An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI)
Final Report

Setting name	Pixies Montessori Pre-School
Setting address	162a Fernhill Arklow Wicklow Y14HN90
TUSLA registration number	TU2015WW157
DCEDIY number	09WW0082
Date of inspection	24-01-2023
Date of issue of report	24-03-2023

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	24-01-2023
Inspection activities undertaken • Pre-inspection meeting with the management team • Review of setting documentation and records of children's learning and development • Review of the education resources and facilities • Observations of interactions during two pre-school sessions • Interaction with the children • Feedback meeting with the setting owner/educator and early years educators	

Context of setting

Pixies Montessori School is a private setting, which is located in a residential area in Arklow, Co. Wicklow. The long established setting, provides two morning pre-school sessions, for children availing of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, the owner, who acts in the role of early years educator, along with five educators and twenty-seven children, were present. The owner and three educators attended the post-inspection meeting. The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the 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 was very good.
- The atmosphere in the setting was very warm and pleasant. The children entered the learning rooms with enthusiasm. Some of them proudly presented shapes that they had brought in from home, to the educators and their friends. They then selected from a range of play experiences.
- A key person approach which supports a strong link between the setting and the children's families was in place. The educators facilitated a gradual settling-in process to promote a smooth transition into the setting.
- The interactions between the educators were kind, responsive and respectful. The educators moved to the children's level and listened with interest to the children as they spoke.
- The educators affirmed the children when they noticed positive actions, such as kindness or good manners.
- Snack time was a pleasant and relaxed occasion. The children and the educators sat together and engaged in relaxed chats as they ate their snack.
- The children's identity and belonging was supported through a wide variety of displays and imagery of the children and their families.
- It was reported that there were some opportunities for parents to come into the setting, for example to attend a sports day at the end of the year.
- The children were developing an awareness of their local community. In the past, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, they were visited by a *Garda* and a hairdresser.

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Actions advised

- The educators are advised to provide opportunities for parents to participate in the daily life of the setting, wherever possible.
- In order to enhance the children's sense of community, the educators are advised to develop a plan to make the local community visible to them.

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 curriculum approach in place was play-based, combined with elements of the Montessori Method.
- The children had ample time to engage in child-initiated play. A range of play types was observed including sensory play, imaginary play and physical play.
- The educators have created clearly defined play areas including; a book area, a home area and a construction area. A wide variety of resources was provided, to support the children's learning and development.
- The educators planned the curriculum on a long-term and short-term basis. The long-term plans, which were linked to *Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*, identified the key topics to be explored throughout the year, such as seasonal events, social skills and nature. The short-term plans provided further detail of aspects of learning to be explored. There were some instances where the children's interests were recorded in the plans.
- The educators used a number of assessment methods, including developmental checklists and learning resords to record the children's learning. The learning records identified the children's dispositions for learning, along with plans for their future learning. A learning journal, with samples of the children's art work and photographs of them engaged in activities was provided for each child.
- The children had access to an outdoor area, which included a variety of resources such as a sand-pit, a mud kitchen and a selection of tricycles. The children expressed great enjoyment during their time in the outdoor area.
- The educators used prompts and open-ended questions effectively to extend the children's learning.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to consistently document the children's interests and to use this information to plan meaningful learning experiences.
- The educators are advised to streamline their current assessment practices, in order to provide a richer picture of the children's learning and dispositions. The learning journals will assist 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 presented as content and at ease.They demonstrated real enjoyment in their learning and engaged with interest in their chosen learning experiences.
- The children were developing many dispositions for learning. This was evident as a small group of children enjoyed examining coloured ice cubes in a large tray. They marvelled at the different colours and the way in which the ice melted in their warm hands. Processes had not been developed to make the children's learning visible to them.
- The children communicated their thoughts and ideas clearly. This was observed during their play, when a child made a character using playdough. He named the character and later included him in a story.

- The children were developing their sense of creativity. Resources such as paper, paints and materials for mark-making were freely available. Templates were widely used in the setting.
- The children were developing their independent skills. They put away their belongings on arrival and completed a number of small tasks during the morning.
- The children were developing their physical skills. They particularly enjoyed running and jumping in the outdoor area.

Actions advised

- The educators are advised to make the children's learning, progress and achievements visible to them, on an ongoing basis. The learning journals may assist in this regard.
- In order to further enhance the children's creativity, the educators are advised to decrease the use of template art, in favour of more child-initiated, creative experiences.

Area 4: Quality of management and leadership for learning

- The quality of management and leadership for learning was good.
- The team presented as committed and professional in their approach to supporting the children's learning.
- The team was aware of the benefits of engaging in continuing professional development. Two of the educators have completed a course of study at undergraduate level. Other professional learning programmes completed include the *Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years* (LINC) *programme* and training on the *Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Guidelines.*
- The processes relating to self-evaluation, reflection and support and supervision currently happen on an informal basis.
- The manager avails of advice and support, when required, from the local county childcare committee.
- The educators have engaged with the Access and Inclusion (AIM) Model and with external clinicians, to support the participation of all children.
- The educators have developed strategies to share information with parents. A welcome letter, which is provided for parents during registration is translated into the home languages of the families in the setting. Information on the curriculum and other general information is provided in a parent handbook. The educators use a computer application to share information relating to the group learning experiences and in some instances, in relation to individual children's learning.
- The educators have put strategies in place to support the transition from pre-school to primary school. They included school uniforms in the dress-up area and sourced photographs of the schools to which the children are transitioning. They have also developed links with a local school

Actions advised

- The manager is advised to schedule regular team meetings to focus on planning and review and to facilitate support and supervision meetings for individual educators. .
- In order to strengthen their informal self-evaluation practices, the educators are advised to use the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide.*
- The educators are advised to provide increased opportunities to share the learning for each individual child, with parents. The learning journals could be used as a means to share meaningful information, on a regular basis.

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	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.*

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.

- A team meeting is scheduled to take place on Monday 13/03/2023 at 6:30pm. We will use this opportunity to look over our plans/ upcoming plans, review what's working/didn't work well, what changes can be made. Discuss children's interests to inform planning. Staff will be advised at this meeting about individual staff chats will now be recorded on the (Job Chat Form) and appraisals that are due before Easter.
- The Aistear Siolta Practice Guide specifically the self-evaluation section has been prepared by me and will be given to all staff . They will be encouraged to take part in this and I will follow up with staff to see how they found this process.
- Since our inspection, we have completed 37 parent and staff meetings in which we shared children's achievements, learning, journals and observations. We also used this time to chat with our parents, asking them if they would be interested in participating in their child's daily activities such as reading, music, dance, art and we got a good response. So, its just a matter of staff getting together to plan this in the coming weeks.
- We are looking at possible outings for the coming weeks (after the Easter break) in which we hope to visit firstly our local library where there is a hive of activities happening of late. We have also been sending information to our parents about local activities happening in our community.