An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

REPORT

Busy Beavers
09KE0006

Abbeylands
Castledermot
County Kildare

Date of inspection: 31 May 2016

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

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Busy Beavers Montessori is situated in the village of Castledermot, Co. Kildare and is in operation for nine years. It engages in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme in a one room setting operating a morning and afternoon session. The morning session which was inspected caters for twenty-two children. On the day of inspection there were eighteen children present. The practitioner manager and two assistant practitioners were also present on the day of inspection.The setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings of 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 excellent.
- The atmosphere in the setting is very warm, caring and very welcoming of parents and children.
- The quality of relationships fostered between the practitioners and the children is excellent. Practitioners demonstrate sensitivity, knowledge and respect for the children and their families.
- Children's sense of identity and belonging is carefully nurtured using a range of effective strategies. These include regular reference to a range of visual displays featuring children's individual and group photographs, a family-tree wall and displays of children's work. Individual journals are also used to promote a positive sense of identity for all children.
- The organisation of the setting is highly supportive of children as active agents in their learning and development. This is characterised by the calm, free-flow manner in which learning experiences are organised together with the carefully prepared environment which offers appropriate and suitable choice to children.
- The service has collaborated with the community in recent project work and the attractive wall displays reflect links with the community.
- Transitions within the setting are managed very effectively to maximise children's learning and well-being with practitioners using a range of strategies including visual displays, rhymes, rest time and a bell.

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 excellent.
- The curriculum is informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and planning is organised on a short-term, medium-term and long-term bases. It takes account of children's varying needs, interests, strengths and previous learning experiences to provide an inclusive, holistic learning experience for them.
- Practitioners demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of pedagogies underpinning their practice and use it skilfully and purposefully to extend children's experiences and learning. Adult-child and child-child interactions are of sustained high quality.
- There is an excellent balance between adult-initiated and child-initiated activities.
- Assessment of children's learning is strengths-based, using a multi-faceted approach. It includes a learning journal, an interactive child diary, child profile, passport to school and a range of detailed observations. The extensive range of observations include language, social, physical, anecdotal and observations of engagement with Montessori materials. These are shared regularly with parents formally and informally.
- Play is central to children's learning and development and takes account of the children's interests, of *Aistear*, and of *Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education.*
- The service provides a stimulating indoor and outdoor environments which are used purposefully and creatively by practitioners to provide rich learning experiences for children. The indoor environment is well resourced and has a rich print environment featuring excellent use of labelling. It is very well organised throughout with full accessibility for children to an extensive range of resources that are rotated regularly.

- The outdoor area which is fully accessible to the children throughout the morning is carefully organised and includes a range of discrete areas which provide very good opportunities for the development of children's physical and social skills.
- Supported by the extensive literacy and numeracy resources that are available, practitioners use a range of strategies to promote language and numeracy development. This includes excellent language modelling, excellent questioning and recap techniques and very good expansion of both numeracy and literacy language.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is excellent.
- Children demonstrate high levels of engagement and enjoyment in their learning activities. They are afforded full autonomy in their learning choices.
- All of the children demonstrate high levels of independence. They move confidently within the various learning areas, expressing their feelings, thoughts and ideas in a variety of ways.
- Children's communication skills, inter-personal skills, creative skills and gross and fine motor skills are consistently being actively promoted.
- Children interact very positively with each other and play co-operatively, take turns and support each other.
- Children have opportunities to philosophise and to reflect on their play and learning.
- Children demonstrate a very good awareness and appreciation of themselves as individuals, as members of families and of the pre-school and local community.
- Children engage in a variety of rhymes and songs, use a range of books, including audio books in English and in additional languages, relevant to the languages spoken by the children. Children also have access to a laptop and tablet.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of the management and leadership for learning is excellent.
- An ethos of teamwork and professionalism is evident at the service.
- Documented team meetings are held weekly which have a four week cycle, looking at practice review, policy review, curriculum review and children's plans through engagement with *Aistear* and *Síolta*. Practitioner reviews are held twice a year in order to support ongoing improvement in practice.
- The service has taken part in the *Síolta Quality Assurance Programme* and received their validation in 2015.
- The service engages regularly in professional development and quality improvement initiatives provided by the County Childcare Committee with their county childcare committee and voluntary organisations. They are committed to continuing this professional development into the future.
- Interviews are held with children at the end of the year on their experiences at playschool which are documented and used to inform planning for the following year.
- Parents are provided with an information handbook which includes a copy of the policy and procedures of the service. Meetings with parents are held three times a year in relation to their child's learning. Parents contribute to all policy changes. A parents' committee is in place which meets yearly.
- The service supports the sensitive management of children's transitions to primary school, completing a passport to school in conjunction with parents and children. Children visit the local school with the practitioner and engage in extensive discussion as a group in advance of starting.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The manager and staff members show an excellent capacity to engage in ongoing improvements and development.

Summary of Overall Inspection Findings

Area	Quality Level
Quality of context to support children's learning and development	**Excellent**
Quality of processes to support children's learning and development	**Excellent**
Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements	**Excellent**
Quality of management and leadership for learning	**Excellent**

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.