An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

Report

Deltas Little Academy
16LK0223

Delta Park
Ballysimon
Limerick

Date of Inspection: 9th November 2017

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

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Deltas Little Academy is a privately-managed service in operation since January 2016. It is located in a business park on the outskirts of Limerick city and provides a morning only Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the morning of the inspection, five children and a sole owner/practitioner were present. The majority of children were relatively new to the ECCE Programme. The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the 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 caring, positive and affirming atmosphere in the service. On arrival, parents and children are warmly welcomed. The children self-register by finding their name and posting it into a box and they display excitement in seeing each other.
- The routine and structure of the day provide familiarity and security for the children and they have many opportunities to be active agents in choosing and organising their own learning activities. The routine is flexible to their learning and developmental needs and it offers them freedom to move around the room and to move materials from one area to another.
- Times of transitions within the daily routine are a positive learning experience for the children. They are managed very successfully through many and varied calming strategies, singing of songs and involvement of the children.
- Genuine respectful and reciprocal relationships are evident. The practitioner is calm, attentive and respectful to the children. She very effectively comes down to their physical level when speaking to them and is alert to their cues and movements. The children seek her out to share their successes and when they need support and guidance.
- The practitioner competently encourages the development of child-child relationships. Paired and team work amongst the children is embedded in the practice, the routines and the transitions.
- Praise and positive affirmations through the use of narrative and 'high 5s' are given to the children in a meaningful way for effort, for helping each other, for taking part in team work and cleaning the room.
- Snack time assists social interaction, independence and healthy eating habits among the children in a very positive way.
- The children's sense of identity and belonging is very effectively supported. Attractive displays have been created and displayed. These include photographs of the children and their families, individual free drawings and paintings, a birthday chart, and real photographs of plants and various locations around the world.

Actions advised

- The practitioner is advised to include photographs of the children with their names on the self-registration cards. This will ensure they have success and can independently self-register along with being supported in recognising and associating specific symbols with their name.
- The practitioner is advised to develop clear, realistic boundaries and limits for the children in relation to what is expected of them. These can be developed and discussed with the children, introduced slowly, and supported and embedded through the use of puppets, stories and socio-dramatic 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 excellent.
- The curriculum is inspired by Reggio Emilia and Montessori and is clearly underpinned by the principles and aims of *Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. Play, hands-on learning experiences, art and creatively are prioritised within the planning.
- The curriculum is organised successfully on long-term, medium-term and short-term bases. Planning is supported by the templates available in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide*.
- The practitioner demonstrates knowledge, understanding and confidence in putting flexible plans in place for each child that take due account of their needs, prior knowledge and current and emergent interests.
- Observations and assessments are ongoing and they effectively provide a very well-rounded picture of the children's learning and development and the next steps in their learning.
- The indoor environment is homely, spacious and purposefully developed into learning areas. It has a wide variety of resources that enable the children to have rich, play-based, active, hands-on, meaningful social learning experiences.
- The outdoor space is small but successfully nurtures children's physical well-being, team-games and messy play. On the morning of inspection, the children played ball together, followed rules and took turns, they cycled, played with sand and ran and chased each other.
- The practitioner knows the children very well and is a very positive role model for them. A wide range of very effective and appropriate pedagogical strategies were observed. These included very effective use of open-ended questions, reflective listening, encouragement, an expanded vocabulary, timely suggestions and visual representations.
- The children are supported very effectively to be independent and to take responsibility for their own personal care needs and the environment. They confidently put on their own coats, clean the tables, sort and return the play materials, and recycle their rubbish in partnership with the practitioner.
- Play is highly valued and purposefully embedded and planned for within the programme of activities, the resources, the pedagogical strategies and the environment. The children have lots of time to engage in self-initiated play on their own, with peers, with the practitioner and in small groups. They also enjoy games and exploratory, fun, hands-on experiences and activities supported and initiated by the practitioner.
- The children's emergent language, literacy skills and mathematical understanding are effectively promoted through the resources, interactions and experiences provided.

Action advised

- The practitioner is advised to add more real, open-ended materials into the imaginative play area, to model writing, and provide the children with opportunity to engage in purposeful mark-making (writing). In this regard, the provision of additional notebooks, pencils, whiteboards, cards and envelopes to the imaginative play area, construction and art areas will be beneficial.

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 demonstrate autonomy, confidence and enthusiasm as they make decisions about their learning activities. They present as very happy and relaxed and show enjoyment when engaging in the activities and the care routines.
- The children reveal positive learning dispositions. They persist with challenge and initiate the singing and humming of favourite songs and rhymes. They are curious about books and story-lines and they eagerly anticipate the actions and repetition when joining in with the 'Bunny' song.
- The children exhibited varied stages of development in communication skills. A number of them communicated very effectively using gestures and facial and body language while others demonstrated their emergent oral communication skills by telling stories and sharing their ideas. The majority of the children make requests and refusals and are developing positive pro-social skills such as listening to each other, taking responsibility and co-operating within the routines, developing friendships, and waiting their turn.
- The children display a keen interest in participating in rhymes, songs, stories and actions games.
- The children's innate need for independence and responsibility is very effectively nurtured and the children demonstrated these in abundance.
- The children are experiencing success and they persist and repeat activities to achieve mastery. This was especially evident outdoors when a number of children were playing a ball game.

Action advised

- The practitioner is advised to include the children in the development of their learning journals and to have their conversations and voices more visible. This will support them in seeing themselves as competent capable learners and it will give them more ownership over their learning. Having the learning journals available and accessible to the children and parents is advised. Further guidelines on including children in the development of learning journals is available in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide.*

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- The owner/manager provides a high quality learning and development experience for the children and demonstrates a very good capacity to reflect on her provision and to ensure effective systems for the smooth organisation of the activities.
- The newly developed vision, mission statement and curriculum goals are very clear and they mirror the goals and principles of *Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*.
- The owner/manager prioritises on-going professional development and in recent times has engaged with the LINC programme and diversity and equality training.
- There is an ethos of transparency in the service. Parents and families are consulted and involved as partners in their child's learning and development.
- The parents receive a comprehensive handbook which includes the policies and procedures and they have opportunity to comment and influence these. Information is also shared in the welcome area and during one-to-one meetings.

Action advised

- To further support the good practice of self-review, transparency and involving parents in their children's learning and development, the owner/manager is advised to continue utilising the resources available in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide,* especially the 'Partnership with parents' pillar of practice and the professional development section entitled, 'Curriculum foundations'.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the service 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	**Excellent**
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.

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