An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

Report

Naíonra Leacain
09WW0140

Lacken
Blessington
County Wicklow

Date of Inspection: 5th October 2017

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

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Lacken *Naíonra* was established in 2010. It is located on the premises of Lacken National School and is managed by the principal and board of management of the school. The *naíonra* provides a morning sessional service for children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. Both English and Irish are used and promoted in the *naíonra*, with English being the predominant language of the setting. On the day of the inspection the practitioner and three children were present. The practitioner and the manager (who is also the principal of the primary school) 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, 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.
- A warm, caring and supportive atmosphere has been successfully created. The practitioner shows positive regard for the children and their families and recognition for the uniqueness of each child.
- Secure relationships are fostered between the children and the practitioner. The practitioner knows the children and their families very well. For example, when two of the children were playing with farm vehicles, the practitioner promoted a discussion with them about which of their identified family members had tractors or jeeps.
- Opportunities are provided for the children to develop an appreciation of themselves as individuals; the children's artwork includes fabric and fibre images of themselves with details about their favourite activities, colours and food.
- The practitioner supports the children to manage their own hygiene and personal care needs. She provides guidance towards positive behaviour and the development of social skills such as turn taking and sharing.
- The children are active agents in choosing and organising their learning activities. They are familiar with the general routine and procedures of the setting; a sand timer and song are used to signal transitions between activities.

Actions advised
- To build on the children's sense of identity and their appreciation of themselves as members of families and groups, the further development of visual displays of families and the local community that are accessible to children and can be used by them is advised.
- It is advised that strategies used during times of transition be extended to include visual cues such as a daily timetable and additional involvement of the children in auditory transitional activities such as songs and poems. This will further support the children in their understanding of transitions and in preparing for the next activity.

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.
- A thematic approach to planning supports an integrated approach to children's learning and linkages are made to the themes of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. There is evidence that planning takes account of the children's emerging interests. For example, in response to the children's interest in shopping, the weekly theme of 'My Family' was changed to activities centred on shopping.
- The practitioner is mindful of the importance of gathering information on the children's interests and their learning experiences. Approaches to assessment include records of the children's

observations such as, 'The pasta feels bumpy' and 'The flower feels pretend', and photographs of the children's engagement in activities.

- Play is the central medium through which the children learn and develop in this setting. A broad range of play types is made available, including sensory play, creative play, physical play and imaginative play.
- The indoor environment is well resourced and provides for a variety of multi-sensory learning experiences for the children. The outdoor play areas are spacious and resources such as the 'bug hotel' provide for the promotion of the children's awareness of the natural environment. The extension of the range of resources in use in the playground to support the children's physical fitness and gross motor skills is planned.
- The practitioner demonstrates the capacity to effectively use open-ended questioning and prompts to extend the children's learning. On the day of the inspection, examples of this included, 'What else do you need?' and 'Why do you like that one?' The practitioner models and encourages some use of Irish, for example, colours, and nouns such as parts of the body, animals and modes of transport.
- The children learn in an inclusive environment. In the outdoor playground the children play and socialise with their peers from the pre-school and junior classes in the primary school for children with additional learning needs.

Actions advised

- In planning for curriculum implementation, the more formal linking of the weekly themes and the children's emerging interests with the learning goals of *Aistear* is advised.
- The further development of approaches to assessment is advised. In particular, the practitioner is advised to incorporate the use of learning logs and greater use of assessment information and the children's emerging interests when planning for the next steps in the children's learning and development. The section on planning and assessment in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* will be helpful in this regard.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is good.
- The children engage in learning activities with interest and enjoyment. They demonstrate initiative and the ability to make decisions about their learning. For example, on the day of the inspection one child decided, 'I'm making a car' while another child, when finished with the playdough and before moving to play in the tent declared, 'Maybe I'll leave it there until I come back'.
- The children are developing their ability use language to ask questions, make requests and to give and receive information. For example, 'I want to wash my hands' and 'I need more red (paint) please'.
- The children demonstrate an awareness of the use of pictures and print as a means of communication and a growing understanding of the meaning and use of mathematical language. For example, during circle time they were supported by the practitioner to use Irish to identify pictures on flashcards, to name parts of their bodies, and to name and count items in the room such as the doors and windows.
- The children represent their ideas through various media and play activities. Opportunities are provided for the children to engage in making art and mark making. On the day of the inspection they experimented with mixing paint to make new colours.
- The children are developing their capacity to play co-operatively in pairs and in small groups; they interacted confidently with others as they played in the tent with the dolls.

Actions advised

- The provision of additional opportunities for the children to practise Irish as they discuss and reflect on their learning experiences is advised. In so doing, there is a need to extend their understanding and use of the language to include more verbs, phrases and language structures.
- In order to support the development of the children's emergent language, literacy and numeracy skills, consideration should be given to increasing the opportunities provided for the children to engage in rhymes, songs, poetry and storytelling.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- An ethos of professionalism and collaboration between the manager and the practitioner is evident.
- The practitioner demonstrates an ongoing commitment to continuing professional development; on the afternoon of the inspection, the practitioner attended a workshop on speech and language development organised by the local County Childcare Committee.
- Positive relationships and formal and informal channels of communication with parents and families are promoted. These include the use of a daily communication book for each of the children which details some of their learning activities and interests.
- Transitions into the setting are managed in a flexible manner based on the needs of each individual child. Strong links are maintained with the local national school.

Actions advised

- It is advised that a plan be formulated to support the development of the children's vocabulary and language functions in Irish. The sharing of this plan and the children's learning logs with parents will support continuity and progression in learning experiences for the children.
- The use of the self-evaluation tools in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* is advised to aid the setting's ongoing self-review process and to guide and inform future developments in educational provision.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the service to implement the actions advised above is very good. The manager and practitioner show commitment to ongoing improvement of the children's learning experiences. They engaged positively in open, professional dialogue during the post-inspection feedback meeting.

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	**Good**
Quality of management and leadership for learning	**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.

Thank you for the comprehensive and useful feedback from our inspection dated 5th October 2017. Our Naíonra strives to foster the holistic development of the child in a safe and happy environment.

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

•Songs and poems are now being used as transition in preparing for the next activity.

•Exposure to Irish songs / poems on a daily basis

•We continue to use the Aistear programme as a planning & teaching tool

•We are constantly trying to further the emerging interest of the child, through the Aistear/Síolta themed process and all activities throughout the day

•The usage of verbs as well as nouns is now part of the language programmes in both Irish / English for the children