An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION INSPECTION

REPORT

Setting Name	Woodhaven Montessori & Childcare Academy
Setting Address	Unit 12 Westgate Business Park Kilrush road Ennis County Clare
DCYA number	16CE0216

Date of Inspection: 13-03-2019

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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(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	13-03-2019
Inspection activities undertaken • Pre-inspection meeting with setting manager • Interaction with children • Review of relevant documents	• Observation of interactions during two pre-school sessions • Post-inspection feedback meeting with setting manager

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Woodhaven Montessori & Childcare Academy is a private setting that facilitates full day, sessional and afterschool services. It was established in 2006 and the current manager took on her leadership role in 2017. The setting provides two pre-school sessions for children participating in the first and second year of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. The first session occurs in the morning and caters for children in their second pre-school year, while the afternoon session caters for children in their first pre-school year. Both of these sessions are facilitated in the same learning environment. On the day of inspection, four practitioners and eighteen children were present in the morning session. In the afternoon, two practitioners and seventeen children were present. 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.
- Arrival times are warm and welcoming; the manager greets all parents and children in the reception area. The parents are facilitated to accompany their children to their respective rooms. The corridors and communal areas effectively display important information and photographs for parents and visitors to view.
- Free-play and active choice are key features of the routine in both sessions. The children are active agents and make many decisions about their learning through play. The practitioners present various materials in the learning environment and the children can choose to engage with these materials or lead their own play and investigative learning.
- In some instances, the practitioners consult with the children about their preferences for going outdoors or staying indoors during their free-play. A clock timer is sometimes used to signal a countdown to transitions within the routine. There is scope to develop the ways children can be consistently supported during these times of transition and when making choices as part of their routine.
- The practitioners foster secure relationships with the children. They know the children well and are responsive to individual needs, dispositions and different capacities for emotional regulation. Tailored strategies are used to support individual children to manage and cope with their emotions. The development of a key-person approach would strengthen these relationships between the practitioners and how they organise support for individual children.
- The children's sense of identity and belonging is promoted as their creations are displayed throughout the learning environment. Family posters depict individual home contexts in the communal corridor and familiar words from the children's home language are sourced from parents and used by the practitioners. Very good efforts are in place to make connections with parents and the community during the year. Various seasonal celebrations are organised and parents and individuals from the community are invited to share information, talents and skills with the children.

Actions advised

- It is advised that practitioners develop visual supports for interactive use during the daily routine. By creating a visual representation of the daily routine and choices with the children, the

practitioners can reinforce how the children make meaningful choices about their learning and development.
- It is advised that the practitioners consider the development of a key person approach to enhance the effectiveness of these key relationships between children and practitioners. The 'Using a Key Person Approach' tip-sheet from the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* provides a useful starting point for developing this approach in practice.

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 very good.
- A broad-based curriculum that is informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* is in use. Play-based learning very effectively informs the learning and development experiences that are organised within the curriculum.
- Planning is organised on a long and medium-term basis with seasonal events from the medium term plan informing the short-term planned activities. Individual short-term plans for each session are not yet being documented.
- Learning progression is captured through narrative observations. These observations are the main form of assessing children's learning and development and are descriptive in nature. There is scope to develop how these narrative observations evaluate learning progression. The practitioners use anecdotal notes within a reflective diary to respond to the children's immediate needs and interests.
- The practitioners are playful and responsive in their interactions with the children. They very appropriately scaffold the children to share their thoughts and ideas during discussion. The children are facilitated to take the lead while at times the practitioners lead new learning experiences as they introduce new language, concepts and methods of exploring. Group games are facilitated outdoors to maximise learning opportunities from a group perspective.
- A well-organised learning environment supports active learning through play. Various interest areas successfully invite the children to engage with play props and materials that support a range of exploratory experiences and playful activity.
- Very good structures and strategies are in place to support the inclusion of all children. Links with the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) Programme are in place to avail of extra staffing, external mentoring and equipment to meet the individual needs of children. Individual plans inform tailored interaction strategies and learning experiences for children with additional needs.

Actions advised
- It is advised that the practitioners begin to document a short term plan for each session. By observing the children's developing interests, dispositions, skills and attitudes, the practitioners can use this information to inform a short-term plan that is tailored to the needs and capabilities of each age group. The Planning Pillar of the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* provides useful examples and reflective resources to support this action.
- It is advised that the practitioners review their assessment practices when detailing individual children's learning and progression. As practitioners include evaluative as well as descriptive approaches; a richer reflection of each child's developing dispositions, skills, attitudes and knowledge will be made evident.

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 settled, engaged and motivated in their learning and development. They competently engage in free-play opportunities as they organise and make decisions about the resources they wish to use.
- Strong friendships are developing between children as they navigate towards their peers with similar interests and play dispositions. A few of the children prefer to play alone and observe other children and the practitioners. Within the larger morning group session, there is scope to develop

how these children have opportunity to express their needs and interests within suitable learning contexts.

- The children demonstrate highly effective imaginative play skills as they role-play in the home area, use real world play props and dress-up materials. On the day of the inspection, the children consistently interacted with this area and used the books to read 'bedtime stories' in the home area as each child took on an imaginative role within their co-constructed play.
- They have many opportunities to interact and explore with tactile and sensory-rich materials. Rice, pasta and porridge are used as the children develop their construction play to scoop, transport and dump these materials. On the day of the inspection, the children were observed using water, jugs and spoons to make 'medicine' as part of their imaginative play.
- Both groups of children enjoy the books and book area and independently use books alone and in pairs. They express their thoughts and reflections as they think out loud about the characters and storylines. There is limited opportunity for the children to see their voices and comments reflected in the learning environment and within their individual learning portfolios.

Actions advised

- It is advised that opportunities be provided for the children to explore in small-group and wind-down relaxation experiences. This will increase the children's opportunity for uninterrupted self-expression and reflective discussion. The developing key-person approach will support the establishment of small-group contexts to implement this action.
- It is advised that children be supported to see representations of their thoughts and voices added to the learning environment and individual learning portfolios. By adding displays with children's comments, questions and ideas, photographs, books and children's drawings, practitioners can support children to value and reflect on their learning and individuality.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- The manager demonstrates commitment to promoting a strong sense of teamwork in her role as manager of the full day-care setting. She supports the practitioners in each room when necessary and encourages each practitioner to take a leadership role in organising and facilitating practice for each age group. Individual support and supervision meetings occur informally during the year.
- Communication between practitioners and management about the curriculum and children's learning is mostly informal while team meetings are organised within each room when necessary. A formalised approach to these meetings using self-evaluative structures to monitor and reflect on practice is not yet in place.
- Continuous professional development is prioritised as the manager liaises with each practitioner about their professional training needs. The setting regularly engages with its local County Childcare Committee to avail of information and *Síolta* and *Aistear* training supports. The manager has completed the Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) training programme and through her networking contacts has sourced on-site visits to support practitioners to engage with the Incredible Years Preschool Programme.
- Information about the setting is shared with parents through an information handbook, noticeboard, displays and leaflets. Information sessions are organised for parents at the start of the year about the Access and Inclusion Model. There is scope to develop how individual children's learning and progression within the play-based curriculum is consistently shared with parents.
- Highly effective efforts are in place to support the smooth transition for children and families from the pre-school to the primary school setting. The manager pro-actively uses the '*Mo Scéal'* documents provided by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment to support this transition. She has initiated continuity of communication with the local primary school, the setting and parents, using these support tools.

Actions advised

- It is advised that practitioners formalise their team meetings with a view to maximise collaborative reflection and action planning practices. By using the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* as a support

tool to inform these team reflections, practitioners will ensure that actions identified are outlined and followed-through.

- It is advised that practitioners strengthen and enhance methods of communicating and liaising with parents. Sharing children's learning and the curriculum with parents will foster a partnership approach to consultation and collaboration. The 'Building Partnership with Parents' pillar of the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* provides useful examples and reflective prompts to support this review.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the setting to implement the actions advised above is very good. The manager attended the post-inspection feedback meeting and demonstrated commitment to the on-going improvement of children's learning and development experiences.

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	**Very 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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