An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

Report

Rockboro Pre-school
09CY0015

Rockboro Primary School
Boreenmanna Road
Cork City

Date of Inspection: 4 April 2017

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

CONTEXT OF SETTING

The Rockboro Pre-school is a sessional, community setting, attached to the privately-run Rockboro Primary School. One room leader and two assistants who job-share; and 17 children were present on the day of the inspection. All 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 the context to support the children's learning and development is excellent.
- A very caring ethos is evident with a warm and affirming atmosphere, where children and their families are respectfully welcomed in the morning.
- It is very apparent that the children have agency and autonomy and feel very much at home and at ease in their preschool. This was evident throughout the morning, for example when a boy got up during lunch time and got a scissors to cut open his yoghurt tub, or another child got up and closed the door in the library during book time. There was no prompting or help needed, the children feel confident, competent and are enabled to be self-reliant.
- The daily routine is beautifully structured, with a healthy balance between physically active, child initiated/led activities and adult initiated/led concentration times.
- Mealtime is utilised very well as a social occasion, where children and practitioners prepare the tables, sit and eat and chat together. Well-being and a healthy life style are promoted by practitioners' role modelling good eating and behaviour habits during mealtime. Every day-life situations are skilfully used to promote language development and mathematical thinking.
- Transition times are seem-less and provide positive learning experiences for the children to engage in sorting, pairing, matching, grouping and organising toys and materials.
- Exemplary practice was observed in terms of listening to children's voices and acting upon their ideas in matters, which affect them. Highly respectful and supportive interactions were observed providing guidance and encouragement towards positive behaviour and equal relationships.
- The setting has established very good connections with the local community. As the school and preschool are run by a parental committee, family involvement throughout the year is paramount.
- Diversity is recognised, valued and celebrated within a very inclusive environment. This is reflected in interactions as well as in the displays, activities and materials in use.

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 excellent.
- A play-based curriculum, informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*, is being used to support children's learning and development.
- Practitioners reflect an emergent, enquiry-based curriculum in their planning and assessment. One child's recent interest in Australia has been captured through an observation and is planned for accordingly in the short term plans.
- A variety of assessment approaches is used to gather information about children's learning and achievements. These include individual scrapbooks, which contain children's drawings and art work, as well as folders with observations of children's learning and individual developmental checklists. Together, these approaches are used to build a rich picture of children's learning and development.
- Observations are regularly shared with parents and weekly updates on the curriculum are displayed for parents to ensure they are informed about their child's learning and development.
- Practitioners clearly view children as being unique and capable. High quality interactions with children are facilitated. Practitioners invite children to share their thoughts, ideas, feelings and emotions through the effective use of open-ended questions. An example of this was heard when

a practitioner explained to a child that she had to write down his idea because it was so interesting. This demonstrates the value and level of respect practitioners give to children's thoughts and ideas.

- The indoor environment is richly resourced and stimulates playful opportunities for learning. Clearly defined play areas and a library corner offer opportunities for mark-making, play dough, puzzles, construction and socio-dramatic play.
- Children have regular access to the outdoor environment, which is safe and well maintained. Opportunities to make this space more inviting exist as it currently lacks resources to facilitate and support children's holistic learning and development.
- Play is strongly supported in the setting with rich play opportunities made available throughout the indoor environment. It is the central medium through which children learn, develop and make sense of their world. Play experiences are freely available, accessible, appropriate and stimulating.
- Practitioners are highly effective in fostering emergent language, literacy and numeracy skills. Everyday conversations about who was in preschool on the day of inspection were used as an opportunity to promote mathematical language. An extensive range of songs, rhymes and poems were used for children to enjoy and share. An inviting and richly-resourced book area promotes the frequent telling and sharing of stories by both practitioners and children.
- An inclusive environment is promoted and encouraged by practitioners. One child's dislike of loud noises was respected during singing. Through consultation with the child, the practitioners came to an agreement with all children around the noise level of the songs they sang, demonstrating highly inclusive and respectful practice.

Action advised

- Using the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide*, practitioners are advised to use the self-evaluation tool, 'Creating and using the learning environment', focusing specifically on the outdoor environment. This will provide information on how the play value of the outdoor area can be enhanced to ensure it offers children an inviting space that provides appropriate challenge and supports their developing skills, dispositions, values, attitudes, knowledge and understanding.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is excellent.
- Through their play children display enjoyment and motivation. They demonstrate confidence when making choices and they engage with areas of the environment that appeal to them.
- Children demonstrate confidence and coordination over their gross and fine motor skills. During the obstacle course activity the children demonstrated great pride and success in their ability to balance independently on the bench.
- Children are developing strong personal and social skills to support learning and development. This was observed as the children were engaged in dramatic play. While a small group of children were building a campfire, another child approached them and asked to play. In their response the children warmly welcomed the child to join them and immediately involved her in their conversations around the planning process.
- The Irish language was used in songs and rhymes, as well as regularly throughout the morning for everyday life situations. The children appreciate the language and use it competently with both practitioners and in different situations.
- The children interact and negotiate confidently with each other and with the practitioners. They demonstrate that they are capable of interacting by listening, discussing, questioning and taking turns in conversations.
- Frequent opportunities are made available to the children to support them in making sense of their world. By growing potatoes and planting flowers the children develop an awareness of the natural environment.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is excellent.
- Weekly meetings are held where practitioners reflect together on their practice, policies and procedures. These meetings are used to review the previous week and to plan for future learning experiences based on observations.
- The self-evaluation audit tools in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* are used by practitioners to self-review and evaluate practice. A recent review of the pillar 'Partnership with parents' has enabled the practitioners to evaluate their practice and determine areas which are working well and aspects of practice which are in need of further consideration.
- Practitioners regularly attend continuous professional development opportunities, which demonstrate their commitment to remaining informed and knowledgeable about the sector. This commitment is just one of many examples which illustrate the ethos of professionalism, teamwork, collaboration and partnership amongst the practitioners.
- Practitioners work extremely well together and opportunities are provided for all of them, to take a leadership role in promoting quality learning.
- Parents are proactively consulted as the primary educators of their child. A recent coffee morning, organised and facilitated by the parents committee, invited parents in to the setting. This informal opportunity supported parents to have their voice heard, to pose questions and to meet with other parents from the setting.
- A seamless transition exists for the children who join the attached Rockboro Primary School. Clear and distinctive links are evident between both settings. The children are very familiar with the environment as they share facilities such as the library and hall with the school. The children are also very familiar with the primary school teachers who regularly interact with them.
- A positive and collaborative relationship has been established between the practitioners and the primary school principal to ensure continuity of children's educational experiences.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the service to maintain the exemplary standard of provision is excellent.

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	**Excellent**
Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements	**Excellent**
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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