An Roinn Oideachais

Department of Education

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	Snugglemuffins Montessori
Setting Address	9 Moyrath Kildalkey County Meath C15 YY76
DCEDIY NO.	19MH0387
TUSLA REG. NO.	TU2015MH175

Date of Inspection: 12-10-2021

This inspection took place in the context of public health restrictions necessary to limit the spread of Covid-19

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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:

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	12-10-2021
Inspection activities undertaken • Pre-inspection meeting with the setting owner/practitioner • Observation of interactions and activities during a pre-school session	• Interaction and discussion with the children • Review of educational resources and facilities • Review of relevant setting documentation • Post-inspection feedback meeting with the setting owner/practitioner and practitioner

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Snugglemuffins Montessori was established in 2021. It provides a morning, sessional pre-school programme for twelve children enrolled on the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. The owner/practitioner, an early years practitioner and six children were present on the day of the inspection. The owner/practitioner and the early years practitioner attended the post-inspection feedback meeting. In response to Covid-19, the setting has introduced and implements infection prevention control measures. 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 very good.
- A very warm and welcoming atmosphere is evident in the setting.
- The practitioners have established very positive and respectful relationships with the children. Interactions between the children and the practitioners are calm, responsive and gentle.
- The children seek out the practitioners for comfort and company.
- There is a consistent daily routine in place. Substantial time is allocated to indoor and outdoor, child-initiated play each day. There is also a daily circle time, practitioner-selected activities, snack time and story time. The routine is displayed in an accessible manner for the children.
- The practitioners clearly prioritise the development of self-care skills and support the children to become independent. They often encourage the children to do things for themselves, allowing a lot of unhurried time for the children to master skills. These include, toileting, organising their snack and bags and putting on and taking off clothing.
- Frequent conversations with the children about their families and their lives outside the setting effectively support the children's developing sense of identity and belonging. Prior to Covid-19, the practitioners brought the children out into the community for walks.

Action advised

- To further nurture the children's developing sense of identity and belonging as a key aspect of the curriculum programme, it is advised that the practitioners introduce activities, displays, artefacts and resources that will support the children to explore who they are as individuals, as a pre-school group, as a member of their family and as a person in their community. It is also advised that diversity in society is respectfully and accurately represented in the resources and materials in the playroom.

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.
- The practitioners have knowledge of *Aistear; the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and they implement a play-based programme incorporating some aspects of the Montessori curriculum.

- The practitioners demonstrate a strong commitment to supporting the children's learning and development through child-led play and playful practitioner-facilitated activities.
- At the time of inspection, the practitioners were preparing to begin a complete review of their curriculum programme and assessment and planning approaches.
- The setting has a planning system in place. Planning is centred on practitioner-selected themes and template-based craft activities. The practitioners often respond to extend the children's interests as they emerge in play. The children's current and emerging interests are not incorporated into short-term documented planning.
- The practitioners compile a learner journal for each child, containing templates, colouring-in sheets and some creative art. There is potential to develop these journals into records of each child's individual learning journey.
- The practitioners use effective pedagogical strategies such as playing at the children's physical level, being a play partner, following the children's play ideas and leads and sometimes offering suggestions to extend the children's ideas.
- Early literacy and numeracy are supported through frequent, personal conversations and the use of counting and numeracy vocabulary in play activities and in meaningful situations.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the owner/practitioner accesses the support of the Better Start Quality Development Service to begin the process of developing and embedding an emergent, enquiry-based curriculum and associated planning and assessment approaches.
- It is advised that the practitioners begin to record observations of what individual children are interested in, engaged in, thinking about and achieving. It advised that these observations, along with photographs, samples of the children's creative art and mark making along with their own comments and reflections on their work are placed in their learner journals.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is very good.
- The children are well settled and secure in the setting. They presented as relaxed, confident and happy on the day of inspection.
- During the substantial periods of time allowed for child-initiated free play, the children made many decisions and choices about who to play with, what to play and where. The children were focused and engaged throughout this time as they followed their own interests and motivations.
- The children's play skills are developing well. Many of the children engage in parallel play, in line with their stage of social development. Some children are beginning to engage in socio-dramatic play, acting out familiar roles and representing some real life experiences, around themes of cooking, making coffee and baby care.
- The children are very eager to communicate and express their thoughts, ideas and experiences. When presented with the opportunity, they engage in conversations with confidence.
- The children are learning and achieving through their experiences and activities in the setting, in line with their individual capacities.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the children are provided with time each day for practitioner-facilitated, small-group discussions to support their communication, language and thinking skills.
- It is advised that the practitioners continue to develop the indoor and outdoor learning environments to match the children's development and learning needs and their current interests. Use of the self-evaluation tool in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide,* 'Creating and using the learning environment' will greatly support this action.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- There is a professional ethos in this setting. The practitioners articulate a commitment to providing a quality learning experience for the children.
- The practitioners engage in continuing professional development to enhance their practice.
- The owner/practitioner provides clear leadership. There is very strong and positive team working between the practitioners. Roles and responsibilities are shared equitably. Both practitioners took leadership roles at different times during the session observed.
- The practitioners meet weekly to plan themes and activities for the following week.
- Information about the setting is shared with parents informally, through conversations and social media.
- Information about each child's individual learning and achievements is shared through regular informal conversations with parents. Since Covid-19 restrictions were introduced, the practitioners have increased their use of electronic media to share photographs with parents, often at the children's request. The children's learner journals are sent home at the end of each term.
- The setting has established very positive relationships with the local primary school. The owner/practitioner shares information about the children with the teacher of junior infants, to support their transition between settings.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the practitioners establish a system of self-assessment and planning for quality improvement in the setting. The online *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* can provide guidance and support for this action.
- It is advised that the practitioners develop a handbook for parents that includes information about the curriculum programme implemented.
- The practitioners are advised to invite parents to add comments and reflections to the children's learner journals.
- To further support the children's transition to primary school, it is advised that the practitioners begin to explore using the *'Mo Scéal'* learner profiles available at www.ncca.ie.

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	**Very good**
Quality of management and leadership for learning	**Good**

Language used in Early-Years Education 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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