An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Early-Years Education-focused Inspection Report

An Naí Scoil

09LS0027

Crann Nua
Edenderry Road
Portarlington
County Laois

Date of Inspection: 05 October 2016

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

CONTEXT OF SETTING

An Naí Scoil is a privately run, purpose-built childcare facility located in Portarlington, Co Laois. This service currently operates three learning rooms for children under the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection one learning room, which adopts a play-based, Montessori approach to learning, was inspected. There were 11 children present in this setting along with one Montessori teacher. 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
- Routines and procedures such as tidy-up prompts, chore charts and a labelled environment consistently promote the children's emotional security
- Children are active agents in choosing their learning activities. The children's choices and preferences are celebrated in the setting in many ways including through a display entitled, 'In our classroom, the children said they like to…..'
- Times of transition within the setting provide positive learning experiences for children. Children have many opportunities to enjoy rhymes, jingles and songs when transitioning between the outdoor and indoor learning environments.
- Fundraising coffee mornings and visits from a nurse, fire brigade personnel and a local farmer ensure that the setting is integrated into the local community and that opportunities are provided for bringing together the wider community, families and practitioners.
- Secure practitioner-child relationships are fostered in the setting. Recognition, praise and encouragement are regular features of the practitioner's responses to the children.

Action advised

- To further promote well-being and a healthy lifestyle amongst the children, it is advised that the potential of snack time as a social occasion be further exploited through, for example, the practitioner and children eating together and availing of this opportunity for relaxed discussion.

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.
- An emergent, enquiry-based curriculum where the child is viewed as an active and confident learner is evident and there is a planned short-term and long-term approach to developing children's skills and knowledge.
- Information which builds a rich picture of the children's learning and development is regularly documented in individual learning journals, projects and scrapbooks
- Children are provided with opportunities to choose and explore stories. During the inspection, the children were observed to listen, interact and positively engage with the practitioner when she read the story, 'I'm Sorry'.
- The practitioner promotes and links mathematical thinking and learning to the everyday lives of children through, for example, highlighting shapes in the environment and naturally incorporating counting aloud into the day's activities.
- Very good use is made of nature to support the children's learning and development. During the inspection it was noted that, through the use of leaves and conkers, the children were enabled to connect and transfer their knowledge and skills to new learning situations incorporating their environment, their senses and the visual arts.
- Indoor environments are purposefully structured to develop and stimulate children's curiosity, imagination and desire for sensory and creative exploration. Opportunities are provided for

children to engage in activities such as mark-making, sensory play, construction, fine motor activities and pretend play.
- Children have regular access to outdoor learning environments where resources for physical play are freely accessible and developmentally appropriate. Access to resources in the setting such as frying pans, kitchen utensils, woks, bubbles, water and sand provide multi-sensory learning experiences.
- Creative displays such as 'Autumn frames' and 'Conkers Rolling Painting' are positioned at a level that enables the children to view and interact with the displays.

Action advised
- In order to provide a connected, holistic learning experience for children and to facilitate the communication of this to their parents, it is advised that the children's achievements, the displays in the setting, and the children's learning journals/portfolios be linked more closely to the aims and learning goals of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is very good
- Children demonstrate enjoyment, independence, creativity and motivation in their learning and they experience success during learning activities
- Children are developing the ability to play cooperatively, in pairs and in small groups and were observed to discuss and share aspects of their learning achievements with their peers.
- Information documented in observations and in learning journals reflects the children's development with due regard for their individual interests, needs and learning dispositions.
- Children show increasing confidence and co-ordination over their fine motor skills. This is illustrated in how they competently use scissors and stamps for cutting and pasting, a sieve, spoons and scoops during sensory play, and a turkey baster and sponges during water play.
- Children are taught French-medium songs and rhymes in the setting and understand how different languages can be used with different people.
- Children articulately represent their creative ideas through various play activities. For example, while in the playhouse in the garden a boy announced, 'No more ice-cream….the ice cream shop is closed'.
- Children display a growing awareness of the natural environment through art activities, composting and recycling, an interest table, engaging books, posters and pictures.

Actions advised
- The creation of a 'family wall' in the setting is advised in order to support children in developing a positive understanding of their identity as members of families.
- In order to capture a richer picture of the children's learning and development, the practitioner is advised to gather additional information about the children's learning achievements and their 'I wonder why….' experiences.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good
- *Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education* informs planning, review, improvement and reflective practices in the setting.
- The practitioner avails of ongoing professional development opportunities.
- It is evident that outcomes of self-review are documented and acted upon to improve children's learning experiences and achievements.
- Parents are made aware of the policies and procedures in operation in the setting by email and by notes which are sent home with the children.
- To ensure continuity of experiences and progression in learning for the children, parents and children are invited to become familiar with the setting prior to the start of the pre-school term.

Action advised

- It is advised that parents, as the primary educators of their child and as partners in their child's learning and development, be made aware of the curriculum in operation within the setting

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the practitioner to implement the actions advised in this report is very good.

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	**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-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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