An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

Report

Being Belonging Becoming
16FL0561

8 Glen Ellan Avenue
Swords
County Dublin

Date of Inspection: 27 April 2017

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

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Being Belonging Becoming, established in 2016, is a privately owned early-years setting which operates in Swords Co. Dublin. It provides a morning only Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the morning of the inspection, there were twelve children and two practitioners present, of whom one was the owner along with an assistant practitioner. 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 very caring and calm atmosphere in the setting. Practitioners greet parents and children with genuine enthusiasm and warmth.
- The visual daily schedule on display is representative of the well-balanced daily routine which includes appropriate periods of time for child-initiated activities, meet and greet time, circle time, planning time, large- group activities and lunch time. During the child-initiated activities, children have opportunities to engage in free flow play as they independently choose to move between the indoor or the outdoor environment Children made the transitions from activity to activity and from the indoor to outdoors in a seamless and effortless manner.
- Children are active agents in the choice and organisation of their learning. Throughout the inspection they independently chose their play activity, play partner and where they wished to play.
- Practitioners use various strategies to inform children of changes in the daily routine such as a verbal reminder and the use of a sand timer.
- Secure relationships exist between the children and practitioners; this is evident by the way children enthusiastically share what they are doing, one such example observed during the inspection was the sense of pride one child had as he shared how he stuck two pieces of wood together using the cement he had made from sand and water.
- Generally relationships between the children were very positive. Independently some children were able to communicate their needs and wants and effectively resolve minor conflicts with their peers. A few children required the practitioners' intervention and guidance to support them towards positive behaviour.
- The setting values and recognises the diverse group of children attending the service. Children's sense of identity and belonging is fostered through the highly effective use of photographs, imagery, books and activities. Children can see themselves in the photographs they use to self-register on arrival, their families are reflected in the poster of flags from around the world and books and activities are used sensitively to explore differences.
- The setting is in the early stages of making connections and links with the local community. The owner/practitioner reports that a fireman and firewoman will be visiting the setting in the coming weeks

Action advised

- Practitioners are advised to embed the strategies which they have already introduced to support children to independently deal with and resolve issues of conflict. The use of visual aids and consistent strategies could facilitate this and support children towards positive behaviour.

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 enquiry-based curriculum underpinned by *Aistear the Early Curriculum Framework* is in place. *Aistear* has yet to be woven and included in the setting's documentation and planning.
- Practitioners effectively use documented evidence of the children's emerging interests in their short-term planning as was illustrated in the plans and the linkage to photographs and anecdotal

information in the children's journals. The themes of *Aistear* are not used during the planning process.

- From the extensively rich learning journals and very detailed observations, it is evident that practitioners are very skilled in recognising and documenting the critical achievements and progress in children's learning. Practitioners are to be commended for the variety of assessment approaches they use to inform the next steps in learning. This is illustrated through the observations, anecdotal information gathered, comments on photographs and children's art pieces which build rich pictures of the children as learners. Considerable time and attention is given to providing resources and framing learning activities which allow children to pursue their interests and progress their learning such as was evident with the response to children's interests in the red-back spider and the theme of fire.
- High quality interactions between practitioners and children and between the children themselves is a common feature of the setting. Consistently practitioners name and affirm what the children are doing, they play and work with the children at the child's physical level and ask meaningful questions to help the children make sense of their experiences. Practitioners follow the child's lead and are active listeners in the conversations they have with the children. Peer interactions are encouraged and opportunities such as the small group bread-making activity are provided so that the children can play together and develop friendships.
- Practitioners organise the learning environment, resources and activities in the belief that children are active participants in their learning. Activities are planned so that there is an appropriate balance between adult-initiated and child-initiated activities.
- The very effective indoor environment is well resourced and used effectively to support children's creativity, imagination, their emergent interests and their understanding of the world around them. Through the provision of quality materials children can participate in small-world, construction, puzzles, books, and free creative art, and playdough, manipulative and fine motor activities.
- The very stimulating outdoor environment is laid out so that children can explore and experience the properties of different sensorial material such as sand, water, mud, and natural materials. During the session observed, children were exploring and experimenting with sand and water and flooding the islands and contemplating whether the containers would sink or float. They were using their gross motor skills as they jumped in the puddles, climbed in and out of the hut and used the scooter.
- Practitioners demonstrate a very high understanding of the benefits of play to children's learning and development. Opportunities are provided so that children can participate freely in different play experiences on their own, with other children or with practitioners.
- Practitioners are very skilled in the manner in which they promote children's emergent language, literacy and numeracy skills. This was evidenced through the use of rhymes and songs at transition times and circle time; how they used words to extend the children's language and understanding for example at the playdough 'it's cold and stiff because it was in the fridge' Practitioners use of early mathematical language was interwoven into the natural conversations they had with children. Counting, size, shape, time, one to one correspondence were regularly discussed.
- Practitioners are strongly committed to supporting the children learn in an inclusive environment. They are attentive to the specific needs of the children and work in partnership with outside agencies who support children with additional needs. Practitioners also encourage the notion of non-stereotypical gender roles. This was reflected in the books which were available to the children such as, the book about the female architect.

Actions advised

- Practitioners are advised to document *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* throughout their curriculum policy and the children's learning journals.
- To further enhance the existing planning which in place, it is advised that practitioners develop a more detailed planning system and one which makes connections to the themes of Aistear explicit. The use of the pillar 'Planning and Assessing' from the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* could facilitate this.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is excellent.
- The children demonstrate enjoyment and fun in their learning. Throughout the session observed, children were motivated and engaged in learning activities both indoors and outdoors. The energy and enthusiasm in the hands-on experiences they participated in was noteworthy.
- The children are extremely competent in making decisions about their learning. They are very capable at carrying through their play intentions and they display many positive learning dispositions such as initiative, resourcefulness and persistence. A child was observed following through on his intention of making different colours by mixing the paint he chose and sourced. He also explored and discussed what was happening with a practitioner.
- Children's emergent interests are given considerable value by the practitioners who nurture and extend emergent interests so as to engender deeper learning. A child's emergent interest in firemen has been supported over time through socio-dramatic play, mark making, hands on experiences such as making a fire with twigs and using a hose.
- Children experience success during the many active and open-ended activities they participate in. These successes are valued as evidenced by the photographs and anecdotal information included in the children's folders and on display in the classroom.
- The children are given opportunities to work together to develop their social skills, such as playing co-operatively, in pairs and in small groups. Whilst outdoors, two children were taking it in turns to use the scooter and jump in the puddles, also in the indoors when children were playing together in the construction area.
- The circle time contributes remarkably to children's sense of well-being. Children discuss their interests, feelings and share their personal experiences.
- The children are developing an appreciation of their uniqueness and understanding of their identity as learners. Some of the examples noted included the interactions between a child and the assistant practitioner during their exploration of differences in their hands and the picture of the hand on the wall; the photographic time-line in a child's journal of her evolving skills at building and how a child compared himself to the cheetah 'he's the fasted animal, I run like him, I am the fastest'..
- Children are competent in communicating their ideas and taking turns in conversations and negotiating evolving ideas in their play; as was seen during outside play at the sand and water. The children's individual learning journals record the children's thoughts and what they say about themselves 'I am 102 cm, I measured myself'. The children have a say in what songs are sung as was illustrated during circle time when the children's choice of song was acceded to.
- The numerous exploring and thinking opportunities provided for the children nurtures their inquisitiveness and supports them to make sense of the world around them. For example, the discussion at the sand and water about what was going to happen to the islands and the sand as more and more water was added.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- There is a shared understanding and vision for children's learning and experiences amongst the owner/practitioner and practitioner. At the informal weekly meeting, they discuss the impact of the previous week's experiences and plan for the coming week. This new service has yet to implement a formal review system as part of the high quality provision they offer.
- There is a very strong sense of teamwork, collaboration and partnership within the setting. This was evidenced at both the pre-inspection and post evaluation meeting and throughout the session and through the effective interactions between practitioners.
- The setting has made links with Fingal Childcare County Childcare Committee and have engaged with Better Start through the Access and Inclusion Model.
- Through the strong leadership of the owner/practitioner, there is clarity on the roles and responsibilities of practitioners. Opportunities are provided so that each practitioner takes a leadership role as was evidenced during the inspection when different practitioners took the lead during the daily routine. Mentoring and coaching occur to ensure consistency in language and approaches used by the practitioners in the service
- Parents receive information on the service when children start and there has been two information meetings since September 2016 for parents. The open-door policy is a living document with

parents welcome to visit the setting. The setting communicates news to parents via social media and occasional newsletters.

- Practitioners share information with parents about children's learning informally daily at arrival and home time. Some of the children's folders are sent home. Liaison regarding children's individual needs and requirements occur.
- The owner/practitioner reports that the setting is at the early stage of making connections with local primary schools to support children's transitions to primary school.

Action advised

- It is advised that formal systems be put in place to reflect, review and evaluate practices. The use of the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* will support practitioners to document and act on outcomes of self-review and support development of quality provision for children's learning experiences and achievements.
- Practitioners are advised to share the children's observations and learning journals with parents on a more regular basis. This will further support parents in engaging in their children's learning and development.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the service to implement the actions advised above is excellent. The owner/practitioner and practitioner demonstrate a noteworthy commitment to the ongoing quality development of Being Belonging and Becoming.

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	**Excellent**
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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APPENDIX

SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

Content of this report is very factual thorough and fair. Service is only running since September 2016 so I found it extremely helpful as a guide to further enhance my practice and service.

***Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection* activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.**

Area 1: We have introduced a conflict resolution book to our library and poster to our service. This process is followed at all times with all children. Also after attending two workshops on supporting young children's behaviour and well-being, we have updated our behaviour management policy.

Area 2: Aistear and Síolta have become more visible in our service and can now be seen in learning journals and learning stories. We also had a parents evening to update them on changes. We have begun the pillar Planning and Assessing from Aistear Síolta Practice Guide. Planning is now organised on a long term, medium term, and short term basis.

Area 4: Formal staff meetings are now held weekly where we both reflect, review and evaluate our practice. The Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide has been an invaluable aid. Children's learning journals now go home monthly, observations are copied and included for parents to keep.