An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

REPORT

Hill House Pre-School

09KE0050

1 Tipper Road
Naas
County Kildare

Date of inspection: 25 May 2016

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

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Hill House Pre-School is a sessional pre-school service. The pre-school describes its vision as being underpinned by three commitments: parental partnership, a rich Catholic ethos and the provision of an all-round education. The setting has three morning classes participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme with thirty-six children enrolled. There were eleven children in the pre-school room inspected, all of whom participate in the ECCE Programme. Two practitioners were present during the inspection. The manager of the setting did not work in the room inspected but was present with the room leader during the feedback session. 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 very good.
- The children and their families are welcomed into the setting as they arrive in the morning and there are opportunities at that time for parents to talk to the practitioners. A warm, caring atmosphere is evident. Secure relationships between the practitioners and the children are fostered.
- Routines to support the children's learning and development are well established. They include free play, small-group and large-group activities, snack time and outdoor play. A visual timetable, developed in conjunction with the children, would further support the children's awareness of their daily routines and add to the children's emotional security.
- The children actively choose areas and materials to explore. They organise their own learning and development activities such as role play and construction.
- Snack time, as organised in the setting, is very effective in supporting social participation; the practitioners sit with the children and talk with them during this time.
- Transitions between activities are supported through adult verbal direction. The use of more visual and auditory cues to signal transitions between activities would further support the children in managing and understanding changes in activities.
- Children's sense of identity and belonging is nurtured in a variety of effective ways; a photographic family wall celebrates the children and their families, there are opportunities for parents and grandparents to visit the setting, and links with the local community have been established through fundraising events.

Actions advised

- To further support children's well-being and emotional security, it is advised that practitioners develop, in collaboration with the children, a visual timetable to help all children's awareness of the daily routines.
- It is advised that the strategies supporting transitions between activities be extended to include the use of visual and/or auditory cues as well as the children's active participation in the transitions.

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 setting adopts a play-based curriculum which includes a virtue programme aligned to the setting ethos.
- Practitioners in the setting plan themes and topics in consultation with the room leaders. Plans are informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. Daily plans include time for children to contribute their ideas. The documentation does not record how plans have been adjusted or influenced by the children's interests.

- A variety of effective assessment approaches is used to gather information about the children's learning experiences and achievements. Learning stories and individual children's folders are used to document children's progression in learning. Written plans indicate the proposed next steps in the children's learning. A note of the extent to which planned next steps in learning are implemented, modified and achieved would further support the assessment for learning process.
- Practitioners engage in meaningfully balanced and developmentally appropriate interactions with the children. Child-initiated learning is facilitated and extended by the practitioners through role play, drama and storytelling.
- The indoor and outdoor environments are purposefully resourced and structured to support children's interests, engagement and imagination. A craft room supports children in exploring paint and developing their creativity. Natural resources of sand, water and planting materials are available outdoors.
- Play opportunities are freely available, with children confidently planning, talking and including others in their play experiences. Children organise role play and follow their interests, as noted during their 'Black-suited Wolf' drama and 'Minding the Baby' game.
- The practitioners make very effective use of puppets, role play and books to support the children's emergent language and literacy skills.

Actions advised

- In order to plan for meaningful learning experiences for children, practitioners are advised to document how plans have been adjusted or influenced by the children's interests. It is advised that practitioners maintain a note of the extent to which planned next steps in learning are implemented, modified and achieved in order to further support the assessment for learning process.
- The provision of regular access to sensory materials indoors is advised in order to extend the existing opportunities for children's holistic learning and development and to increase the potential for sustained engagement by the children in their learning.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is very good.
- Children display enjoyment, motivation, confidence and engagement in their learning activities. Opportunities are available for children to play in small and large groups. The activities available support social interaction.
- Children freely choose areas and materials to explore. They set up scenarios and develop their interests, as evidenced on the day of the inspection by their creation of a puppet show and their play in the home corner.
- Children are developing personal and social skills which enable them to describe their ideas and feelings. Practitioners gently support children in turn-taking and conflict resolution. The children would benefit from additional support in building their capacity for negotiation and conflict resolution.
- Children use a variety of methods to communicate their ideas and to interact with others. The very effective use of puppets, drama and role play in the setting affords children a creative and safe channel through which to express their ideas.
- The children have regular access to mark-making and painting; this supports their self-expression, creativity and capacity to convey their interpretations of their work

Actions advised

- It is advised that existing strategies to support children's emotional and social development be extended to include the use of visual aids and sand timers in relation to turn-taking. Clear communication of expectations about helping to take care of play equipment and materials is also advised.
- Practitioners are advised to document children's interpretations of their mark-making and artwork in order to further support the children's communication skills while at the same time adding to the richness of the profiles of the children's learning and development.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- Management structures provide for regular meetings with room leaders and practitioners to plan for children's learning and development.
- The manager and practitioners adopt a highly professional approach to their work. This is evident in the sharing of leadership for learning in the setting, the practitioners' attainment of academic qualifications, and their participation in workshops run by the local County Childcare Committee and Early Childhood Ireland. The manager's and practitioners' thoughtful and thorough approach to their work are also reflected in their inclusion of schemes such as Play-Read from the local library and the Road Safety Authority's road safety programme in the setting planning schedule. Senior management plan to extend continuous professional development in relation to early childhood care and education.
- Very effective channels of communication exist between the setting and the parents. They include organised tea and coffee mornings, an open-door policy whereby parents are always welcome, a monthly newsletter, and a planned series of talks for families on the setting's ethos.
- Transitions into the setting upon the child's commencement in the pre-school are supported through information meetings and opportunities for children and parents to visit in advance.

Actions advised

- The setting is advised to explore ways of supporting the children's transition to primary school, for example, through establishing contact with local primary schools and working in partnership with parents in relation to their child's transfer to primary school.
- To further develop the self-review practices established, practitioners are advised to access continuous professional development that is specifically tailored to the context of early childhood education and care and to explore the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* at staff training and meetings.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the practitioners 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	**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.