**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

# Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

# REPORT

## Maywood Montessori
## 09DY0150

## 5 Maywood Park,
## Raheny,
## Dublin 5.

## Date of inspection: 14 June 2016

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS
INSPECTORATE

## CONTEXT OF SETTING

Maywood Montessori is a sessional service located in a private dwelling in Raheny, Dublin. It is open for eight years and offers a pre-school service, using the Montessori approach, to sixteen children. On the day of the inspection, the owner and an assistant practitioner were present catering for 10 of the 12 children who are currently availing of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. The setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised in this report, and the response of the setting will be found in the appendix of this report.

## 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.
- A warm, caring atmosphere is in evidence. Children and parents are welcomed by name into the setting by the practitioners.
- Parents are invited to share in seasonal celebrations in the setting at Halloween and Christmas.
- A key worker system is in operation and this involves assigning each practitioner to a designated number of children for the purposes of sharing the taking of observations of children's learning. This is rotated on a weekly basis.
- Children are aware of the well-established daily routine and are given some choice in organising their learning activities.
- Children are regularly offered praise and encouragement on their achievements.
- A child helper offers fresh fruit to the children at snack time. The children enjoy snack time as a social opportunity to chat with friends and the practitioners.
- Practitioners use a suitable range of transitioning techniques to support children's moving from one activity to the next.
- The practitioners support children towards positive behaviour in a calm, caring and sensitive manner.
- Children use books to familiarise themselves with the local community. The children know the postman and visit the local post office to post letters they have written, to each other.

*Actions advised*

- It is advised that a permanent key worker system be introduced to ensure consistency of care and further strengthen children's sense of identity and belonging within the group.
- The development of a visual timetable of the daily routine at child height is advised to support children's sense of identity and belonging within the group and to support them in their learning experiences.
- Practitioners are advised to actively extend children's knowledge of the wider local community by bringing children on walks and inviting members of the community to visit the setting.

## 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 good.
- Practitioners use an annual themed-based approach to planning that is then divided into weekly units.
- There is a planned approach to progressing children's learning by noting children's achievements in their use of the Montessori materials.
- The indoor environment supports children to access a wide range of Montessori equipment. The outdoor area offers children space to run around and has a selection of outdoor play equipment to support the development of the children's physical skills.
- The routine currently in use allocates twenty minutes to 'toy time' for children at the start of the day where on arrival children can freely choose from the play equipment.
- Practitioners use a range of interactions strategies to motivate and engage children with some good examples of open-ended questions used.

- On the day of the inspection children were observed spending a considerable amount of time in large group activities that focused on the over-formalised learning of numbers and letters, rote learning and testing.
- Children have easy access to pencils and request paper to engage in mark-making. The practitioners use workbooks to develop children's pre-reading and writing skills. Children take part in arts and crafts every week related to the weekly theme.
- Books are available to support children's understanding of the weekly theme which related to worms and insects on the day of the inspection.
- At the end of the day children use yoga to unwind. The practitioner helps them to use their body to describe the life of the caterpillar and facilitates connections in their learning.

*Actions advised*

- It is advised that practitioners provide additional time within the daily timetable for children's to engage in free-play experiences and also to provide additional play resources to support children's learning.
- In planning practitioners are advised to adopt an enquiry-based curriculum that takes cognisance of children's emerging interests and that is informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*.
- Practitioners are advised to extend the current records of children's learning by developing assessment approaches that capture all aspects of the child's experiences in the setting.
- It is advised that the current emphasis on formal adult directed activities which promote recall and rote-learning be reviewed with a view to increasing activity-based and child-led learning initiatives.

## AREA 3

## QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is good.
- Children display enjoyment and satisfaction in their learning. Children achieve success and fulfilment in their use of the graded Montessori equipment.
- Children are curious about the natural environment and their learning is extended by practitioners providing suitable books. Children enjoy naming and describing the planets.
- Children's experiences of selecting a variety of materials and expressing their ideas through art creativity are limited.
- Children are confident in naming their choice of activity and in discussing their work with their peers and the practitioners.
- Children are able to play cooperatively together. They understand turn taking and share comfortably.
- On the day of the inspection the large group is used for group lessons. There are some opportunities for children to work together in pairs or small groups.
- Records are kept of children's progression in their use of Montessori materials and plans are in place to advance their learning.

*Actions advised*

- Practitioners are advised to offer additional opportunities for children's choice of mark-making and free creativity and to make these visible within the setting.
- It is advised that practitioners enhance children's learning experiences and motivation by limiting the amount of large group activities and refocusing on small group work.
- Practitioners are advised to gather and record information on children's learning achievements within all aspects of the learning programme, to enhance continuity in their progression and development.

## AREA 4

## QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of the management and leadership for learning is good.

- There is a good ethos of teamwork and collaboration in evidence.
- Practitioners work well in partnership and enjoy opportunities to take on leadership roles.
- The manager demonstrates a clear vision for the ongoing development of the setting.
- Practitioners avail of support and mentoring from Dublin City Childcare Committee and Early Childhood Ireland. Practitioners have recently completed training in Child Protection.
- There are opportunities for sharing information with parents about their children's learning at arrival and departure times. Social media is used to communicate with parents and an information leaflet is given to parents at the start of the school year.
- The setting operates an open-door policy and in September the daily routine offers unstructured play to support children's settling in.
- Practitioners offer information to parents about child readiness for primary school. During the month of June practitioners focus on preparing children for primary school through discussions and ensuring they have the necessary skills.

*Actions advised*

- The use of the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* is advised to support the setting's self-reflection and review of policies and procedures.
- It is advised that consideration should be given to the development of additional opportunities for sharing children's learning experiences and their learning journeys with parents.
- The practitioners are advised to develop policies and procedures in order to support children's transition to primary school.

## CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The owner and assistant practitioner of Maywood Montessori demonstrate a good capacity to implement the actions advised.

## Summary of Overall Inspection Findings

| 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 | **Good** |
| Quality of management and leadership for learning | **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. |

*Published December 2016*

**APPENDIX**

**SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

**Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report**

**Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.**

- Since our inspection we have implemented a permanent key worker system which will ensure consistency of care and further strengthen children's sense of identity and belonging within the group.
- A visual timetable of the daily routine (at child height) is now displayed in the school.
- A number of planned outings in the local community will commence in 2017 (subject to insurance guidelines and clarification regarding adult/child recommended ratio from Tusla).
- At the time of our inspection we allocated an average of 45 minutes for free play. We have reviewed this session to include resources to support the children's learning.
- The curriculum is currently being reviewed and amended in line with the Early Childhood Curriculum (*Aistear*).
- The current records of children's learning have been extended to include and capture all aspects of the child's experiences in the setting.
- Mark-making and free creativity has now been extended in the daily activity rota.
- The schools policies and procedures have been reviewed and updated to include support for the children's transition to primary school. In addition the policies have been reviewed in line with *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide*.