An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

Report

Broigin Montessori Pre-school
09MN0015

St. Louis Infant School
Park Road
Monaghan
County Monaghan

Date of Inspection: 30 October 2016

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

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Broigin Montessori Pre-school is a private early-years service, established fourteen years ago and re-located to St. Louis Infant School in Monaghan town five years ago. The service provides a morning pre-school programme in two rooms and the evaluation was conducted in one of the pre-school rooms. Two early-years practitioners and fourteen children were present on the day of inspection. 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.
- The atmosphere in the service is very welcoming and the children and their family members are greeted warmly by the practitioners on arrival.
- There is a very consistent and well-balanced daily routine in place which allocates one hour each day for child-chosen play. During this time, the children can choose to join in adult-planned and facilitated small-group learning activities. Forty minutes is allocated for Montessori activities, thirty minutes for outside time, and there is a daily snack and a large-group activity.
- The effectiveness of the service's healthy-eating policy is evident in the children's healthy lunches.
- The children are very well supported by the practitioners to manage their self-care and hygiene needs. One child is chosen each day to complete meaningful jobs which support the development of their independence and life skills such as, cleaning tables, putting out the bin to recycle food waste and distributing hand sanitiser to other children. There is potential to involve more children in these activities every day.
- Relationships between the practitioners and the children are sensitive and respectful. The practitioners know each child as an individual and demonstrate good understanding of their needs and interests.
- The children's developing sense of identity and belonging is very well supported through the effective use of photographs. Individual spaces for each child's belongings and work are provided, each child's name is sung in a welcome song and there is a very attractive photographic display of each child's eyes which celebrates each child's uniqueness.

Action advised

- In order to provide regular opportunities to develop independence and self-care skills, it is advised that the children be offered the opportunity to complete meaningful jobs in the pre-school room more frequently.

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.
- There is a broad-based curriculum in place incorporating aspects of the Montessori Method of education and *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework.* The practitioners are actively engaged in and committed to ensuring that the children's learning and development is supported through play.
- There are short-term, medium-term and long-term planning processes in place which are linked to *Aistear.* There is potential to progress the development of an emergent enquiry-based curriculum by incorporating the children's current and emerging interests into curriculum planning.
- A variety of approaches is used to record children progress in learning and development.

- The practitioners are very skilled in adapting their interaction strategies to meet individual children's needs. They demonstrate capacity to be a play partner and take direction from the children, to organise learning activities and to guide the children's learning.
- The learning environment is attractive and very well-maintained and provides for many types of play and learning activities. This includes provision for Montessori materials and activities, play dough, manipulatives and puzzles, books, small world and socio-dramatic play. A suitable range of resources is easily accessible to children.
- The practitioners had an active involvement in planning the play provision in an outdoor play yard which is shared with the adjacent primary school. There are four attractive wooden sheds which represent different buildings in a village, each offering different play activities, such as home, shop, and workshop. The practitioners are currently engaged with the school in planning the development of a second play yard which will provide outdoor sensory play opportunities, such as a mud kitchen.
- The practitioners articulate and demonstrate a very strong commitment to supporting the children's language and early literacy development through balanced conversations, daily use of songs and rhymes, book reading and some playful mark-making activities. Currently, the book area is small and becomes overcrowded and there is potential to provide increased support for play-based early mark-making.
- The children are learning in an inclusive environment and specific attention is paid to the learning needs of children who have English as an additional language.

Actions advised

- In order to further develop the planning process, it is advised that information about the children's current and emerging interests and development be used to inform the next steps in learning.
- It is advised that practitioners continue to support the children's language and early literacy development by advancing their plans to develop the reading area, making it more spacious and expanding the range of reading and mark-making materials available.

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 are very well settled in the service and enter eagerly and smiling in the morning.
- During free play, Montessori activity time and outdoor play time the children are motivated and fully engaged. During these times, the children make many decisions and choices about where, what and who to play with.
- Many children choose to engage in a template-based art activity organised and directed by a practitioner during the free play period. There is potential to develop these small-group learning activities to allow children to experience collaborative learning more closely aligned to their current stage of development.
- Many of the children who choose to engage in the snowman play dough activity during free play displayed high levels of imagination and creativity in how they made their three-dimensional snowman models.
- The children display a strong sense of group membership. They follow the daily routine and take part in activities with enthusiasm.
- It was observed on the day of the inspection, that many children are developing capacities to play alone, in pairs and in small groups. Some strong friendships are developing and children seek out friends to play and talk with.
- Many children demonstrate skills in turn-taking, negotiating in play and working co-operatively.
- Some children demonstrate a developing understanding of the function of writing, such as when they created a game of 'writing' what other children want for Christmas and 'writing' a naughty and nice list.

Action advised

- It is advised that the children would benefit from increased opportunities for small-group collaborative learning activities which are intentionally planned to support the children's specific and individual learning and developmental needs.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- There is a very professional ethos in the service, which has membership of professional organisations and is linked to the local County Childcare Committee for advice and support.
- The practitioners demonstrate a strong commitment to quality improvement and to continuous professional development.
- The session observed was very well planned and ran smoothly.
- Effective teamwork and equitable sharing of responsibilities are evident as practitioners took turns in leading group activities.
- Parents are provided with comprehensive information about the service programme and the children's group activities in various ways such as, a parent handbook, a section in the school newsletter, emails, texts, a social media page and photographs of the children's activities displayed attractively in the hallway.
- Currently, information on children's individual progression in learning and development recorded in a portfolio is shared with parents at the end of the year.
- The service has established excellent links with the infant school. The children visit the junior infant teacher's classroom and information to support the children's transition from pre-school to school is shared verbally with the teacher.

Action advised

- In recognition of parents as the primary educators of their children and to further support information sharing between home and service, it is advised that information about each child's individual progress in learning and development be shared more frequently with parents.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The two early-years practitioners were joined by the owner/practitioner for the feedback discussion following the evaluation. 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	**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.

Published April 2017

APPENDIX

SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report.
Everything in the report was discussed with staff on the day of the inspection allowing for feedback. The report is well formatted. It explains the strengths, positive approaches and styles currently used to care for and educate the children in our service. It acknowledges the strong commitment we demonstrate in supporting the children's learning and development, and in so doing, motivates us to move forward with the recommendations suggested to improve and enhance our 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: Through the Montessori practical life exercises, the children gain independence and self-care skills on a daily basis. "Important /meaningful" jobs are part of our daily routine. These jobs, which occur during transitions times, have been extended to allow for more children to be involved.

Area 2: Opportunities are being created for the children to take an active role in decision making, giving them more choice and more involvement in their learning. More information regarding the children's emerging interests will be used to inform the next steps of learning. This will lend to further developing the planning process. Our reading area has been extended to provide a cosy space with soft furnishings. Mark making materials are available to the children at all times.

Area 3: As part of the Montessori curriculum, the children are urged to take control of their own learning. This can result in both solitary and group play. Opportunities for small-group activities are now intentionally planned to encourage collaborative learning experiences and small-group discussion on a daily basis.

Area 4: We recognise parents as the primary educators of their children. To further support sharing of information between home and service, details of each child's individual learning and developmental progress will be shared with parents/guardians at the end of each term. The children's portfolios will also be shared at regular intervals throughout the year.