An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Early Years Education-focused Inspection REPORT

Ballinspittle Community Playgroup
09CC0231
Ballinspittle
County Cork

Date of inspection: May 17 2016

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Ballinspittle Community Playgroup is situated in the centre of the village of Ballinspittle. It caters for a maximum of 22 children four mornings a week for three and a half hours each morning. Two practitioners, are running the playgroup. On the day of the inspection visit there were 18 children present, 15 of whom were participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. The setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised in this report, and the response submitted on behalf of the setting will be found in the appendix of this report

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.
- There is a busy, warm and affirming atmosphere in the setting; the children come in happy and smiling at the start of the day and they go straight to play or to chat with their friends.
- Very caring and respectful relationships exist between the practitioners and the children as evidenced, for example, when one practitioner said to a child, 'Let me see your lovely face' when there was something on the child's face that needed to be cleaned off. The practitioners know all of the children very well and display great respect for and recognition of the uniqueness of each child. This was clearly illustrated in how the practitioners put one child who was a bit shy at ease during the inspection visit.
- Routines in the setting are well established and the children are very familiar with them; one child, for example, was eager and able to tell what happens throughout the day.
- Transitions between activities are very effective. For example, the transition from free-play to tidy-up is announced five minutes ahead of time in order to prepare the children for the change and to give them a chance to finish what they are doing. All of the children engage very well in sorting resources and in tidying the room.
- The time the children spend waiting in a line to go to the bathroom is too long; many of the children get bored and engage less positively with one another during that waiting time.
- Diversity is recognised, valued and affirmed through the many illustrations around the room of how different people live and the flags of different countries, as well as through a 'Hello' poster in different languages, the displays of the children's photos above the coat hooks, and the birthday chart balloons.
- During free-play the children actively choose and organise their learning and development activities.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the time the children spend waiting in line be reduced and that children be given greater agency over their own hygiene and personal care routines.
- The strategy of enabling children to actively choose and organise their activities, which was evident during free-play time could be utilised more throughout the day. Small-group activities, could be offered as a choice of activity during free-play for the children who are interested in doing this, while the other children could continue to learn through their play.

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.
- Planning for curriculum implementation is organised on a long-term, medium-term and short-term basis and occasionally takes into account the children's emerging interests. This was obvious when, for example, after discussing and drawing musical instruments during the week, one girl took a particular interest in an accordion and the practitioner responded by bringing in her accordion to show to the children.

- Practitioners demonstrate an awareness of the need to document children's holistic development as well as the children's emerging interests and dispositions when planning the next steps in the children's learning at both an individual level and at a whole-group level. Information arising from the assessment of children's learning and development is documented in some narrative observations in the individual A5 booklets maintained for each child.
- The indoor learning environment is well maintained and purposefully structured in order to foster the children's learning and development. Overall, the indoor play areas are well defined.
- The outdoor environment could be utilised more on a daily basis and as an extended classroom if resources to stimulate play and physical activity were added.
- During free-play, the practitioners effectively facilitate the children's learning and development.
- Practitioners model appropriate language (including mathematical language) and they extend the children's vocabulary through the purposeful use of songs, rhymes and games.
- The attention to academic work, such as worksheets, which was noted in the setting is not conducive to holistic learning for pre-school children.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the current approaches to documenting assessment information be streamlined though the use of simple developmental checklists several times a year and through taking daily notes of the children's interests, strengths and dispositions to inform the planning of a short-term curriculum.
- The outdoor area needs to be developed further. A recommended source of guidance in this regard is the environmental audit in the *Aistear/Siolta Toolkit*.
- It is advised that, instead of spending time on the use of work-sheets for colouring in, tracing lines, matching and pairing on paper and similar tasks as a whole group activity, practitioners prioritise the development of gross motor skills, confidence and creativity in order to promote school readiness.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is good.
- Children demonstrate enjoyment in their learning. They are motivated, interested and engaged in their learning activities, and they show initiative, self-reliance and resourcefulness. The ability to play cooperatively in pairs and in small groups was also demonstrated by a group of children who were building with Lego, creating worlds together and chatting as they worked. They showed skill in negotiating, solving problems and taking turns.
- The children are very well behaved and have lovely manners. They understand the rules and boundaries of acceptable behaviour and they demonstrate an evolving capacity for self-regulation and conflict resolution.
- The very confident and competent children would benefit from the use of more open-ended, 'I wonder why' questions to ignite their curiosity, to prompt exploring and thinking, and to get them to reflect on their learning.
- During story-time some very effective interactions between the children, and between the children and the practitioners, which included listening, discussing and questioning, were evident.
- The children have access to books for fun and for information during free-play and they are also encouraged by the practitioners to look at books once they have finished their lunch.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the very effective interactions between the children and between the children and the practitioners which were observed during story-time be further encouraged by letting the children talk more about their own experiences, their ideas, feelings and thoughts, in order to enhance their communication skills.
- It is advised that children be encouraged to share the exploration of books when they want to look at the same books at the same time, rather than being advised to choose different books.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- Management and staff reflect daily on their work with the children. This review time could be used to put appropriate systems in place for the assessment and documentation of children's learning and development in a streamlined way as well as for the planning of the short-term curriculum.
- Good teamwork is evident. There is clarity around the roles and responsibilities of each practitioner, as well as a natural changeover in the taking of leadership in activities during the day.
- Respectful and reciprocal parent-practitioner interactions were observed at both the start of the day and at pick-up time, with informal chats and exchange of information between parents and practitioners.
- An information board is well used by the practitioners to keep the parents updated about the setting's policies and procedures, upcoming activities, and the themes of the curriculum.
- Enrolment and settling-in procedures are in place to ensure the sensitive and effective management of the transition of children into the setting.
- Practitioners are conscious of the value of liaising with the local primary school and continuously offer to collaborate with the school.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

- The capacity of the practitioners to implement the actions advised above 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	**Good**
Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements	**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.

APPENDIX

SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

PART A: OBSERVATIONS ON THE CONTENT OF THE INSPECTION REPORT

PART B: FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS PLANNED OR UNDERTAKEN SINCE THE COMPLETION OF THE INSPECTION ACTIVITY TO ADDRESS THE ACTIONS ADVISED IN THE INSPECTION REPORT

Area 2 Quality of processes to support children's learning and development.
What I am now doing is writing notes all through the day of different things for example (I noticed child x finds the letter C hard to pronounce; Child E and F made a tower "bigger" then themselves, this is a new word and mathematical concept; Child B turned her magic wand saying "I am turning playschool into a castle and you are the teacher queens and I am too" and she was so excited saying this to me). All these notes are used for curriculum planning to further children's interests, learning and development.

Every month I was going to go through my checklists for each child and see what activities I could have to enhance and any areas that may need attention. For example, I noticed a few children struggling to take a Lego brick apart so I introduced that for a while.

At present the outdoor area is the same but I have introduced a few magnifying glasses so if the children see any bugs they can see them in detail. I will look into *Aistear/ Síolta* toolkit further in the future.

When it comes to arts and crafts I have a much more relaxed approach regarding my expectations and the work is much more general, with lots of cutting pieces of paper and gluing. Sometimes I tell the children we will do junk art, which involves giving them all different types of materials, tinfoil, bun cases, coloured paper, match sticks and I encourage their individuality.

Area 3 Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements.
During circle time now what we do is we have some nursery rhymes and we break for children's news, to encourage their use of language, self-confidence, review skills and memory.

In relation to the books, if two children want to see the same book we encourage them to share.

Area 4 Quality of management and leadership for learning.
We will approach the national school before Easter in relation to the junior infant teacher coming to our pre-school to meet the children. However, there are a few other schools as well that children will be going to but we will start with one anyway.

Regarding planning for curriculum being streamlined through an effective system for capturing children's interests, we are looking at our group of children and finding the interests in general. For example, one child brings in dinosaurs each day so we are finding ways to further that interest, learning and development.

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