**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

# Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

# Report

## Bumblebee Kids
## 12MH0261

## The Briars
## Ashbourne
## County Meath

## Date of inspection: 10 October 2016

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

## CONTEXT OF SETTING

Bumblebee Kids is a private service, established in 2012 and located in a purpose-built early-years building in a housing estate on the outskirts of Ashbourne, Co. Meath. The service offers a morning, sessional pre-school programme in four separate rooms. The inspection took place in one pre-school room. One early-years practitioner and eleven children were present on the day of the inspection. 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.
- There is a warm and welcoming atmosphere in the service. An open-door policy is evidently in operation; parents bring their children into the room in the morning, one mother spent time looking at and discussing a display of work with her child and two fathers discussed an up-coming birthday party with their children.
- Relationships between the practitioner and children are responsive and sensitive and conversations with parents are friendly and relaxed.
- Children's uniqueness is recognised and celebrated; many positive comments were heard through the day highlighting children individuality.
- Children's sense of identity and belonging is supported through a range of initiatives including 'all about me' displays and frequent discussions with children about their likes and dislikes, interests and achievements.
- The practitioner offers very effective support for the development of peer relationships, referring one child to another for support on tasks and acknowledging children's emerging friendships.
- Children are offered very effective support in order to develop independence and self-care skills, such as nose blowing, putting clothes on and off and preparing and clearing up at snack time.

*Action advised*

- It is advised that children's sense of identity and belonging is further supported through the use and display of photographs of the children, their families, the group engaged in play and activities, and of the local community.

## 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.
- The service is beginning to engage with and reflect on *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. There are displays visible in the setting that illustrate links between daily routines and activities and the four themes in *Aistear*.
- The service is currently developing a curriculum statement through a collaborative process of staff discussion, reflection and feedback. The curriculum is described as moving towards a play-based approach and currently still utilises themes and specific learning content, such as shape and colour recognition.
- Written observations are recorded three times a year regarding each child's learning and development. These are linked to *Aistear* and placed in the child's 'learning journal' with work samples and photographs. The journal is sent home when children leave the service.
- There is a consistent routine in place with daily opportunities for indoor and outdoor play, adult-initiated group activities and child-initiated free play. Currently, free play happens during a few short periods throughout the session limiting the potential for children to become involved in extended play and learning experiences.

- The practitioner's interactions are skilled and supportive. On the day of the inspection a suitable range of interaction strategies were used to support children's learning needs, such as playful engagement with a child as she created her own guessing game to respectfully demonstrate the rules of a board game to a small group of children.
- Effective supports for children with additional needs and for whom English is an additional language were observed, such as using gestures, extending vocabulary as children played and using simple, clear sentences. The service works cooperatively with external support agencies and hosts support practitioners in the playroom.
- The indoor learning environment is well-maintained. Opportunities for some types of play, such as games, puzzles, manipulatives and books are available daily. Currently there is no discrete area in the room to facilitate painting, art and mark-making. The large outdoor play space has yet to be developed and currently children are invited to choose materials from the indoor learning environment to bring outside.
- All play materials and resources in the play room are easily accessible to children.
- The importance of children's exposure to early mathematical concepts and vocabulary is recognised by the practitioner and there is scope to enhance and expand the strategies used to support early mathematics.

*Actions advised*

- It is advised that the daily routine be restructured to provide children with one unbroken length of time to become more deeply involved in their free play.
- In order to provide for a wide range of play and learning opportunities, it is advised that that an art and mark-making area be developed, that sensory and natural materials are freely available and that real resources are added to the socio-dramatic area to spark play interest.
- It is advised that early mathematical thinking and learning be supported through everyday interactions and activities.

**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 well-settled in the service and come into the playroom enthusiastically.
- The children are engaged in their play and learning. At free play times, children are active agents making many decisions about who, where and what to play with.
- Many of the children are confident to speak with a visitor discussing themselves, their families and their interests.
- The children know the routine and support each other to transition to different parts of the day by highlighting to each other what is coming next and making a transitional bell sound.
- The children are experiencing achievement in their activities and displaying pride in their success, naming what they have done and showing others.
- Many children are developing social skills which enable them to play cooperatively in pairs and small groups. Some children demonstrate growing capacities to turn-take and negotiate within play situations.
- The children's oral language is developing well. Children who have English as an additional language are communicating well in the group and acquiring English. On the day of inspection children shared and enjoyed three songs at circle time.
- Children are communicating their ideas, thoughts and experiences to adults regularly through informal conversations and structured activities, such as drawing a picture of some news after the weekend and discussing it with the practitioner. There is potential to support children's communication with peers.

*Actions advised*

- To further promote all children's language development, it is advised that songs, rhymes, chants, poems and finger rhymes be used more frequently and throughout the daily routine.

- In order to maximise opportunities for children to communicate their thoughts, ideas and experiences with peers, it is advised that the practitioner plans to facilitate discussions in pairs and small groups.

## AREA 4

## QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- There is an ethos of professionalism and collaboration in the service.
- The owner/manager is effectively leading a major programme of review, reflection and development in the service.
- The staff team are collaborating to improve practice and the quality of the children's learning experiences. They are currently focusing on the development of a curriculum statement, curriculum planning and assessment processes.
- The owner/manager provides a clear vision and promotes high standards among the staff team. A system of practice supervision is planned to begin soon.
- The pre-school session observed was well-organised and ran smoothly.
- Information about the children's learning and development is shared with parents informally in the playroom, by emailed newsletter and through displays in the hallways and in the playroom.
- Parents are provided with an information handbook. Currently, this handbook contains information about full day care for 0-3 year olds which is not relevant to the current pre-school service provided.
- The voice and the opinions of the children are used to inform some curriculum decisions, such as allowing the group to decide if the next activity should be painting or making play dough.

*Actions advised*

- In order to respectfully represent the pre-school programme provided in the service, it is advised that a new handbook for parents be developed and that the new curriculum statement, currently under development, be included.
- To further enhance communication between home and the service and to foster working in partnership with families, it is advised that information gathered on children's progression in learning and development be shared more frequently with parents and that parents' feedback, information and comments are sought regularly.

## CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The owner/manager and early-years practitioner attended the post evaluation meeting to discuss the key findings outlined in this report and the service demonstrates a very good capacity to implement the actions advised.

## 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 | **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 February 2017*