

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

**Early-Years Education-focused Inspection
REPORT**

**Goldilocks Pre-school and Montessori
09GY0189**

**Magheramore
Oughterard
County Galway**

Date of inspection: 18 May 2016



CONTEXT OF SETTING

Goldilocks Pre-school and Montessori is a privately owned sessional service located in Oughterard, County Galway. The service has been in operation since 1999. The key approaches adopted are underpinned by the principles of the Montessori Method of education and a play-based pedagogy. There were two practitioners, one volunteer and ten children present on the day of the evaluation. The setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings of this 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 very good.
- The younger and older children have developed secure and supportive relationships with the practitioners.
- Routines and procedures consistently promote children's physical, social and emotional security. There is a key practitioner for the younger and older age groups.
- The atmosphere nurtures children's learning and development. The children are confident to choose their activities as they settle into their routine.
- The snack time is recognised as a social occasion that brings the younger and older children together.
- The practitioners know the individual children and their families very well. This is demonstrated in the effort made to communicate with parents on a regular basis, through informal events and sharing of resources.
- The setting brings together families and children on a regular basis to celebrate community and organised events. The children cook for their families at the St Valentine's Day event held in the setting. Parents and families are also involved in the St. Patrick's Day parade and the 'Going on a Bear Hunt' activity and picnic. There is limited visual representation of children's identity and belonging within the setting and their community.

Action advised

- The practitioners are advised to develop the children's scrapbooks and the wall displays to reflect each child's growing identity and sense of belonging within the setting and wider community.

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 planning is thematic and a mapping tool is used to link the Montessori exercises to the *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*.
- The practitioners use a variety of assessment templates to help gather information about the children's learning and interests. Currently, the observations do not inform the next steps of practice or used as an active teaching and learning tool.
- The children play well with their friends and are motivated to learn and make their own choices in their play. In the outdoor area a group of children cooperated well as they explored early mathematical concepts in their play using open-ended resources.
- The responsive and skilful interactions by the practitioners allow the children to see themselves as capable learners.
- The practitioners recognise that play is central to children's learning and they work hard to support and extend children's play. There are limited opportunities in the indoor environment for children to explore their ideas for free play.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to provide more opportunities and natural resources in the indoor environment to support the children's ideas for free play.
- It is advised that practitioners use the observations of children's learning more purposefully to build and extend on the children's interests and ideas.

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 experience achievement and are developing through their learning experiences and interactions with each other.
- The children are making good progress in their learning through playing, investigating and questioning. There are limited opportunities available for children to revisit their questions and share their learning experiences with each other.
- The children are eager to communicate their thoughts and feelings and they are given the time and language to negotiate and develop their social skills.
- Children enjoy and explore song, rhythm and movement which is incorporated naturally into the routine.
- The older children who are confident communicators are having a positive influence on the younger children's early language development.

Action advised

- The practitioners are advised to use concrete tools to provide additional opportunities for children to talk about their experiences and consolidate their learning.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of the management and leadership for learning is very good.
- The practitioners work well together and have developed a supportive environment where children feel valued and respected.
- The positive and collaborative relationships with parents and the local community support children's continuity of experiences and progression of learning.
- The staff in the setting make a significant effort to involve parents, by organising informal events to bring parents together and share how children learn through play.
- There is clarity with regards to the roles and responsibilities of practitioners.
- The teamwork between both practitioners is very positive and there is an openness to further improvement. Currently the team does not engage in formal self-evaluation practices.

Action advised

- The manager and practitioner are advised to engage in systematic self-evaluation activity and focus on specific pillars within the *Aistear, Slolta Practice Guide* to help support consistent and continuous improvement in the children's learning.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The manager and practitioner engage very well in professional dialogue around the key findings of the inspections and demonstrate a very good capacity and ongoing commitment to ensure the quality of provision for children's learning and development.

Summary of Overall Inspection Findings

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	Very Good

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.