An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

Report

Sticky Fingers Montessori
09CN0041

Millview
Moynehall
Cavan Town
County Cavan

Date of inspection: 18 October 2016

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

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Sticky Fingers is a private early-years service, established in 1996 and located just outside Cavan town, Co. Cavan. The service provides full day care and after-school care for children attending primary school and a morning sessional pre-school programme. The Montessori Method of education is implemented in the pre-school programme by the owner/manager and an early-years practitioner. Twenty children were present on the day of inspection. 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 good.
- There is a warm atmosphere in the service and parents and children are greeted individually by practitioners at arrival.
- A consistent routine has been established which provides an appropriate balance of daily indoor and outdoor play. There are daily full-group learning activities planned and guided by practitioners. Currently, there are no adult-planned small-group learning activities.
- Relationships between practitioners and the children are positive and respectful. Currently, there is no key person system in place.
- Practitioners offer good support to children to enable their peer interactions, such as fostering communication between children and supporting relationships in play.
- Children are well supported by the practitioners to develop independence and self-care skills, such as toileting, nose cleaning, putting clothes on and off and unpacking lunch.
- The children's developing sense of identity and belonging is supported in the playroom through photographic displays of the children which they explore and discuss with great enthusiasm.
- Practitioners sit, eat and chat with children at snack time. Currently, the snack is not eaten at tables, resulting in children having to place containers for food and drinks on the floor. Practitioners indicated that a self-service snack shelf will be introduced to the room early next term.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the service explores the benefits of introducing a key person system which will allow practitioners to plan and assess learning for a small group of children and become the primary connection between the service and the assigned children's families.
- In order to further promote the children's sense of identity and belonging, practitioners are advised to use visual displays in order make the children's families, their lives and the local community visible in the playroom.
- In the interests of hygiene, healthy eating practices and to provide opportunities for children to learn skills connected with preparing for and sharing meals, it is advised that snack time happens seated at tables and that a set snack time be maintained to complement the planned introduction of the self-service snack shelf next term.

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 service implements the Montessori Method of education and is in the process of exploring links with *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* using mapping resources developed by Montessori Alliance.

- Practitioners are currently reviewing and developing their curriculum planning processes. Long-term planning consists of a list of themes, cultural events and celebrations. Short-term planning is conducted weekly and identifies a theme and an activity for each day. There is scope to further develop planning processes.
- A wide range of assessment processes is used to assess the children's learning and development such as, developmental milestone checklists, written observation notes, photographs, samples of children work and learning stories. Currently, links to *Aistear* are made only in the learning stories and assessments are collected in a variety of folders and a 'memory book' for each child.
- Good quality interactions were observed where practitioners demonstrated skilled support for the children's use of self-selected Montessori equipment and activities. The practitioners offer good support for the development of children's oral language through balanced conversations and the intentional vocabulary extension.
- The indoor learning environment contains a good range of Montessori equipment and exercises and a book area, all easily accessible to children. The covered outdoor learning environment provides for sand, small world, books, socio-dramatic and physical play and the garden area provides rich opportunities for engagement with nature and the physical environment. On the day of inspection, the garden area was not in use.
- Many opportunities for children to explore early mathematical concepts are provided through the children's self-selection and use of Montessori mathematical equipment.
- The service adopts an inclusive approach. Specific attention is given and good strategies are used to support children with additional needs and those who are English language learners, such as repeating words children say in their home language, using gestures and supporting children to engage in activities at their developmental level.

Actions advised

- In order to continue the development of a broad-based curriculum that supports the children's learning and development, it is advised that *Aistear* and the children's emerging interests be incorporated into curriculum planning.
- To create a full and rich illustration of children's progression in learning and development over time, it is advised that all current assessment elements be linked to *Aistear* and collated into one portfolio or learning journal for each child.

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 are engaged and enjoy their play and activities.
- The children are experiencing success through their engagement with the wide range of Montessori self-correcting equipment.
- The children are developing a sense of identity and connectedness in the group. Some children took time and enjoyed identifying and naming children in photographic displays to the inspector and talking about shared activities they had experienced.
- Many strong friendships are forming and instances of children identifying peers as 'their friends' were observed.
- Many children are competent conversationalists, initiating conversations, sharing information about themselves and their families and asking appropriate questions, with both adults and peers.
- Children are developing very good knowledge and understanding of the natural world and its features, such as animals, plants and seasons through engagement with resources indoors and play in the outdoor garden area.
- The children confidently took part in a full group song and rhyme time which was centred on a CD and most children attended well to full group storybook reading activity.

Actions advised

- In order to further support the children to explore, think and communicate their ideas, it is advised that more opportunities for small group learning activities be provided.
- To further promote language and literacy development it is advised that song and rhyme times are guided by practitioners without the use of a CD and that increased opportunities for small group and one-on-one reading to the children are provided throughout the session.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- A professional ethos is evident in the service. The service is a member of professional groups and links with Cavan County Childcare Committee for advice and support.
- Very good team working and very effective communication between staff was observed on the day of inspection.
- Roles and responsibilities in the playroom are clearly and equitably allocated among the team.
- The staff team reviews and reflects informally each day. Formal team meetings are held approximately every three months. Currently, the focus at these meetings has been on issues and resolving difficulties.
- Very good informal communication with parents was observed. Formal sharing of information currently consists of hand-outs on relevant topics, such as head lice, and the presentation of each child's memory book as they leave the service.
- The practitioners in the service have established some links with local primary schools and share information about children with junior infant teachers when directly requested to do so by parents.
- Practitioners use some effective strategies to explore the transition to primary school with the children, such as a maps with photographs of the local primary schools.

Actions advised

- To further strengthen communication with parents, it is advised that the practitioners share more information about the curriculum, for example by newsletter, and that children's assessments, compiled in a portfolio or learner journal, are shared throughout the year with parents.
- To support effective transitions for children into primary school it is advised that the service compiles a transitions policy and continues to strengthen links with the local primary schools.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The owner/manager and the early-years practitioner attended the post evaluation discussion and the service demonstrate a very good capacity to implement the actions advised above.

Summary of Overall Inspection Findings

Area	Quality Level
Quality of context to support children's learning and development	**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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