An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

Report

Happy Kids
10 FL0333

104 Edgewood Lawn
Blanchardstown
Dublin 15

Date of Inspection: 6th September 2017

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Happy Kids, established in 2010 is a privately-owned early years-setting which operates in Blanchardstown, Dublin 15. It provides a morning and afternoon Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On a typical day, the early-year practitioner is present with the children for the duration of the session with the owner/practitioner being present for a few elements of the daily routine. The inspection took place during the morning session when eleven children and the early-years practitioner were present. The owner/practitioner was present for brief periods during the session and attended the post-inspection meeting with the early-years practitioner. A play-based, emergent curriculum underpinned by the principles of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* is in place. 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 can 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.
- There is a very warm friendly and childlike atmosphere in the setting. Parents, grandparents and siblings are all made welcome on arrival and at home time.
- It was very clear that the practitioner's affirming and caring interactions with the children enhance the very positive manner in which they arrive and immediately engage in conversations with other children and the practitioners.
- The practitioner offers the children praise and acknowledgement for their efforts throughout the session and provides encouragement towards appropriate behaviour.
- The daily routine comprises of a suitable balance of adult-initiated and child-initiated activities that foster the children's social and emotional security. There is a visual daily schedule on display.
- Snack-time is seen as a social occasion when the children and the practitioner sit together and engage in conversations.
- The transitions between activities and places are well signalled with the practitioner giving the children a verbal reminder and using a clock. A few children became distracted during the transition to the outdoor area as they waited for others to get dressed and became noisy, and uneasy.
- Respect for the children as individuals and as members of their family is valued within the setting. This is clearly visible through the use of photographs for children to self-register daily, the job chart and the photographs of the children and their family.
- Opportunities are provided which bring the children, their parents and practitioners together, such as the up-coming trip to St Catherine's Park and the recent visit of a parent to share their baking skills.
- The practitioner in the setting has made links with the local community to foster children's sense of belonging. Visits to the setting by the lollipop lady have been facilitated. There is also a photographic display depicting areas of interest in the locality.

Action advised

- It is advised that the use of songs and rhymes be introduced when putting on the clothes and footwear for the outdoors to help children to maintain focus and not disturb others.

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.
- The practitioner consistently documents the children's emergent interests. This information underpins the curriculum planning process which is successfully used to inform practices in this

setting. This was reflected in the daily planning and also in the connections between this planning and the assessment information in the children's learning records.

- High quality interactions between the practitioner and the children were clearly visible during the session observed. The practitioner knew the children very well and was skilled at tuning into their thoughts and interests using open-ended questions. She was also very skilled in the role of a play partner with individual children or with groups as she consolidated and extended their learning in meaningful contexts.
- The indoor and outdoor learning environments are very stimulating. They are used purposefully to promote and extend the children's learning and their emerging interests. Both these inviting environments are well laid out so that children can explore and experience the properties of different sensorial materials along with real materials to deepen their understanding of the world around them.
- It is clearly evident that the practitioner has a very high understanding of the benefits of play for children's learning. The children have opportunities to engage with an extensive range of suitable materials that allow them to participate in a variety of purposeful play experiences, on the own, in pairs, in small groups or as part of the large group.
- The practitioner consistently models mathematical thinking and other early numeracy skills through the meaningful and playful interactions which take place. One such example noted was when the practitioner prompted the children to count as they played Mr Wolf in the outdoors.
- The practitioner is very effective in extending the children's developing and emergent language during conversations. The practitioner demonstrated very good active listening during the session and was consistently expanding the children's vocabulary.
- Opportunities are regularly provided for story-time. An example of the shared interests in story reading was reflected in the recall of information between a child and the practitioner about the dinosaur book which had been read the previous day.
- During the session observed, the children were predominantly involved in whole-group learning activities with little opportunities provided for them to engage in pre-reading and mark making activities in a meaningful manner.
- Practitioners are strongly committed to ensuring that the children are learning in an inclusive environment. They are attentive to the specific needs of the children and work in partnership with parents.

Action advised

- It is advised that the practitioner provides more opportunities for the children to further develop their pre-reading and mark-making skills. The constant accessibility and use of mark-making materials, books and other reading materials as part of the everyday resources for the home area and other areas of interest could facilitate this.

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 high levels of enjoyment, fun, and excitement in their learning. During the inspection, they displayed high levels of interest and persistence in their learning through active hands-on experiences
- Children are capable and confident in sharing their learning. One of the many effective examples observed on the day of inspection occurred when a child shared his learning about the robin who had built a nest in the annex of the setting.
- The children are experiencing success and display a sense of achievement, as was noted from the smiles from a child when he successfully mastered how to put on his coat like Superman.
- The children demonstrate successful use of their gross and fine motor skills, through the manipulation of the playdough and in the garden when they were running about and climbing the tyres.

- The children are developing the skills to help them to become competent and effective communicators and share their understanding of their world. One such example was when a child informed a small group of children about fireworks and how they scare her.
- The children have sufficient opportunities to work and play together co-operatively, in pairs and small groups through their active participation in meaningful activities.
- It was clearly evident from the practitioner's commendable and sensitive guidance that the children are developing the appropriate personal and social skills and language to help them to respond appropriately to sharing, turn-taking and building relationships.
- The children's language and vocabulary development is very well established. Children were encouraged to name the cooking and baking utensils during the guessing game which was well linked to their current learning.
- The children's early numeracy is developing as demonstrated through the everyday discussions which take place where early mathematical concepts feature. These discussions involved counting, and comparing more and less.
- The children have opportunities to experiment and be creative, as observed through the gluing collages and their participation in the in adult-initiated play dough activity.

Action advised

- To further develop, children's sense of curiosity and creativity, it is advised that the range of opportunities be extended for children to engage with open-ended, natural and multi-sensory materials and experiences.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of the management and leadership is very good.
- There is a very strong ethos of professionalism and positive collaboration between the owner and the early-years practitioner. They effectively demonstrate a shared understanding and vision for high quality provision for the children's learning and development as was noted during the discussion on the plans for the outdoor area.
- The clarity around the roles and responsibilities of the owner and the lead-practitioner contributed to the fluidity and smoothness of the session observed. The owner helps the lead practitioner at busy times such as arrival and home time, during the transition to outdoors activity time and snack time.
- The owner/ practitioner and early-years practitioner use the self-evaluation tool in the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* to identify improvement priorities when planning for and assessing the children's learning. They are at the early stages of conducting self-evaluation and reviews across other areas of practice.
- The setting is a member of Early Childhood Ireland and the lead practitioner has made links with Fingal County Childcare Committee with regard to support and continuous professional development.
- Parents receive information on the setting outlining the curriculum on offer and other information when their child starts.
- The practitioners informally share information with parents about children's learning daily, at arrival and home time, and children's folders are sent home at the end of the school year. Twice a year a formal parent/practitioner meeting is organised when the children's learning and development is discussed and parents are shown the children's learning folders.
- There are very effective practices in place to support children in the transition into the setting. During the summer, the children visit the setting and over time they are introduced to small groups and then the larger group.
- An adequate range of activities, is undertaken to support the children's transition to primary school. These include the practitioners having discussions with the children and facilitating playful activities. The practitioner has established links with a local primary school through communications with the principal and vice-principal and their visits to the setting. There is no transition policy in place.

Action advised

- Building on the self-review and reflection practices which are in place, it is advised that the owner and the early-year practitioner use the self-evaluation tools in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* to support the continuous identification of priority areas to be developed.
- It is advised that a that a review of the current procedures in relation to transitions to primary school be carried out to enhance the sensitive management of the children's transition and the sharing of information between the pre-school and the primary school to ensure continuity in their learning.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the service to implement the actions advised above is excellent. The owner and early-years practitioner demonstrate a very strong commitment to the ongoing quality development of Happy Kids.

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.

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APPENDIX

SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection **activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.**

In relation to the advised actions in area 1: It is advised that the use of songs and rhymes be introduced when putting on the clothes and footwear for the outdoors to help children maintain focus and not disturb others. This was immediately implemented.

In relation to the advised actions in area 2: It is advised that the practitioner provides more opportunities for the children to further develop their pre reading and mark making skills. The constant accessibility and use of making materials, books and other reading materials as part of the everyday resources for the home area and other areas of interest could facilitate this. This was immediately implemented.

In relation to the actions advised in area 3: To further develop, children's sense of curiosity and creativity, it is advised that the range of opportunities be extended for children to engage with open-ended, natural and multi-sensory materials and experiences. This is being implemented on an ongoing basis.

In relation to the actions advised in area 4: Building on the self-review and reflection practices which are in place, it is advised that the owner and the early-year practitioner use the self-evaluation tools in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* to support the continuous identification of priority areas to be developed. This is being implemented on an ongoing basis.

In relation to the advised actions in area 4: It is advised that a that a review of the current procedures in relation to transitions to primary school be carried out to enhance the sensitive management of the children's transition and the sharing of information between the pre-school and the primary school to ensure continuity in their learning. All the information regarding children's observations likes and dislikes are shared with primary schools when consent has been given from the parents to do so. Although we do lots of end of year activities and invite school going children and teachers into the preschool, we have not visited a school due to the fact that the children attending our service usually attend a number of different schools. This we hope to change from June and will be contacting some schools in the area in the future to arrange a visit.