An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

Report

ABC Club Playgroup

Chapel Lane
Taghmon
County Wexford
09WX0066

Date of Inspection: 15th September 2017

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS
INSPECTORATE

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Established in 1999, ABC Playgroup is situated in the rural town of Taghmon. The service is purpose-built facility. A morning Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme is offered to local children from age two years and five months to school age. On the morning of the inspection, six children and two practitioners (one of whom is the owner/manager) were present.
The setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised in 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.
- An inviting, calm and caring atmosphere is evident in the setting.
- The flexible daily routine in place allows the practitioners to be responsive to the children's emergent interests. On the day of inspection, the children had access to the outdoor play area although this was not reflected the daily routine displayed.
- The practitioners encourage the children to be independent. The children in turn demonstrate independence and confidence in choosing and organising their own learning activities. They very capably manage their own hygiene and personal care needs. For example, they get their own bag, cup and plate for snack time and they use the dress-up clothes with little assistance from the practitioners.
- Snack time is a pleasant and relaxed social occasion in the service. The practitioners sit and eat with the children. On the day of the inspection, the practitioners talked to the children about healthy foods and how different foods taste. During 2015 the service took part in 'Healthy Ireland' and links to this are still visible; they include the large food pyramid displayed in the house area and the healthy eating policy provided for parents.
- All relationships observed amongst those present in the service were respectful. Practitioners showed great sensitivity towards individual children and their families, and strong connections between children and practitioners were evident.
- The children's sense of identity and belonging is strengthened through the value the practitioners place on promoting diversity and inclusiveness in the setting. The uniqueness of each child is captured through photographs, maps, creative displays, helper charts, height charts, birthday displays and 'Our wishes' charts.
- The practitioners provide opportunities for parents and families to engage with the service. On the morning of the inspection, parents chatted openly with the practitioners and some came into the room to settle their children. The children are encouraged to bring in photographs of their culture or families to share with others.
- The service is well established in the local community and receives invitations from the local resource centre for fun days and competitions. From time to time, children go on local walks to the bank, post office, and supermarket. The service also supports the yearly local tractor 'run'. Once a year, the service participates in a community charity fundraising event.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the daily routine be revised to include daily access to the outdoors without removing other important elements of the routine such as story time.
- To help develop the children's familiarity with the routine, the practitioners are advised to place a photographic visual displayed of it at the children's height.

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.

- Informed by *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*, the service uses a play-based curriculum with elements of the Montessori approach.
- Long-term, medium-term and short-term planning is thematic and based around interest topics, seasons and events. The children's individual emergent interests inform some of the planned activities and, on occasion, spontaneous planning of new activities takes place in response to children's current interests.
- Checklists, learning records, some written observations and photographs document the children's learning and development. A clearer focus on documenting the children's interests and achievements, to include what children like and can do, would further support planning for the children's learning and development.
- The indoor environment consists of one large play room divided into interest areas that are freely accessible to all children. A range of resources supports the children to actively engage in most types of play such as painting, table-top play, small-world play, construction, socio-dramatic play, and sensory play. On the morning of the inspection the children were observed to have limited opportunities to engage in exploration, risk taking and physical activities.
- The practitioners view play as being central to the children's learning the development. They skilfully extend the children's play ideas and promote positive peer interactions.
- A strong emphasis on language development is evident in the setting. Techniques such as the practitioners getting down to the child's level, making eye contact, and giving the child time to speak, are praiseworthy features of practice. Rhymes and ongoing references to numbers, money, amounts, size, letters, and colour throughout the session contribute to the development of the children's emergent language and numeracy skills.
- Pictures are very effectively used to communicate with children whose first language is not English and parents are asked to provide important words and story books in the children's home language. Close communication with parents and links to external agencies are maintained in relation to children who have additional needs.

Actions advised

- To aid the development of a strengths-based approach to observing and documenting the children's learning, the practitioners are advised to consult the pillar of the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* dealing with planning and assessment.
- The practitioners are advised to make obvious in their short-term plans the link between children's interests and the planned activities. Changes to short-term plans brought about by spontaneous interests should also be noted.
- It is advised that the range of creative, natural, recycled and sensory materials available in the indoor environment be expanded, and a review of the outdoor area be carried out using the 'Learning environment' pillar of the Aistear*, Síolta Practice Guide*.

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 present as happy and content and demonstrate enjoyment in their learning as they actively engage in self-selected and practitioner-led activities. They take great pleasure in sharing their achievements with their peers and with the practitioners.
- During the inspection, the children were highly engaged in socio-dramatic play and demonstrated high levels of imagination. They also showed themselves to be assertive in leading play ideas and sharing information. For example, the practitioners supported a group of children who were playing shop in a way that led to making an ice-cream order and this then expanded to the delivery of the ice-cream. Children and practitioners danced together, a child got a toy camera and proceeded to take photographs of children dancing, while another brought a cake for a 'party'.
- The children demonstrate a good sense of identity. They refer to their likes and dislikes. On many occasions, links to family members were made, such as 'Mammy's favourite song', and 'how Daddy likes to dance.'
- The children have good social and communication skills. They can play alone contentedly. They also play co-operatively in groups and in pairs. Many friendships have been established.
- Children's early language, literacy and numeracy skills are developing naturally through conversation and play ideas. Some children were observed to freely choose mark-making

activities. There were some missed opportunities for developing the children's higher-level thinking through children's reflections on their past activities and plans for their next activities.

Action advised

- To develop the children's higher-order thinking, the practitioners are advised to provide the children with opportunities to reflect on their activities and to discuss their plans for future activities.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is excellent.
- Team meetings are formally held once a term. Informal discussions with the manager about provision in the service also take place. A reflection book is used to document planned activities and outcomes.
- A professional ethos is evident in the setting. There is clarity around practitioner roles and responsibilities.
- The service has established links with national and local organisations for advice, support and training. Those links include affiliations with special needs organisations for training around how to support children with additional needs.
- Information is shared with parents through formal and informal discussions and meetings and by information displayed on the noticeboard and service window. A meet-and-greet session is held in September or October each year. At that time, parents are given the opportunity to add items of interest to the agenda or to raise questions during the session. The answers to the questions raised during this session are formulated into a short note and given to all parents, in particular parents who could not attend the session. Copies of the service policies, procedures and newsletters are disseminated to parents. Social media and texts are also used to share information. Parents for whom English is an additional language are offered longer meeting times should they need it.
- An effective settling-in policy supports the children's integration into the setting. Parents are enabled to remain in the room to help their child adjust if he/she is unsettled on arrival.
- Links with past settings and primary schools have been successfully established to support children's transitions into and out of the service. The practitioners provide, subject to parental consent, information about the children to the relevant primary school in advance of the child starting there. On occasions, practitioners and parents jointly meet with staff from the primary school to discuss how the needs of children with additional needs can best be met. The children visit the school to which they will transfer and the school principals visit the service to meet the children in advance.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the service to implement the actions advised above is excellent.

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	**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.

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