An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

Report

Prospect Montessori
09DY0111

1 St. Teresa's Place
Glasnevin
Dublin 11

Date of Inspection: 4th December 2017

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Prospect Montessori established in 2001, is a privately-owned early-years setting which operates in Glasnevin, Dublin 11. It offers a morning-only pre-school session as part of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, thirteen children and two practitioners were present, one of whom was the owner. 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 very good.
- The very welcoming, pleasant and affirming atmosphere which exists within Prospect Montessori was evident throughout the session observed. The practitioners interact with the children and their families warmly on arrival and at home time as they engage in friendly conversations.
- The well balanced daily routine provides ample opportunities for the children to take the lead and direct their learning. Throughout the session, the children have sufficient opportunities to choose and organise their learning. The practitioners acknowledge and nurture these choices.
- Times of transitions and changes in the routine are signalled through the practitioners' use of verbal reminders and directing the children towards the visual daily schedule. During the session observed, the lead into circle time was long with a few children becoming inattentive as they waited for their peers to arrive.
- The practitioners' sensitive and respectful responses to the children fosters the secure and warm relationships which exist between them and the children. The key worker approach is used effectively in this service. Each practitioner is responsible for a creating a close relationship with a designated group of children and their families along with ascertaining the children's interests and temperaments.
- The practitioners are very skilful in offering regular encouragement and appropriate guidance to the children towards appropriate behaviour. These skills are also visible in the affirmation and recognition that children receive for their efforts.
- The practitioners are consistently mindful of fostering the children's sense of identity and belonging through the use of imagery and books, and the everyday conversations which take place between the practitioners and the children.
- Social occasions are organised throughout the year that bring the children, their families and the practitioners together. Visitors to the pre-school include the local guards, a dentist and doctor and these visits help to raise the children's awareness of members of the local community.

Action advised

- It is advised that playful activities be interwoven into transition times as the children wait for activities to begin. The regular use of songs and rhymes could assist in this instance and help sustain and maximise children's engagement in learning activities.

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 blend of the Montessori approach and play-based curriculum which is in place is informed by the principles and themes of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework.* The children's emergent interests are used to inform planning for the next stage in their learning.
- The recent implementation of an initiative which focuses on recording children's learning through the use of learning stories is noteworthy. The lead practitioner conducts photographic observations of the children. Findings from these observations have yet to be consistently used to inform the next steps in the children's learning.

- High quality interactions take place between the practitioners and the children. The practitioners follow the children's lead as they sit alongside them and use open-ended questions to extend and deepen their understanding and learning.
- The indoor learning environment is arranged in a very effective manner to maximise the provision of purposeful and meaningful learning experiences for the children. Appropriate Montessori and play resources are available and accessible to the children and these are used to stimulate and consolidate their learning.
- The children have regular access to a small outdoor learning environment where they can engage in sensorial and exploratory play. The owner reports that development work is due to commence shortly on this area which will offer children a wider range of play opportunities.
- The practitioners' good knowledge and appreciation of the importance of play is reflective of the medium through which the children learn. They participate in a wide variety of play opportunities including book play, creative, socio-dramatic and physical play.
- The practitioners are to be commended for the attention they pay to fostering the children's emergent language, literacy and numeracy skills. Throughout the session, the practitioners appropriately add and weave relevant vocabulary including mathematical language into the conversations which they have with the children.
- There is a very good sense of inclusiveness within the pre-school setting. The practitioners are skilled in accommodating the varying styles, needs and focus of the children's learning to maximise their participation in the learning activities.

Action advised

- It is advised that both practitioners use the *Aistear* learner record along with their anecdotal notes, the children's artwork, and photographs to document the children's learning. This will enable the practitioners to use their findings as part of the short-term planning process and support and extend the children's emergent interests.

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 demonstrate high levels of interest, motivation and independence in the learning activities which they participate in. Throughout the session, many children displayed a positive sense of well-being as they shared their feelings along with their developing empathic skills.
- The children are acquiring the skills necessary to be confident communicators. They have a brief opportunity to recall and share their learning towards the end of the daily session.
- The successes that the children experience throughout the session are acknowledged by the practitioners. The use of the secret bag which children fill with personal toys from home and share during circle time with the other children and the practitioners also contributes to their positive sense of well-being.
- A significant number of the children have a heightened awareness of appropriate personal and social skills. During the session observed, they exhibited a positive attitude towards sharing, turn-taking, negotiating and taking responsibility as noted through their enthusiasm during tidy-up time.
- The children have sufficient opportunities to be creative and to represent their feelings and ideas in a variety of contexts. One such example of this was evident in the two children's self-portraits which they had created as they sat in front of the mirror. The children also participate in story-telling activities where the practitioner encourages them to actively interact to deepen their understanding of the story line.
- The children are capable of making sense of their world. They also demonstrate a good capacity to ask and to respond to thought provoking questions as they play together. There is a limited opportunities for them to engage with open- ended and real materials that build on their curiosity and sense of wonder.
- The children are encouraged to appreciate and use their home language. This was demonstrated through the support a child was given to share her home language with the other children as they explored a book in her first language.

Actions Advised

- It is advised that the children be given further opportunities to discuss and share aspects of their learning with each other and the practitioners. This will help them to become reflective learners.
- To enhance and further build on the children's sense of curiosity and wonder, practitioners are advised to provide more opportunities to enable them to engage with real, and open-ended materials.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- There is a very strong ethos of professionalism, teamwork and partnership in the setting. There are weekly planning meetings and each month the curriculum is reviewed. The practitioners have yet to use the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* as part of their planning and review processes.
- Continuous professional development is valued as reflected in the owner/practitioner's participation in an Early Years degree programme and the practitioner's participation in a forthcoming workshop on *Aistear* facilitated by Dublin City Childcare Committee.
- The practitioners work closely with parents to support the children's learning: there is daily sharing of information between them. The practitioners also share the children's learning with parents through a monthly newsletter and the use of social media. The children's learning journals are shared with the parents at the end of the pre-school year. Towards the end of the spring-term, progress meetings are held between the practitioners and the parents of the children who are moving on to primary school the following September.
- The practitioners promote parental involvement within the service, through invitations to parents to visit and share their skills with the children. It is commendable that a lending library has been established by the practitioners to promote the sharing of books with parents that facilitate children's learning and continuity between home and pre-school experiences. On the day of the inspection, a parent conversed with the practitioner about the story her child had brought home the previous week from the pre-school library.
- There are effective strategies in place to support the children's transition into and from the setting. Each June an open day is organised for the children who are commencing the new ECCE programme the following September. The children who attend the open day receive photographs of themselves during their visit along with photographs of both the practitioners to familiarise themselves with the pre-school setting.
- Towards the end of the pre-school year, the practitioners organise activities to help the children who are making the transition from the pre-school to primary school. They invite past pupils to visit the service and share what happens at primary school with the children. The practitioners also display photographs of the schools which they children will attend and encourage them to share news about their open day visit to their new primary school.

Actions advised

- To enhance the current practices of sharing the children's learning with the parents, it is advised that the practitioners share the children's learning journals on a more regular basis.
- The practitioners are advised to develop a policy on transitions. This will embed the current practices which are already in place to support the children's transition into and from the setting and the continuity of the children's learning.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the service to implement the actions advised above is excellent. This was demonstrated by the commitment of those present to providing high-quality learning experiences for the children attending Prospect Montessori.

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	**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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