An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	*Tír na nÓg* Montessori
Setting Address	Woodlands Arva County Cavan H12 YAO3
DCYA number	15CN0096

Date of Inspection: 26-11-2019

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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	26 November 2019
Inspection activities undertaken • Meeting with setting owner/manager and practitioner colleague • Observation of interactions during the pre-school session	• Interaction with the children • Review of relevant documents • Post-inspection feedback meeting with the setting owner/ manager and practitioner

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Tír na nÓg Montessori is a privately owned pre-school which commenced operation in 2009 before the setting moved to a purpose-built facility in 2016 on the outskirts of Arva, County Cavan. The owner/manager and one other practitioner work closely together to provide care and education for children ranging in age from two to six years. The children are organised into junior and senior groups for some activities. Each group is facilitated in separate rooms within the facility and the children come together for other activities which are co-facilitated by the two practitioners. There were twelve children present with the two practitioners on the day of the inspection. The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the 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 excellent.
- A warm and affirming atmosphere has been carefully nurtured where the children are encouraged and supported to interact respectfully with each other and with the learning environment.
- Relationships between the practitioners and the children are characterised by consistent positivity and encouragement. It is evident that concept of the child underpinning all routines and interactions is that of an able individual with rights, agency, interests and preferences. The practitioners actively promote and support children's decision-making skills and independence at every available opportunity.
- A suitable range of routines has been very well-established to provide children with an appropriate variety of experiences that are conductive to their well-being and ongoing development. Transitions during the pre-school session are effectively managed to ensure the children have advance knowledge of impending change and opportunity to be actively involved in the management of the transition processes.
- The practitioners are keenly aware of the importance of nurturing children's sense of identity and belonging to the family and wider community. A proactive approach has been adopted to involving parents and members of the local community in sharing suitable experiences with the pre-school children with a view to strengthening their awareness of local traditions and cultural diversity.

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 excellent.
- A blend of pedagogical approaches is used very effectively by the practitioners to provide a well-balanced programme of curricular activities that is closely aligned to children's varying needs and stages of development. The practitioners use their deep-seated knowledge and understanding of the Montessori method of education and *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* to facilitate playful, child-centred learning within an inclusive learning environment.

- A suitable balance of individual, small-group and large-group learning activities are provided for children which facilitate learning by discovery in a variety of meaningful contexts.
- The practitioners' interactions with the children are of a consistently commendable quality. The practitioners skilfully elicit children's thoughts and feelings using a range of verbal and non-verbal strategies; they enable the children to make connections in their learning and to explore new possibilities in their thinking. Practitioners use open-ended questions and prompts very effectively to support children's meaning-making. Their attention to the development of the children's early literacy, numeracy and scientific skills during their interactions with the Montessori resources are particularly worthy of note.
- The practitioners provide appropriate long, medium and short-term planning. Although the practitioners are keenly attuned to children's emerging interests and enable them to pursue their interests through play, story activities and the use of the Montessori and other resources, there remains scope to make the emergent interests and the corresponding adaptions to provision more explicit in the planning documentation. Practitioners undertake a range of other assessment approaches including narrative learning observations which are detailed and indicate the next steps in children's learning journeys.
- Song and rhyme are interwoven throughout the daily routine. This contributes to a joyful and tangible culture of learning as well as enhancing the children's language and phonological awareness.
- The indoor learning environment is prepared to an exceptionally high standard to facilitate children's mobility within the attractive, child-friendly space. An extensive range of Montessori equipment and multi-sensory materials is easily accessible to the children. High-quality books and resources are rotated to facilitate thematic explorations in addition to individual child-led learning throughout the pre-school year.
- The outdoor learning environment has also been developed to a very high standard to provide a variety of discrete areas that facilitate exploration and socio-dramatic play in addition to gross-motor activities such as climbing and balancing.

Action advised

- The practitioners are advised to make the children's emergent interests and their implications for future provision more explicit in the planning documentation; this will contribute to the ongoing monitoring of progression in children's thinking well also facilitating professional self-evaluation on the impact of the approaches adopted by practitioners.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is excellent.
- The children display very secure relationships with the practitioners and with each other. A strong, positive sense of well-being was evident on the day of the inspection. The children arrived very eager to begin play and they sustained high levels of enthusiastic involvement in playful activities throughout the pre-school session. In particular, the children demonstrated very high levels of concentration during their interactions with the Montessori resources and used mathematical language very ably to describe their thinking.
- The children are active in directing their learning and play, making many choices and decisions about what to do, what materials to use and how to use them. The range of learning experiences provides many opportunities for children to be physically active and mobile during the session.
- Children experience success in their learning and demonstrate many positive learning dispositions such as perseverance and curiosity as they try out new ideas. Children of varying interests and abilities engaged in sustained shared thinking and independent learning activities at levels that were sufficiently challenging for them. Practitioners enabled children to make connections and to reflect on the impact of the strategies which they used during the various activities.
- The children demonstrate well-developed social skills to support them to play and engage in many differing social situations; playing intentionally alone, in pairs and in small group, engaging in whole-group and small-group learning activities. They show very good active listening and turn-taking skills

- The children engage in a wide range of sensory exploration during their pre-school session, freely using a wide variety of materials such as playdough, water and paint. They enjoy ample opportunities to engage in mark-making activities and demonstrate very good fine-motor skills.
- The children have regular opportunities to communicate their thoughts and feelings using a range of verbal and non-verbal strategies in this setting. They are supported to engage in higher-order thinking and to consider cause and effect as it relates to their play and learning activities.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is excellent.
- There is a very professional ethos in this setting. The owner/ practitioner articulates a notably strong commitment to delivering a quality early-years programme that enables children with varying needs and strengths to participate and progress. In addition to the daily professional dialogue between practitioners, they hold a formal monthly planning and review meeting.
- The practitioners both have engaged in various professional development courses and have availed of the supports provided by the local county childcare committee. The owner/ manager and her colleague have successfully facilitated a number of valuable improvement initiatives to ensure that best practice in early education informs practice in *Tír na nÓg*. These include the successful adoption of *Aistear* and the recent development of the outdoor learning environment. The pre-school welcomes students on work placement and the opportunity to discuss pedagogical knowledge and skills. A positive culture of collaboration and ongoing learning is very evident.
- A policy handbook has been developed and is shared with parents. An attractive display board for parents in the reception area features interesting articles relating to children's early education. Parents are encouraged to visit the pre-school and to discuss their children's needs and progress.
- The children attending the pre-school come from a wide hinterland and progress to many different primary schools. Information relating to the children's learning is shared with parents and school personnel to support continuity in learning. Parental perspectives and feedback is regularly sought.

Summary of Overall Inspection

Area	Quality Level
Quality of context to support children's learning and development	**Excellent**
Quality of processes to support children's learning and development	**Excellent**
Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements	**Excellent**
Quality of management and leadership for learning	**Excellent**

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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