An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Follow-Through Inspection

REPORT

Setting name	Stepping Stones Montessori Pre-school
Setting address	St. Laurence's National School Brookstone Road Baldoyle Dublin 13 D13C924
DCYA number	09FL0014

Date of Evaluation: 03-02-2020

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WHAT IS A FOLLOW-THROUGH INSPECTION?

Follow-through inspections evaluate the progress a setting has made on implementing actions advised in an earlier inspection rather than the overall quality of education provision in a setting. Inspectors also advise the setting on strategies and actions to enable them to fully address actions advised in the earlier inspection report.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated the progress the setting has made in implementing actions advised in an earlier inspection under the following headings:

1. Progress achieved to date
2. Summary of findings
3. Actions advised

Inspectors describe the quality of the progress made in each of these areas using the Inspectorate's follow-through quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The follow-through quality continuum explains the terms used by inspectors when evaluating the setting's progress in implementing actions advised.

The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the report; a response for publication was not received from the setting.

ORIGINAL INSPECTION DETAILS	FOLLOW-THROUGH INSPECTION DETAILS
Type: Early Education Inspection	**Date of Inspection: 03-02-2020**
Date of Inspection: 17 January 2017	
Report Published? Yes	

Follow-through inspection activities

The following activities took place in the course of the follow-through inspection

- Meeting with the setting owner/manager
- Review of setting documentation and records of children's learning and development
- Review of education resources and facilities
- Observation of part of pre-school session
- Interaction with children

Context of Setting

Since the initial inspection, in addition to a Montessori approach to education the practitioners now provide more opportunities for children to engage in self-initiated, play experiences.

Action advised in original inspection report	Progress achieved to date on implementation of action advised
To support all children's sense of involvement within the daily learning programme, it is advised that the practitioners develop a display of the daily routine with photographs of the children engaged in different activities.	**Very good progress** The daily routine, with photographs of the children engaged in different activities, is displayed on the wall.
It is advised that the practitioners use consistent approaches when signalling changes in the routine, such as, the use of visual and verbal cues and by offering ample time for children to settle to the new activity. These will ensure that all children will have a clear expectations of what is coming next.	**Very good progress** The practitioners use 'now 'and 'next' signs when signalling upcoming changes in activities. A child helper is selected each day to ring the bell to let the children know that it is time to tidy up.
Further depiction of the diversity of children and families attending the setting is advised by creating a family wall, ensuring that all children and their families are represented and that includes meaningful symbols of the families' country of origin.	**Partial progress** Family photographs of a majority of the children attending the setting are displayed on a family wall. The plans for the month of March include a topic on cultural diversity. The practitioners have yet to include resources that reflect the diversity of cultures present in the community.
	Partial progress

The practitioners are advised to build connections with the local community by inviting people from the local area to come and visit the setting.	The lollipop lady has visited the setting and the children have visited the fire brigade station.
To assist the practitioners in incorporating the children's emergent interests it is advised that they avail of the templates in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* to support them in their long-term, medium-term and short-term planning.	**Good progress** The practitioners undertake long-term, medium-term and short-term planning. Group interests, such as spring flowers and new babies, are included in the short-term plans.
It is advised that the practitioners extend their observations to include the next steps in the children's learning and to log the children's progression in their use of the Montessori materials.	**No progress** On the day of the inspection, no observation records were available as it was reported that they are sent home each month. A sample of the template used was provided.
The consistent use of open-ended questions and prompts to support the children's thinking and development is advised.	**Very good progress** On the day of the inspection, the practitioners engaged the children in conversations that included the regular use of open-ended questions, such as 'Where would I see?' and 'How many hats do we need?'
The practitioners are advised to use the Indoor Environmental Audit in the *Aistear* toolkit to assist them in the development of specific interest areas, with suitable, accessible resources in order to ensure that the children experience purposeful learning within their play experiences.	**Very good progress** The indoor area includes specific interest areas, including a home corner with real materials, a socio-dramatic area, a library and an art and mark-making area. Each area has a wide range of clearly labelled and accessible play resources. A separate area contains Montessori materials, such as knobless cylinders and sandpaper letters.
Practitioners are advised to reduce the use of formal teaching of letters, numbers and shapes and instead to focus on everyday activities and learning experiences that are embedded in playful and meaningful contexts for children.	**Partial progress** The practitioners model mathematical language during everyday activities. For example, they used vocabulary, such as 'big' and 'bigger 'while children were playing with the construction resources, and 'fast' and 'slow' during the musical activity. Approaches, such as the teaching of a letter, number and shape during circle time and the promotion of dot-to-dot and pre-writing activities, continue to be used.
The practitioners are advised to develop procedures that will support the development of children's understanding and ability to play socially together and to resolve conflict. The reduction of adult-led activities	**Good progress** Since the initial inspection there is a greater balance between child-led activities and adult-led activities with more evidence of children and practitioners working in small groups. On the day of the inspection, children generally played well together. There were a few instances when children struggled to co-operate and to

and an increase in small-group activities would support children to share with others and develop their negotiation and collaboration skills.	negotiate minor disagreements. A practitioner had to step away from the group or child she was with in order to support these children to negotiate their disagreements.
The practitioners are advised to actively promote the children's free creativity by reducing the amount of adult-led art and craft activities and also by discontinuing the habit of drawing for children.	**Good progress** There are many examples of children's free art on display in the room and children were observed asking the practitioner to record their comments on their artwork. Children's individual art folders contain many examples of art and craft activities linked to the weekly topics. Practitioners continue to draw for children.
It is advised that the practitioners promote the children's sense of identity and belonging and connection to the group by further developing the current child-helper list that identifies helpers for snack time. An option could be adding a list of specific jobs for children throughout the session, such as line leader, helper in the tidy up	**Very good progress** A list of daily jobs, including the name of the child/helper, is displayed at child height.
The practitioners are advised to use the professional self-evaluation tools in the *Aistear; Síolta Practice Guide* to support them in their professional reflection and review of their practice.	**Partial progress** The practitioners have begun to avail of the self-evaluation tools *Aistear; Síolta Practice Guide*. For example, they have successfully used the audit tool 'Creating and Using the Learning Environment' to review and develop the indoors and are now planning to use the template to assess their outdoor area.
It is advised that the owner/manager and the practitioner reflect on the educational experiences and activities used with a view to enhancing children's learning experiences. This can be done by addressing the organisation of the time and opportunities provided for different activities within the daily routine.	**Very good progress** The owner/manager and the practitioner have adapted the daily routine. It now includes adequate time, resources, including sensory materials, and opportunities for children to engage in a wide variety of playful learning experiences.
The practitioners are advised to develop a policy and procedures for the smooth transition of children from the pre-school to the primary school.	**Partial progress** The principal of the primary school in which the setting is based regularly visits the children and practitioners. The practitioners engage the children in conversations about their move to primary school. The practitioners have yet to develop a policy and procedures for children's' transition from pre-school to primary school.

Summary of findings

- Stepping Stones Montessori Pre-school has implemented the majority of the actions advised in the previous inspection report. They have made very good progress in relation to six actions advised, good progress on three actions and partial progress on five of the actions advised. Progress has yet to be made in relation to the implementation of one action advised.
- The key improvement noted since the initial inspection is the development of a number of approaches to support children's sense of well-being, identity and belonging. These include the visual of the daily routine, the expansion of the role of the child-helper, and the increased opportunities for children to make choices in their play.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to make the cultural diversity of the children, their families and the local community visible in the setting. This could be achieved using displays of resources and books, by depicting different languages, and through discussions on cultural celebrations.
- Practitioners are advised to further promote children's awareness of the people and places in the local community. This can be achieved by inviting local people to come and share their work experiences and by taking photographs of areas of interest to the children and displaying them in the room.
- The practitioners are advised to include the children's individual emergent interests in the short-term plans. The templates in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* will assist them in this approach.
- Practitioners are advised to update the current template used for recording children's learning. It is further advised that they maintain copies of the children's observation records to support them in the planning for children's learning.
- The practitioners are advised to reduce the formal teaching of letters, shapes and numbers and the use of pre-writing and template-based activities. In addition, they are advised to discontinue the practice of drawing for children.
- The practitioners are advised to develop procedures, in consultation with the children, which will support the development of their understanding and ability to play socially together and to independently resolve minor disagreements. This will help the children to develop a sense of ownership and commitment to following their self-chosen rules
- The practitioners are advised to continue to avail of the self-evaluation tools in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* to support them in the development of their practice.
- The practitioners are advised to develop a policy and procedures to support children's transition from pre-school to primary school. In so doing, the addition of a transition box that includes photographs of the local school and samples of the school uniform will be helpful. The use of the transition document *Mo Scéal* from the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment would also be beneficial in this regard.

THE QUALITY CONTINUUM FOR FOLLOW-THROUGH INSPECTIONS
Very good progress indicates that appropriate action has been taken to address the action advised, and that the action has fully achieved or will achieve the required outcome.
Good progress indicates that appropriate action has been taken to address the action advised, and that substantial improvement has occurred, although further progress is necessary.
Partial progress indicates that some appropriate action has been taken to address the action advised, and some improvement has occurred, but considerable further progress is necessary.
No progress indicates that no action has been taken, and that the original action advised remains to be addressed.

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