An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	Shining Stars Montessori
Setting Address	Frosses County Donegal
DCYA number	12DL0166

Date of Inspection: 02-10-2018

An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

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(s) 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	02-10-2018
Inspection activities undertaken • Meeting with the acting manager and practitioner • Observation of interactions during one pre-school session	• Interaction with children • Review of relevant documents • Feedback to the acting manager and practitioner

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Shining Stars is a privately owned, sessional pre-school setting located in Frosses, County Donegal. It offers the ECCE Programme to participating children. The pedagogical approach is informed by the Montessori approach to early education and by the principles of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework.* On the day of the inspection, an acting manager, one assistant practitioner and nine children were present. The acting manager and practitioner attended the post-inspection feedback meeting. 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 displayed daily routine guides the range of activities available to the children and is used to organise the pre-school session. Children actively choose their play preferences in the allocated free-play time. Child-initiated play is minimised by the frequency of adult-led activities within the routine.
- The practitioners welcome the children and their parents into the pre-school in a warm and friendly manner. They encourage the children to develop self-help skills by placing their personal belongings in various locations and use soft-tones during the gentle exchanges.
- Practitioners position themselves effectively at snack time. They use this aspect of the routine to relax with the children, to maximise conversations and to connect with the children's learning experiences.
- Practitioners use verbal and auditory cues successfully to notify the children of upcoming transitions. The amount of transitions within the routine impacts on the time allocated to open-ended play for the children.
- There is a key-worker approach in place to support close adult-child relationships. Practitioners interact with and observe designated groups of children. These groupings are displayed on the wall.
- Practitioners are caring, respectful and encourage the children to develop reciprocal relationships with their peers. During the inspection, some adult-led activities did not support the children's participation which resulted in the reinforcement of rules. Practitioners have not yet consulted with the children to develop a heightened awareness of the expectations of positive behaviour within the pre-school.
- The children's identity and uniqueness is promoted through various photographic displays. Diversity is acknowledged in the play resources available and through the 'All around the World' display.
- Parents are invited into the setting to share their knowledge and skills with the children. Practitioners integrate the pre-school in the local community through planned outings.

Actions advised

- It is advised that practitioners review and develop the daily routine to minimise the frequency of transitions and to maximise the time allocated for open-ended play and choice for the children.
- It is advised that practitioners consult with the children to promote ownership over the group rules, empowering the children to share their thoughts and ideas when creating meaningful expectations of behaviour.

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.
- There is a broad-based curriculum in place informed by the Montessori approach to early education and the principles of *Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework.*
- Plans are structured on a long, medium and short-term basis. While the themes used are predominantly adult-led, practitioners have started to develop elements of an emergent approach by highlighting the children's play preferences. Whilst practitioners record the children's next steps in learning within the observations, they are not currently utilising this information to inform planning.
- Practitioners complete observation records, developmental checklists and snapshot observations of the children's learning. They plan to share the observations with parents once the settling-in period has passed. They distribute the children's special books to them at the end of the year.
- Practitioners are responsive to the requests and interests of the children. They view them as competent learners and encourage independence throughout the session.
- The indoor environment offers opportunities for multi-sensory play, table-top activities, Montessori materials and role-play. The majority of creative experiences are offered to children as a planned activity. There are minimal authentic and natural materials available in the play areas.
- The small outdoor environment is accessed regularly. On the day of the inspection, leaves, pinecones and paper were available for the children to paint. Practitioners engaged in action songs to promote the children's physical skills. There are minimal resources for the children to explore in the outdoor provision.
- Children have opportunities to engage in play activities alone, with their peers and with the practitioners. Opportunities for spontaneous child-led play are provided during the free-play period at the beginning of the session. There was an imbalance between the time allocated for extended, open-ended play and the frequency of adult-led activities during the inspection.
- Children are supported to make connections in their learning and to transfer their prior knowledge to new learning situations.
- Practitioners promote language development through the use of story, songs, extended vocabulary and mathematical language within the session.

Actions advised

- Practitioners are advised to develop a more emergent, enquiry-based approach to planning. Utilising the children's observed interests and learning needs in addition to the *Aistear* learning goals will further support learning and progression.
- It is advised that practitioners review and develop the indoor and outdoor learning environments to make authentic, creative and open-ended experiences available to the children.
- Practitioners are advised to provide extended time for spontaneous play to create a balance between adult and child-initiated learning.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is good.
- The children demonstrate enjoyment in multi-sensory play, construction and in participating in the action song activities. There were frequent occasions during the inspection where individual children became disengaged from play.
- Some children demonstrate self-confidence when making choices and decisions. Some older children show the ability to use initiative, to reflect on their learning and make judgements when planning the next steps in their play.
- Children regularly experience success as their efforts are acknowledged and celebrated. This was strongly apparent as one child persevered to complete the broad stair activity with sheer exhilaration demonstrated in her body language as she returned it to the shelf.

- The children are beginning to develop relationships with one another with acts of kindness evident during playful exchanges. They are establishing an understanding of the rules and boundaries of behaviour.
- Children are becoming aware of the local community through frequent visits from the postal operative, the central location of the setting in the village and through organised visits in the community.
- The children communicate their ideas and use their imagination to recreate roles. They are learning some Irish vocabulary within the pre-school. The children are developing listening skills as they follow instructions for the action-songs and whilst listening to the daily story.
- Children are becoming aware of the natural environment through nature walks. An autumn sensory box helps them to note seasonal changes. They have the opportunity to explore technology through the range of phones, a keyboard and a till on offer in the home corner.
- Children explored the effects of natural phenomena through 'Storm Ali' and represented their thoughts using paint. This type of exploration could be utilised further and more frequently within the curriculum to extend the children's problem-solving, enquiry and investigative skills.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the children's levels of engagement are regularly reviewed throughout the session to promote maximum learning through motivational activities and experiences.
- It is advised that children have the opportunity to further promote their creativity through open-ended experiences that are freely accessible and available on a regular basis.
- It is advised that opportunities to promote investigation, curiosity and problem-solving are offered to the children to broaden cognition and their knowledge of the world around them.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- The practitioners work in partnership, collaborating well with one another to provide an organised session with clear roles and responsibilities.
- Practitioners reflect daily on an informal basis and meet formally on a weekly basis to discuss curriculum planning and snapshot observations. There are missed opportunities to evaluate broader aspects of practice using the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide.*
- Practitioners occasionally engage in continuing professional development, predominantly participating in regulatory training.
- Informal communication occurs between parents and the practitioners on a daily basis upon the arrival of the children and when they are collected. A monthly newsletter and a group journal have been established to share the children's experiences with the parents. Practitioners have yet to implement organised opportunities to meet formally with all parents with regard to their children's learning and progression.
- The settling-in period is supported by inviting the children and parents to view the pre-school prior to the start of the term. Parents complete a registration form, have access to a parent handbook, and provide photographs to display on the family wall. There remains opportunity to garner personal information regarding the children's interests and experiences to support settling-in.
- Transitions to primary school are supported through discussions about school and using a variety of school-themed resources. The acting manager stated during the inspection that a plan was in place to record transition reports for each child this year prior to their transition to school.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the manager develops consistent processes for self-review, creating action plans for improving practice using the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide.*
- It is advised that the manager develops formal opportunities to consult with parents regularly in relation to their children's learning to promote a partnership approach to the children's development.
- It is advised that the manager develops measures to support the purposeful sharing of information at settling-in and when the children are transitioning to primary school to ensure continuity of experiences for the children.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the setting to implement the actions advised above is very good. This was exemplified in the practitioners' constructive engagement in professional dialogue around the key findings of this inspection.

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	**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.

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