to engage in self-directed learning.
- It is advised that the educators review and develop the indoor and outdoor learning environments so that the children have access to a wider range of resources and materials, such as multi-sensory, creative and socio-dramatic play.

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

- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements is good.
- Many of the children appeared engaged during the table-top activities such as the Montessori activities presented to them, jigsaws and creating an under the sea creation on a felt board.
- The children decide which activities to engage with outdoors, some chose sand, some chose bikes and others enjoyed playing hide and seek with their friends.
- The children have an opportunity to mark-make daily on templates and to paint on occasions throughout the year. The templates and art work are not generally displayed and go home with the children as they are created. The children's voices are not strongly represented in the pre-school setting.
- Some children confidently share aspects of their learning with others and identify when they need support. At times during the session, the children's sense of achievement was based on their knowledge of seasons, days of the week and the months of the year, which created a competitive atmosphere by using closed questions.
- During the inspection one child celebrated their accomplishment when describing their sea creation as 'lovely' and another child had confidence in their learning by stating 'I'm doing it my way'. There are some opportunities for the children to develop gross motor skills on the outdoor bikes, tunnels and slides.
- A few children are developing strong social skills that support them to play co-operatively with their peers during child-led play, indoors and outdoors.
- The majority of the children competently communicate their needs, ideas and are developing the ability to take turns in conversation. Some children show good awareness of mathematical concepts, making statements such as "I am two plus two, I am four".
- Some of the children show a real interest in learning about the natural environment and are confident when describing sea animals and the purpose of a lighthouse. Some children have developed the capacity to make connections between their past experiences and new learning such as recognising the Gruffalo in the Gruffalo's child story book.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the educators make the children's voices more visible in the setting. Creating opportunities for the children to see their creations displayed with annotated descriptions, displaying photographs of them participating in play and recording their interests will support the development of this action.
- It is advised that the educators broaden the children's sense of achievement by replacing the closed questions with opportunities to share, discuss and celebrate what the children know and what they would like to discover further. Additionally, using regular observations, building a portfolio of art along with photographs of the children playing will support their identity as competent learners.
- It is advised that the educators provide a broader range of play and learning opportunities that support the children to strengthen their social skills such as turn-taking, co-operation and an understanding of the views of others.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is fair.
- The educators are very aware of their roles and responsibilities during the session and work in a collaborative manner.
- Some reflection in action around various activities was observed during the inspection. Self-evaluation using the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* is currently not in place.

- The daily routine and use of weekly curriculum resources support the organisation of the session. The educators participate in mandatory training to support health and safety in the setting.
- Communication with parents is predominantly conducted through informal conversations at arrival and collection. The children's art work and Montessori inset tracings are sent home on a weekly basis. The educators are very familiar with the families and called to the children's homes to deliver resources during the Covid 19 closure.
- The settling-in period is guided by the needs of the child and their family. The lead educator offers reduced or staggered hours, if required, to support the child during the settling-in process.
- The educators have some informal discussions with the children to prepare them for the transition to primary school. There are currently no opportunities for the educators to engage in co-professional dialogue with the primary school prior to the children's transition.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the educators develop strategic opportunities to engage in self-evaluation throughout the year to support quality improvement.
- It is advised that the educators engage regularly in continuing professional development to develop an awareness of current research around children's learning.
- It is advised that the educators regularly consult with the parents around their child's holistic learning experiences and progression. Sharing observations of the children's learning will support a two-way process of communication.
- It is advised that the manager adopts more formal processes for sharing appropriate information with the parents and children to support the settling-in process. Additionally, developing methods for sharing information with the parents and the local primary schools about the child's learning prior to their transition to primary school will support continuity in learning.

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	Fair
Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements	Good
Quality of management and leadership for learning	Fair

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.*