An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

Report

Rainbow Nursery
09DL0088

Roughpark
Woodlands
Letterkenny
County Donegal

Date of Inspection: 20th November 2017

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

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Rainbow Nursery is a private service located in a rural area on the outskirts of Letterkenny, County Donegal. It provides two morning sessions for children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme, one of which was chosen for inspection. The pedagogical approach adopted in the setting is informed by the Montessori Method of education which is blended with a play-based approach and underpinned by the principles and goals of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. As the service operates an outdoor day each Friday, the staff and children from both ECCE rooms were interacting together during the inspection. The lead practitioner of the senior ECCE room, two practitioners and nineteen children were the focus of the observation on the day of inspection. The manager of the service attended the post-inspection 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.

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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 excellent.
- A very warm, caring and encouraging atmosphere is evident. Effective systems are in place to reinforce this inviting approach, such as the use of a designated practitioner to welcome the children and their families upon arrival.
- Children's independence is actively promoted. The children are viewed as competent learners who are encouraged to create their individual learning experiences and guide their preferences for play.
- Snack time further enhances the children's independence through the use of a buffet snack system, which encourages them to participate at a time of their own choosing. Practitioners caringly assist the children during personal routines, sensitively gauging the level of support required for each child.
- The practitioners demonstrate commendable warmth in their interactions with the children and demonstrate high positive regard for their families. Secure relationships are fostered through a key person approach. This system effectively utilises the attachments made in the settling in period to establish the specific groups of children each practitioner observes.
- Practitioners provide guidance and encouragement towards positive behaviour and effectively re-direct the children when minor incidences occur.
- The uniqueness of each child is shown commendable respect within the setting. The practitioners are aware of the children's needs and temperaments. They use this knowledge to promote a sense of belonging through responsive and sensitive interactions with the children.
- Diversity is celebrated through the pictorial representation of a range of cultures and family backgrounds. The provision of such an inclusive environment is supportive of learning for all children. Family members are welcomed into the setting to share their skills and interests. This invitation is extended to grandparents when celebrating 'Grandparents' Day'.
- The setting has made links with the local community and children have had the opportunity to explore the role of the farmer, nurse, doctor and dentist. The children have visited the local theatre and the annual graduation event is held in a local manor house.

AREA 2

QUALITY OF PROCESSES TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- The quality of the context to support the children's learning and development is very good.
- The curriculum is organised on a long, medium and short-term basis. It broadly outlines the planned Montessori activities with links made to *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*.
- The practitioners plan play-based activities around themes that are flexible enough to incorporate the children's emerging interests. They have reflectively created a detailed sketch of the outdoor

area which is utilised to effectively plan for and evaluate the engagement of the children in a variety of contexts.

- The children's learning and development are recorded frequently within individual portfolios. These include learning stories supported by photographs, paintings and pictures. There is scope to develop the information contained within the observations so that it visually reflects the progression of the children's learning and development.
- The practitioners work in an extremely dedicated manner and are particularly mindful and supportive of children with additional needs. Individual Education Plans, personalised visual portfolios and regular reports are prepared and disseminated to parents and external professionals.
- The practitioners demonstrate caring, respectful and personalised interactions with the children and they respond promptly to their needs and requests. The practitioners promote active learning and support the children to interact collaboratively. Although some practitioners modelled mathematical language to good effect at times during the session, this was not apparent in the majority of interactions.
- Play is valued by the practitioners and is evidently the central medium through which the children experience learning. Practitioners provide dedicated areas in the outdoor environment that support a variety of play types including, physical, socio-dramatic and construction play.
- The outdoor environment provides a wealth of active experiences for children. They can climb trees, high mounds and a ladder to the high outdoor slide. There are opportunities to create 'mud coffee' in the mobile coffee area, to dig, construct and create in the sand area using natural materials. Water play, a construction area and painting with water and brushes are also provided.
- The indoor environment is clearly defined and well-resourced to offer children a wide array of rich learning opportunities through multiple contexts. The practitioners have recently developed a sensory room within the setting to provide a relaxing and comforting space for children to explore.
- Practitioners provide children with opportunities to enjoy story and song during circle time. They use variety of tone, rhymes and actions to effectively engage the children.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the information recorded within the children's portfolios further demonstrates the progression in each child's learning. This will subsequently support the practitioners to plan on an ongoing basis for activities that will inform and develop the next steps in learning.
- Practitioners are advised to increase their use of mathematical language in their interactions with the children. This will extend the children's vocabulary and further progress the development of their early numeracy skills.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the context to support the children's learning and development is very good.
- The children are engaged, motivated and resourceful in their learning outdoors. They demonstrate developing dispositions such as persistence and imagination as they collaborate to create trenches and skyscrapers in the large sand area.
- Children's decision making skills are encouraged and the open-ended resources accessible to them supports natural curiosity in their learning. They interact with peers of a variety of ages and are developing the skills of co-operation and turn-taking during their play.
- Children have the opportunity to experience success during their chosen learning activities. This is apparent in how they proudly describe what they are building and creating and in celebrating their achievements excitedly with their peers.
- All children have individual portfolios which compile their creative expressions along with observations of their learning. There are missed opportunities to share the portfolios with the children so that they can appreciate the progression in their learning.
- The children's sense of belonging is nurtured through respectful, open expression and communication. This in turn supports a connected group identity. An outdoor stage provides children with the opportunity to confidently express their unique interests and ideas through role-play and song.

- Children demonstrate confidence in their gross and fine motor skills. They explore skills such as spooning, pouring, mixing as well as running, climbing, digging and rolling tyres in the outdoor environment.
- Children make sense of the world through investigating and interacting in the natural environment. On the day of the inspection a pair of children collaborated to inventively construct a 'tyre mountain' and then assessed its structure and height. There were some missed opportunities for practitioners to increase the children's capacity to problem-solve and to respond to higher-order questioning.
- Children explore learning themes and topics of interest using a projector and large screen to broaden their understanding of the world and of ICT.

Actions advised

- It is advised that practitioners support the children to develop an awareness of their changing and developing abilities. The use of content from their individual learning portfolios in daily interactions and in support of focused discussions will provide opportunities for the children to see the progression in their learning.
- Practitioners are advised to develop the children's enquiry skills and opportunities for higher-order thinking during interactions through the increased use of open-ended questions.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of the context to support the children's learning and development is excellent.
- The manager of the setting promotes high standards of practice and her modelling of a dedicated approach is dispersed and exemplified by all practitioners within the setting.
- The ethos of the setting is most professional and practitioners effectively collaborate with one another to create a smooth and organised approach to the session.
- The manager and practitioners are embracing a continual review of practice and collaborate effectively, sharing their developing knowledge. This has been cultivated through recent engagement with continuing professional development in the Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) programme and training in the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM). The manager has created a projection area to display researched video clips during team meetings to promote discussion and professional reflection.
- Practitioners implement highly commendable practice in the management of inclusion within the setting. For example, the strategic provision of extensive information to parents of children with additional needs is praiseworthy. Continual liaison with external professionals is highly effective in meeting the individualised needs of children.
- Parents are provided with questionnaires periodically to evaluate the service provided. They are invited to attend the open day which is utilised to establish relationships with the parents and to obtain parental expectations of the service.
- The manager has recently created an opportunity for parents to have an input into the documented observations of their child's learning. A specific area on the observation template has been developed to record parents' thoughts. Practitioners meet with the parents once a year to further this sharing of information regarding their children's learning.
- Transitions into the setting are supported through the use of organised strategies such as; an open day presentation, an enrolment pack, an 'All About Me Form' and a prepared visual booklet for children with additional needs.
- The pre-school have established close relationships with the local primary schools and collaborate to share information about each child prior to transition. The practitioners have created visual booklets in joint partnership with the primary schools to ease the transition for children who are challenged by this process.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

Given the commitment to ongoing improvement in the quality of provision as demonstrated by the leader and practitioners, 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	**Excellent**
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	**Excellent**

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.

The Inspection was informative and supportive.

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

Currently two staff members are completing a level 7 degree in Early Childhood Studies and two staff members have completed level 7 courses in Autism studies and Additional needs.

I will engage with the “Better Start” team to ensure Learning portfolios show progression and inform planning. I will send learning portfolios from preschool to home on a regular basis in order for children and parents to be more involved. I will engage with Better Start for Mentoring training and support in relation to higher order thinking and using open ended questions as advised. I will provide in house training, mentoring and support in order to reflect and improve practice.