An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

Report

Luttrell House Crèche
09FL0185

Carpenterstown Road
Castleknock
Dublin 15

Date of Inspection: 10th May 2017

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

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Luttrell House Crèche is a privately–owned full day care service located in Dublin 15. The service was established in 2001 and is located in a purpose-built building in its own grounds. The service offers two morning preschool sessions using a Montessori approach with some elements of play included. A small number of children attend for the sessional service only. On the day of the inspection, fourteen pre-school children and two practitioners were present. The owner/manager and one of the practitioners attended the post-inspection feedback meeting. 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 context to support the children's learning and development is very good.
- There is a warm, friendly atmosphere in the setting. Practitioners take the time to greet and chat to parents and children as they arrive for the sessional service.
- Children know the daily sequence of activities very well. They place their lunches in the fridge and join their friends for circle time. The daily routine is displayed on the wall and transitions are signalled by the practitioners giving verbal reminders that it is time to tidy up.
- Throughout the session, children confidently select and organise their learning activities and these decisions are supported by the practitioners.
- A key person approach is very effectively used by the practitioners. This approach is one where the practitioner develops a close, secure relationship with the child and acts as a link between the pre-school and the parents. On the day of the inspection, the practitioners worked in small groups with their key children both indoors and outdoors and were observed taking notes of children's learning and their comments throughout the session.
- Calm, soft tones are used by the practitioners and praise and encouragement are consistently offered to the children. The practitioners use 'high fives' and phrases such as, 'well done' and 'I'm so proud of you' to motivate the children and keep them engaged.
- Snack time is valued as a social occasion and the practitioners sit and chat with the children about what they like to eat.
- The children's sense of their uniqueness is reflected in the birthday poster and in their self-portraits on display.
- Practitioners talk to children about different cultures and books reflecting cultural diversity are available to the children. A number of children attending the setting come from a variety of cultural backgrounds and this was not reflected visually in the service at the time of the inspection.
- The service discusses the importance of road safety with the children, discussing with them how to cross the road correctly using the Safe Cross code. To support the children's awareness of the people working in the local community, the owner has made contact with local lollipop ladies with a view to them visiting the service.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the practitioners reflect and celebrate the cultural diversity of the children and families attending the service. The use of maps, illustration of the home language of the children, props and celebration of cultural festivals will enhance the children's awareness of family diversity and support the development of a more inclusive environment.
- The practitioners are advised to extend the children's knowledge of the local community and the people within it. This could be achieved by inviting local people e.g. the postman or a Garda to visit the setting. The use of displays or photograph albums to show areas of local interest within the room such as the local shops, schools and the library is also 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.
- The practitioners undertake planning that is based on themes and seasonal topics selected by the practitioners. *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* is reflected in the posters on display. Annual planning is divided into monthly and weekly topics based on the seasons and the practitioner's ideas. Practitioners know the children well but at this time planning does not reflect the individual children's interests.
- Throughout the session the practitioners were observed taking notes of children's learning. Information on the children's progression in their use of the Montessori materials is recorded and an individual memory book is compiled for each child with samples of their art work. The group and some individual children's learning within the activities are recorded on a template that is linked to *Aistear*. At this time, observation records do not identify the next steps for the individual children's progression.
- The practitioners recognise the children as capable, confident learners. They are attentive to their learning needs and encourage them to call if they need help during activities. This approach supports the children's independence and promotes awareness of their abilities as autonomous learners.
- They know the children very well and use a variety of positive and respectful interactions throughout the session. On the day of the inspection, the practitioners were observed skilfully extending the children's thinking, by effectively using prompts and open-ended questions, such as, 'how do you know? tell me about your picture'.
- The indoor environment is attractively and carefully laid out with suitably equipped discrete areas. The 'prepared environment' facilitates provision for the Montessori activities associated with Practical life, Language, Mathematical area, Sensory and Cultural area along with cultural learning experiences.
- The very well prepared outdoor environment is accessed by the children on a daily basis and offers a variety of playful learning to the children. A very large sand tray, mark-making with chalk, an 'ice-cream shop' and opportunities for climbing, using ride along toys are available to the children.
- Adequate time is allocated to play at the end of the session and children have the opportunity to engage in playful learning experiences with their friends and the practitioners. The room shares a variety of play resources such as dress-up clothes and kitchen equipment, jigsaws, a doll's house and train set with the adjacent room.
- Children discuss shapes and numbers they are using with their friends and the practitioners. During the arts and craft activity, they talk about the shapes they use to make the flowers and show their understanding of numbers when counting out the pegs. An over-emphasis on practitioner-led educational structures where children are expected to learn letters, numbers and shapes through worksheets, colouring-in templates, and rote learning was observed on the day of inspection. Children are introduced to pre-writing skills and pre-reading books within the planned activities.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to develop an emergent curriculum that is underpinned by *Aistear* and includes the individual children's emergent interests. The templates and examples in the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* will assist them in this regard.
- It is advised that the information gathered and recorded about children's learning and achievements be shared more regularly with parents. Including activities and experiences in the current documentation on children's development will support practitioners to plan for progression in their learning.
- Practitioners are advised to reduce the emphasis on practitioner-led activities, such as workbooks, pre-reading, pre-writing and template-based activities. The practitioners could expand their current use of everyday experiences and activities for the children that are fun, playful, meaningful and interesting, such as songs, rhymes, games, and free mark-making opportunities to assist in this practice.

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 show great enjoyment and real engagement in their self-selected activities. They also showed satisfaction and pleasure when engaged in the adult-initiated, butterfly art activity.
- It is evident that children have developed very close, trusting relationships with the practitioners. The practitioners successfully give them time to discuss feelings. During the circle time the practitioner validated children's feelings as they discussed how they felt, and described how happy they feel in pre-school.
- The children discuss with the practitioner, what they want to play with. They are given many opportunities to make choices and to organise their own learning.
- The children are developing a positive sense of their own identity as members of a family and the group. They talk about family holidays and their lives outside the pre-school with practitioners, visitors and their friends.
- The children reflect on their own art work with the practitioners and on the comments added by the practitioners. This helps the children appreciate their own uniqueness and see themselves as competent learners.
- The children are aware of how mathematical language is used in meaningful contexts and were observed comparing how many eggs they had, stating, 'I have two and you have three'.
- Children understand the social rules of the setting. They take part in the tidy-up routines, place activities they have completed back on the shelves and push their chairs in when they leave the table. On the day of the inspection, children were practising their self-help skills by using the Montessori materials to practise their pouring. There is scope for children to practise these skills during snack time.
- The children are developing personal and social skills which support them to share materials self-confidently and play cooperatively with their peers. Some nice friendships are being made and one child was observed making a birthday card for her friend.
- Children are learning about the lifecycle of the butterfly. They take an active part in the story of the Hungry Caterpillar, interjecting to make comments about what he likes to eat. Sounds of laughter and excitement are heard as children pretend to grow from a caterpillar to a butterfly. They dance and jump onto leaves while flapping their wings and pretend to sip nectar from the 'flowers'.
- Children are aware of the natural environment and grow a variety of vegetables and flowers such as carrots, scallions and tulips.

Action advised

- To further support the children's self-help skills and independence, it is advised that they be offered the opportunity when appropriate, to pour their own drinks, serve each other at snack time and be given jobs within the daily routine to help the practitioner and each other.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- Practitioners come together every week to document children's learning, to review the previous week and to discuss upcoming events.
- The practitioners come together as a team every three months to review their policies and procedures.
- The owner/manager accesses support and mentoring from Early Childhood Ireland and Fingal County Childcare Committee in order to support her work and practitioners. She promotes a clear vision for the setting, sets high standards and is committed to supporting the practitioners continuing professional development.
- Practitioners have recently completed training in paediatric first aid and manual handling.
- The manager offers ongoing support to the practitioners. She supervises their work and provides them with formal appraisals once a year.
- The practitioners have been working together for a number of years and there is a strong sense of team work and collaboration evident.
- Information is shared with parents informally at arrival and collection times. At the end of the year, the children's memory book and a report on the children's progress in the Montessori materials is given to parents. An information booklet on the setting's policies and procedures is given to parents at the start of the year. An information board for parents is positioned at the entrance to each room and shows upcoming topics and posters with photographs of the children's engagement in the

week's activities. At the end of the six week settling-in period, parents are given an update on how their child is settling in.

- To support the children's transition from pre-school to primary school, the practitioners talk to the children about their upcoming move to school. The service has not yet developed links with the local primary schools.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to avail of the templates in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* to support them in their current professional self-reflection and review of policies.
- It is advised that the practitioners develop procedures to support the children's transition to primary school. The use of the 'Supporting Transitions' document in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* will assist the practitioners in this process.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The owner/manager and practitioner attended the post-inspection feedback meeting. The capacity of the service 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.

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