An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)
Final Report

Setting name	Montessori House of Children, Milltown
Setting address	Church Street Milltown County Kerry V93 EV97
TUSLA registration number	TU2021KY005
DCEDIY number	22KY0261
Date of inspection	23-03-2023
Date of issue of report	13-05-2024

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	23-03-2023
Inspection activities undertaken • Pre-inspection meeting with the setting owner/manager • Meeting with relevant early years educators/other members of staff • Review of setting documentation and records of children's learning and development • Review of the education resources and facilities • Observations of interactions during a number of sessions • Interaction with the children • Feedback meeting with the setting owner/manager and early years educators	

Context of setting

Montessori House of Children, Milltown is a private childcare setting operating in an impressively refurbished school house in Milltown, County Kerry. It was established in 2022 and provides a morning and afternoon session for children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, fourteen children, and two early years educators were in attendance. 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 very good.
- An extremely warm, welcoming, nurturing and affirming atmosphere prevailed in the setting. The educators' practices were based around respectful engagement with the children and their families.
- The educators planned a highly-effective environment that was calm, relaxed and encouraged curiosity, creativity and playful exploration and learning.
- During the care routines, the children demonstrated their independence and their ability to manage their self-care needs. The children were adept at putting on and taking off their coats, changing their outdoor shoes for their indoor slippers, opening their lunchboxes and tidying up after themselves.
- The times of transition within the setting supported positive learning experiences for the children. They were managed very effectively and promoted continuity in learning throughout the session.
- The manager and educators created and maintained conditions necessary for nurturing relationships with the children. They fostered caring and respectful child-to-child relationships.
- The educators provided the children with opportunities to develop an appreciation of themselves as individuals. For their birthday celebration, the educators supported each child to make a personal 'time line', featuring a photograph of themselves for each year of their life. They shared this with the other children during their Montessori birthday walk. On the day of the inspection, there were no individual photographs of the children, their families or the community on display.
- The children had opportunities to make positive social connections with the other children and the educators throughout the session.

- The educators provided opportunities for the children to get to know people within their community. A farmer visited and brought a lamb with him, and there were visits from the postman, and a decorator who showed the children how to mix paste for wallpaper. A mother from India visited in traditional dress and Indian and Irish festivals were celebrated.

Action advised

- The educators are advised to gather images of the children, their families and the community and to create displays in a sensitive and meaningful way. This will support the children to make more concrete connections and help embed their emerging sense of self and their sense of belonging to a group.

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.
- The educators developed a broad-based curriculum informed by the Montessori Method of Education and linked to *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. This was documented and used to support the children's learning and development within an authentic Montessori prepared environment.
- Planning for curriculum implementation was organised on long, medium and short-term bases. The plans were flexible enough to allow for a response to the children's emergent interests.
- The educators used a variety of meaningful, strengths-based assessment approaches to gather information about the children's learning experiences and achievements. This information was used to ensure continuity and progression in their individual learning. The assessments included a narrative observation, a well-being development checklist and a speech and language checklist. Individual learning journals were not provided for each child.
- The educators provided opportunities for the children to achieve fulfilment, success and mastery during learning activities. The learning activities provided more complex, varied and challenging experiences for the children in accordance with their individual needs and abilities.
- The educators used a range of appropriate interaction strategies and methodologies to facilitate a broad range of learning experiences.
- The indoor and outdoor environments were purposefully structured and organised to develop the children's curiosity, creativity, imagination and desire for exploration. The resources and experiences effectively stimulated, consolidated and extended the children's learning.
- The children had access to high-quality books, linked to their interests and play areas in a charming library room. They were provided with regular opportunities to listen to and explore stories in the company of affectionate and attuned educators.

Action advised

- The educators are advised to develop individual learning journals in collaboration with the children and to share these with their families regularly. The tip sheet 'Documenting children's learning and development' in the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* may help in this regard.

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

- The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements was very good.
- The children demonstrated enjoyment and fun in their learning. They were secure and at ease within the setting.

- The information documented about the children's learning reflected their achievements in a range of connected learning experiences appropriate to an early education context.
- The children were able to communicate their interests, opinions, family background and personal experiences. One child showed his and his sister's slippers to some of the children, and this led to lively discussion.
- The children were developing personal and social skills which enabled them to respond appropriately to different situations. These included turn-taking, co-operating, patient waiting and building relationships.
- The children took turns in conversations, and they explored sound, repetition and language through conversations, songs and rhymes in both Irish and English.
- The children represented their ideas and feelings through various child-led media and play activities. The children placed their artwork in a drawer cabinet which was identified by them with their name and a label. The children's interpretations of their artwork were not documented.
- The children were aware of the natural environment and its features, materials, animals and plants. The theme of spring was reflected throughout the environment including a beautifully presented nature table with flowers (daffodils), herbs (rosemary), information relating to typical spring weather, twigs, buds, leaves and pictures of animals.
- The children engaged, explored and experimented in their environment and used their developing physical skills to manipulate objects and diverse materials.

Action advised

- The educators are advised to develop discussion around the children's creative mark-making and to record, more extensively, the children's interpretations of their mark-making and other creative work.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was very good.
- The manager and educators provided oversight and had responsibility for the programme of learning and care, in line with best practice and research. The self-evaluation tools in the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* were not used.
- An ethos of professionalism, teamwork and partnership was evident. The educators were aware of relevant research, policy and practice developments that impact on the quality of their work with the children. The educational experiences and activities were well organised.
- The stated philosophy and vision of the setting were evident in the practice of the staff. There was clarity around the educators' roles and responsibilities with regard to educational activities.
- The parents and families were proactively consulted as the primary educators of their children and involved as partners in their children's learning and development.
- The parents and families were made aware of the policies, procedures and curriculum in operation within the setting.
- As a child transitioned into the setting, the educators gathered information from the parents about the children's prior experiences. This knowledge was used to help ensure continuity in the child's experiences and progression in learning.
- The educators established a good professional mutual relationship with the local primary school. The principal visited the children in the pre-school.

Action advised

- The educators are advised to exploit more fully the self-assessment tools and resources in the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide.* This will support the process of self-review and ongoing reflection on 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

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.*

The following resources can be used by ELC settings in their quality improvement:

Aistear Siolta Practice Guide

Department of Education Insights – Quality in Early Years Education webinars