An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

Report

Inis Óg Childcare
12MN0072

The Glebe
Inniskeen
County Monaghan

Date of Inspection: 17th February 2017

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

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Inis Óg Childcare is a private early-years' service, established in 2013 and located in the village of Inniskeen, Co. Monaghan. The service provides full day care, pre- and after-school care for school-aged children and a sessional pre-school programme for children enrolled on the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. The service has opened a second pre-school room at the beginning of this pre-school year. The inspection was conducted in one pre-school room and on the day of inspection the room leader, a relief early-years practitioner and eighteen children were present. The setting was given an 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.
- There is a very warm and welcoming atmosphere in the service. All parents and children are welcomed individually, by name on arrival.
- The service operates an effective open-door policy and many parents come into the room and chat with the practitioners and the children at arrival and home time.
- Relationships between the practitioners and the children are responsive, caring and sensitive to the children's needs.
- There is a daily routine in place with time allocated for indoor and outdoor play and for adult-initiated group activities such as, table-top and messy play. The time allocated to child-initiated indoor play and the range of activities and resources accessible to the children is not sufficient to allow deep engagement in play and learning to develop.
- Transitions in the daily routine are signalled effectively by the practitioners and are smooth and organised.
- Snack time is a relaxed time where healthy eating is promoted and discussed. The service recently successfully completed the Health Ireland Smart Start programme. There are possibilities for the practitioners to further extend the children's learning at snack time as on the day of inspection, practitioners did not join the children for snack.
- The children's sense of identity and belonging is well supported; children have individual cubbies for their belongings, labelled with their name and a photograph, a greeting song is sung where each child's name is called out and there are photographic displays of the children and their families in the room. Currently, these are displayed above the children's eye level.
- There are opportunities throughout the year for parents to come together in the service for events and celebrations. Last year the service won an award for their participation in the village St. Patrick's Day parade and the children and parents are enthusiastically preparing for this year's parade.

Actions advised

- In order to support the children's engagement in sustained, self-chosen play and learning activities, it is advised that the daily routine be restructured to create an uninterrupted period of free play during which all play opportunities, areas and resources are open and freely available to the children.
- To continue to support the children's developing sense of identity and belonging, it is advised that photographic displays of the children, their families and the children's activities in the service be displayed at the children's physical level, in the playroom.
- It is advised that the practitioners sit, eat and chat with the children at snack time to further support the children's social skills and to promote well-being and a healthy life-style.

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 service implements a play-based curriculum informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework.* Two practitioners in the service are attending training the *National Síolta Aistear Initiative* with the National Children's Network.
- The curriculum programme is planned around adult-selected themes and learning activities. Short-term plans are sometimes amended in response to the children's engagement with adult-planned activities and their emerging interests. The children's emerging interests could be recorded and used more effectively to plan an emergent enquiry-based curriculum.
- The children's learning and development is effectively recorded and assessed through learner stories, a portfolio of the children's template art work and photographs of their activities.
- The indoor learning environment is very large, bright and well-maintained. There is provision for some types of play and learning activities such as table top, socio-dramatic and books. At the time of inspection, resources consisted mostly of commercial toys and play materials. The indoor learning environment could be more purposefully structured to effectively promote the children's learning and development.
- On the day of inspection, the practitioners demonstrated a range of effective interactions strategies; offering support and guidance in the use of materials, conversing with the children about topics of interest to them, and valuing the children's play by being a play partner.
- The practitioners were observed to support the children to make connections in their learning as they recalled activities and events from the previous week.
- The children's early mathematical learning is well supported through playful activities, conversations about clothes using vocabulary such as 'too big' and 'tiny' and games such as hide-and-seek and what time is it Mr Wolf?, where children count in a meaningful and concrete context.

Actions advised

- To further progress the development of an emergent enquiry-based curriculum, the practitioners are advised to record a brief description of the children's emerging interests and to plan play and learning activities from these interests to support the next steps in learning for the group and for individual children.
- The practitioners are advised to progress their plans to combine the various documentation and assessment of the children's learning into one folder/portfolio and to ensure that it contains representations of the children's own creative work and their voice.
- To optimise the potential of the indoor learning environment it is advised that the practitioners redesign and restructure it to create distinct interest areas for different types of play and that real and natural materials and tools be introduced.

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 arrive into the service happily and are enthusiastic to begin play.
- Very strong and well-established relationships between the children were observed and they display concern and care for one another.
- The children are engaged and motivated in their play and learning activities and display developing capacities to play alone, in pairs and in small self-selected groups.
- Many of the children are able to negotiate within play activities and to play cooperatively to achieve a goal. Five children were observed to work together to construct a train track down a series of different sized boxes to the floor, creating 'a slide for trains'. This activity took negotiation, planning and re-planning over a period of time and the group achieved success.
- At outside play some children displayed ingenuity and persistence to access natural play materials, pulling the fencing back to use shovels to dig out small amounts of earth and sand that was then transported to a tractor tyre and where it was mixed with the rain water.
- The children engage in songs and rhymes very enthusiastically.
- All of the children are developing very good self-care skills and independence in tasks such as opening lunches, putting clothing on and off and taking care for their own belongings.
- The children are developing impressive tidy-up skills and take part in care of the environment activities with pleasure. On the day of inspection, some children asked to help with classroom jobs.

- The children are confident to engage in full-group activities where they share their own ideas and thoughts with the group such as their 'Friday Toy Day' activity where each child presents one of their toys to the group and talks about it.

Actions advised
- It is advised that increased opportunities be provided for the children to engage with and explore the natural environment, its features, materials, animals and plants both indoors and outdoors.
- In order to further promote the children's independence and skills in care of the environment, it is advised that children take responsibility for daily class jobs.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- There is a very professional ethos in the service. The owner/manager and assistant manager articulate a very strong commitment to quality improvement. Current areas under review and development are recording and assessing the children's progression in learning and development and the revision of the information handbook for parents.
- The practitioners are committed to continuous professional development. The service engages in training and mentoring opportunities and is linked to local agencies for support and advice.
- Full staff meetings are held regularly and room team meetings are held every two months.
- The pre-school session observed was well organised and ran very smoothly.
- Information about the children's learning and development is shared very effectively with their parents through conversation, a monthly newsletter and sending the children's work sample books home regularly.
- The practitioners share information about specific aspects of the pre-school programme with parents, such as holding an information session on the Start Smart Programme and distributing hand-outs about dental hygiene supplied by the local dentist who visited the children this week. There is no information about the overall curriculum programme in the service's handbook for parents.
- The service has established commendable links with the local primary school. The children's transition to primary school is supported through a visit to the teacher of junior infants in her classroom and a return visit by the teacher to the pre-school. The practitioners engage the children in activities to explore and discuss their transition primary school.

Action advised
- It is advised that a curriculum policy or statement, detailing the curriculum programme delivered in the service, be written and that it be included in the revised handbook for parents.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The owner/manager and the room leader/assistant manager engaged confidently and professionally in the feedback discussion following the inspection. The capacity of the service to implement the actions advised above is excellent.

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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