

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills**

**Early-Years Education-focused Inspection
Report for Setting Response**

Kilminchy School House

15LS0117

**Dublin Road
Portlaoise
County Laois**

28th November 2016



CONTEXT OF SETTING

Kilminchy School House is a privately run Montessori and day care centre which has been operating since 1999. This service adopts a Montessori approach to learning and currently operates two sessions for children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, the morning session was visited. There were 16 children present along with the manager, who is one of the practitioners in the setting, and two other practitioners.

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
- Settling-in routines are highly effective. For example, at the start of the session, the children sing the 'Good Morning Song' and '*Téim ar scoil ar an Luan*'. These, and other settling-in routines used in the setting promote the children's physical, social and emotional security, together with their learning and development.
- The practitioners provide encouragement towards positive behaviour. They support the children in naming their feelings by using strategies such as the 'feelings wheel' visual cue and by reminding children to use their 'inside voice' when indoors.
- A caring ethos is evident. Praise, encouragement and bilingual affirmations are regular features of the practitioners' responses to children.
- Meal times are seen as social opportunities to promote wellbeing and healthy lifestyles. Children are enabled to manage their own hygiene and personal care needs independently.
- Families, children and practitioners frequently gather together in the setting to celebrate and share the children's achievements. Such occasions include sports day, graduation day, the Halloween show, the Christmas show, art exhibitions and picnics.

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
- The development of an emergent, enquiry-based curriculum informed by *Aistear*; *the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the Montessori Method, is very evident. It is clear that children are recognised as active agents in their learning. Play is used as a medium for the children to interact with, explore and make sense of their world. For example, on the day of the inspection, the children were observed lifting garden materials and touching snails and worms during a snail hunt in the garden.
- Outdoor learning environments are excellently maintained, easily accessible and very inviting. Children regularly enjoy outdoor activities such as gardening, sensory play, mathematical challenges, mark-making, sand and water play, construction and other physical activities which develop their physical fitness and gross and fine motor skills.
- There is excellent use of labelling throughout the indoor environment where opportunities are provided for a variety of types of play including creative play, language play, physical play, imaginative play, socio-dramatic play and construction play. Materials such as logs from the farm for construction, high-quality books in the library for storytelling, and real objects in the shop area are carefully selected taking cognisance of the child's perspective, and provide rich opportunities for active learning experiences.
- Children's achievements are easily accessible and creatively displayed in the setting. They also feature in a slideshow presentation and in an art display for families in a local theatre at Christmas.
- Children are at the centre of all visual displays, individual booklets and projects. Themed photobooks such as, 'Emergency! Call 999 or 112', regularly record the children's learning experiences which are then shared online with families.

- The practitioners model appropriate language, including mathematical language, and encourage an expanded use of vocabulary and language during interactions. Children regularly enjoy a variety of Irish-medium and English-medium action and number rhymes, jingles and songs.
- Information about the children's learning and development is regularly documented, photographed, tracked and shared with parents through personal journals, and through informal and formal meetings and emails.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is excellent
- It is evident that the children are very aware of the natural environment and its features, materials, animals and plants. They regularly demonstrate creativity in and natural curiosity about the outside learning environment when they engage in planting, growing and harvesting vegetables, herbs and flowers, and also when they assist in caring for Mario, the pet rabbit.
- The children demonstrate an evolving capacity for self-regulation and conflict resolution. The practitioners were observed supporting the development of the children's personal and social skills during boundary games in preparation for their monthly Forest School trip to a local woodland environment.
- The children have a growing awareness of their local community and enjoy regular trips to places such as Farmer Séamus's Farm, Cullahill Castle, the local forest, the fire station and an adventure park. Connections are also made with local people within the community through visits to the setting from a chef and personnel from the Dogs Trust.
- Children are supported in developing a positive understanding of themselves as individuals and as members of groups. They celebrate cultural occasions such as Chinese New Year and Christmas dinner together in the setting.
- It was very evident in their mark-making and early literacy activities that the children have an emerging understanding of the meaning and uses of symbols, pictures, print and numbers as a means of communication.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is excellent
- The manager, who is the lead practitioner, provides a good role model for the staff, promotes high standards and fosters a clear vision and direction for the work of the setting. It is evident that there is clarity around the roles and responsibilities of practitioners with regard to educational activities.
- Information regarding policies, procedures and curriculum are proactively shared with parents through emails, newsletters, an open day in May, and also in a welcome pack. Current weekly themes and short-term planning informed by *Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education* are on display in the reception area of the setting.
- An ethos of professionalism, teamwork, collaboration, professional reflection and partnership is evident. The practitioners avail of continuous professional development; for example, they participate in Picture Exchange Communication (PECS), LÁMH and mentoring, when appropriate.
- Transitions from one activity to another in both the indoor and outdoor environments of the setting support positive learning experiences for the children. In advance of the children starting in the setting, information is gathered from parents, formally and informally, about the children's prior experiences and is used to ensure progression and continuity in learning. Relevant information is also shared between the setting and the primary school in the best interests of the child.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the practitioners to implement the actions advised in this report is excellent.

Summary of Overall Inspection Findings

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-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.

