An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

Report

Dunmore Pre-school
09GY0052

Scoil Nicolás Naofa
Ballycostelloe
Dunmore
County Galway

Date of Inspection: 30 November 2016

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

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Dunmore pre-school is a privately-owned, sessional service that is located on the grounds of Scoil Nicolás Naofa primary school. The setting operates a morning session and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. The pedagogical approaches are informed by the Montessori Method of education and *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. The owner/manager, practitioner and thirteen children were present on the day of inspection. The owner/manager and practitioner attended the post-inspection feedback meeting. The setting was given the 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 good.
- A caring and inviting atmosphere is evident. The practitioners value the importance of the informal contact with the children's parents and families.
- Secure relationships are fostered between the children and the practitioners; this is demonstrated by their considerate and sensitive approach to helping the children settle into the daily routine.
- The routine is sufficiently flexible and there is an appropriate balance of adult initiated and child-initiated activity.
- The daily routine provides dedicated time for children to engage in free play every morning. The practitioners want to know how best to plan and support children's free play. On the day of inspection during the time dedicated for free play, the table-top activities were the main activity.
- Transition times are recognised as a time to promote positive learning experiences for children as they move from one activity to the next. The helper roles provide an opportunity for children to feel a sense of personal responsibility and ownership in their routine.
- The practitioners are very considerate and respectful, allowing children time to complete what they are doing before moving to the next activity. On the day inspection, the children were excited to know what was happening next in their routine.
- Snack-time is viewed appropriately as a social occasion; the practitioners sit with the children and spend time talking with them about their favourite food and the different types of healthy food.
- The practitioners recognise that the local community is central to children's learning and development. They have made real efforts to bring the community into the setting by developing a photograph book of local community events and places that children can connect with and recognise.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to review the sequencing of the daily routine, such as circle-time to help the children plan and make choices during the free-play session.
- To further support children's sense of time and place in their daily routine, the development of a visual timetable of the day created in consultation with the children is advised.

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.
- A broad-based curriculum is adopted which is informed by the Montessori Method of education and by the principles of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. Practitioners' planning for the implementation of this curriculum is organised on a long, medium and short-term basis.
- The practitioners use learning stories and Montessori checklists to help them gather information about aspects of the children's learning and progression. At the time of inspection, these

observations did not provide sufficient information about the children's learning and emerging interests.

- The practitioners engage the children in a respectful and caring way. Their use of open-ended questions and thoughtful conversations help the children to explore new ideas and expand their language. Throughout the session, the practitioners add new words, using Irish and English vocabulary to help develop the children's understanding about how different languages can be used in different situations.
- The circle-time routine promotes children's engagement, learning and development. The story-telling activity observed on the day of the inspection provided an enriching learning experience for all children. The practitioners used active words effectively to describe and build anticipation which encouraged the children to listen attentively and create mental pictures of the characters and events from the story
- Play is recognised as a medium for learning. The practitioners know the children well and they recognise the importance of giving children time to complete their chosen play activity. The practitioners want to find out more about how to use children's play and emerging interests to support and extend the process of learning.
- The children have regular access to outdoor learning environments and the resources and games help develop the children's physical fitness and their gross and fine-motor skills.
- The indoor environment has some well-defined areas, such as the book area and home corner which allow the children to see and pursue their ideas for play. At the time of inspection, the areas dedicated for arts and crafts, mark making, sensory work, constructive and small world play were not clearly defined.

Actions advised

- Practitioners are advised to adopt a key person system for conducting observations on children's learning. This system will allow the practitioners to observe a small group of children each, and find out more about what the children know and gather information about their play, interests and conversations. This information will also help practitioners plan and inform the next steps in children's learning.
- The practitioners are advised to further develop and reorganise the environment to encourage more free movement and clearly labelled interest areas, with additional open-ended materials to help extend children's creative thinking and ideas for play.

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 enjoyment and are excited to revisit their play ideas in the outdoor environment. They are developing the capacity to negotiate with each other and initiate games with rules and plan ideas for their cooperative play.
- The children are demonstrating their awareness of the meaning and use of letters in real meaningful terms and contexts. They are learning to recognise their names in print.
- A significant feature of the learning observed in this setting is the children's confident use of communication strategies and their use of language. The children are developing a very good capacity to use their new vocabulary in a variety of contexts.
- The children regularly enjoy and explore patterns of activity through song and movement. On the day of the inspection, the practitioners used descriptive language to help the children express themselves creatively and to act out an imaginary trip across mountains and rivers.
- The children can make connections in their learning and are developing a positive understanding of their identity as learners. At circle time, the children were motivated and enthusiastic to talk about their new learning. The practitioners take photographs of children's learning experiences and the scrapbooks hold samples of children art work.
- The children display initiative and persistence to help them achieve success and mastery in their chosen table-top activity and they demonstrate perseverance in their daily living skills, such as putting on and taking off their own coats.

Action advised

- The practitioners are advised to develop the scrapbooks with the children, to help them reflect and talk about their individual learning experiences and achievements throughout the year. The scrapbooks can note observations of children's conversations, learning and emerging interests, using photographs and samples of the children's process artwork.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- The manager and practitioner work very well together. The collaborative team work and mutual respect for each other's knowledge and experience have created a positive and warm atmosphere within the setting.
- The manager and practitioner are committed to the improvement of the quality of provision to support children's educational learning experiences. The manager's recent engagement in further training and continuing professional development and has had a positive influence with regards to reflective practice. The staff has attended workshops in relation to the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* and has engaged in professional dialogue and reflection leading to the documenting of the curriculum foundation stage. The next step is to evaluate and identify the areas for improvement to support the quality of the processes for children's learning and development.
- Parents and families are made aware of the policies and procedures through the information booklet, informal meetings, and well-positioned noticeboard. The setting organises seasonal events and outings that bring families together to share in their children's early-learning experiences.
- A positive relationship and two-way communication between the pre-school and the primary school demonstrate a commendable commitment to ensuring continuity in children's educational experiences.

Action advised

- To support the process of moving towards the development of an emergent curriculum, the practitioners are advised to refer to the Learning Environment and Play pillars in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide*, to help them reflect on what is working well and identify the areas for improvement and put in place an action plan for review.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The practitioners demonstrate a shared purpose to ensuring the ongoing improvement in the quality of provision for children's learning and development in the early-years setting. They demonstrate a very good capacity to implement the actions advised above.

Summary of Overall Inspection Findings

Area	Quality Level
Quality of context to support children's learning and development	**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	**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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