An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

REPORT

Little Scholars

13KE0326

Curryhills
Prosperous
County Kildare

Date of inspection: 10 June 16

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Little Scholars Pre-school and After-school is situated in the village of Prosperous, Co. Kildare and is in operation for eighteen years. It is at this location for two years. It engages in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme in two rooms, operating a single session daily. There are nineteen children enrolled in the room inspected. On the day of inspection there were fifteen children present. The owner/manager, the room manager/lead practitioner and the assistant practitioner were also present on the day of inspection.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 atmosphere in the setting is very friendly, caring, kind and relaxed.
- The quality of relationships fostered between the practitioners and children are very respectful. Parents are welcomed warmly at drop-off and collection times by the practitioners.
- Children are afforded very good opportunities to be active agents, choosing and organising their own learning and development activities, such as whether to go outdoors or stay indoors to engage in a musical activity.
- Daily routines and procedures have been well established and are understood by the children.
- The children's sense of identity and belonging is nurtured and celebrated using a suitable range of strategies. This includes visual displays featuring individual photos of the children, a birthday tree, and family tree with photographs of the children, their families and extended families and the compiling of personal journals.
- Throughout the morning, the practitioners model positive behaviour and calmly deal with any difficulties that arise between the children, enabling positive resolution of differences. This is further supported by a visual display on the wall to support positive behaviour.
- The service has made very good links with the local community including the local school and wall displays and community projects reflect these links visually for the children.

Action advised

- Building on the current practices of supporting children's sense of identity and belonging, it is advised that visual representation is made in order to celebrate the various cultures of the children attending the setting.

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 curriculum is informed by *Aistear; the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and planning is organised on a short term, medium term and long-term basis.
- Assessment is varied and regular, strengths-based and fully informed by *Aistear*. It includes individual and group learning stories, comprehensive observations and general checklists.
- The service provides a well-resourced indoor environment including good sensorial, literacy and numeracy materials together with a varied nature table. The book area includes a commendable variety of books, including books developed by the service and a photo album with photographs of all of the children attending the service. These are used purposefully to provide rich learning experiences for children.
- The outdoor area provides adequate opportunities to engage in a range of play opportunities such as climbing, water play and hopscotch.
- There are very good opportunities provided for playful learning. This includes a variety of play types and children are given opportunities to lead their own play.
- Adult-child interactions are very good and there is a very good balance between adult-initiated and child-initiated activities. Children learn in an inclusive environment with provision for their learning closely aligned to their interests, needs and developing abilities.

- Children's art work is creatively displayed throughout the room and documents children's own comments about their own creations.

Action advised
- It is advised that consideration be given to the further development of the outdoor environment to provide a broader range of play experiences for the children that involve additional opportunities for creative, imaginative and adventurous play

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is excellent.
- Children demonstrate high levels of confidence, independence, competence and enjoyment engaging with their environment. They interact very positively with each other. They play co-operatively, take turns and support each other's ideas.
- The children experience a broad and balanced range of learning experiences that facilitates their development across all domains and takes account of their varying interests and needs.
- The children engage with a variety of different media and use books very effectively. They have created their own class books, based on their interests, such as a book about their likes and dislikes and a book called 'Dinosaur land'. These books are displayed in the book area and are fully accessible to the children at all times.
- Children communicate in a variety of ways and there are opportunities for large group and small group discussions. Throughout the morning the children engaged in a wide range of rhymes and songs and musical games and sang as they played.
- The children enjoy opportunities to engage in playful learning activities using a computer, engaging in mark-making, role play and in problem-solving activities.
- Children's positive sense of well-being is evident. This is further supported through the use of emotion cards and regular opportunities are provided to the children to discuss their feelings. The sharing of Cuddles the teddy bear between home and school supports this development further and provides a good link between both settings.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- An ethos of teamwork, staff collaboration and professionalism is evident at the service. Bi-monthly staff meetings are held to inform quality practice.
- *Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education* is used effectively by staff members to inform the development of policies and procedures. Self-review and reflection on practice by staff are also informed by engagement with the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide.*
- Parents are provided with an information handbook, a monthly newsletter and a report about their child twice yearly together with regular observation records. An open-door policy and key-worker system is in place to support communication with parents.
- The staff members in this service engage regularly with their County Childcare Committee and voluntary organisations. They demonstrate a commitment to continuing this professional development into the future.
- The service effectively supports the sensitive management of transitions to primary school. Children visit the local school with their practitioners and the teacher of the Junior Infant class visits the pre-school also. A wall mural depicting a pathway from home to school further supports this transitioning for children.

Action advised
- It is advised that parents are invited to contribute to policy reviews in relation to matters that centre on children's learning and development.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The manager and staff members demonstrate very good capacity to implement the actions advised in this report.

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	**Excellent**
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.