An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

Report

Sutton Playgroup
09FL0210

The Sutton Methodist Church Hall
Church Road
Sutton
County Dublin

Date of Inspection: 8th November 2016

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

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Sutton Playgroup is a community-based pre-school located in Sutton Methodist church hall in Dublin city. The setting has been in existence since 1967 and currently offers a play-based curriculum over four days per week to 19 pre-school children. The service has the use of a hall, a playroom and a quiet room. The building is used by many groups; this requires the practitioners to take equipment out of storage at the start of the day and tidy it away at the end of each session. Sixteen children were in attendance on the day of the inspection. A room leader and two practitioners were present on the day of inspection and attended the post-inspection feedback. 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.
- There is a very calm, welcoming atmosphere. The practitioners take the time to chat with parents and exchange information with them about their children at arrival and collection times.
- The hall and the playroom are well-laid out to support children's learning and provide a range of activities.
- As children arrive, they are confident in choosing and organising their own activities.
- Children who are attending for the second year are well aware of the flexible daily routine. Transitions in the setting are signalled by the practitioners giving a verbal reminder that it is tidy-up time.
- Snack time is valued as a social occasion. Practitioners sit and chat with children and ensure that children are given adequate time to complete their lunch.
- Secure, warm relationships are evident between the practitioners and children, with many examples of praise and encouragement offered throughout the session. Some children are a little nervous and the practitioners are attentive to them, offering comfort and support.
- Throughout the session observed, the practitioners modelled positive behaviour and calmly dealt with conflict situations that arose by offering the children the language to negotiate and resolve their differences.
- Though photographs are not on display, due to the multi-functional use of the rooms, each child's uniqueness is recognised through the birthday display, the learning tree and through the symbols used for their lunch boxes.
- Parents attend the setting for the Christmas party and the end of year graduation. The practitioners in the setting also invite parents for the annual trip to Malahide Park.

Actions advised

- The development of a daily routine display at child height is advised to develop children's independence in following the routine and also to support their sense of identity and belonging.
- It is advised that the practitioners use a range of techniques, such as a timer and a bell to support children's transitions within the daily routines.

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.
- Currently, the practitioners prepare for the implementation of the curriculum by undertaking themed monthly planning that is broken down into weekly topics. This is displayed on the parent's notice board.
- Practitioners use a range of different approaches to gather information on the children's learning. Different checklists are used and a narrative observation capturing an aspect of children's learning is undertaken monthly.

- High quality interactions were observed between the practitioners and the children on the day of the inspection. For example, their consistent use of open-ended questions to extend children's thinking and recall skills, during story time and during play activities was noted. Practitioners use calm, respectful tones and provide positive recognition to children for their efforts and achievements.
- Play is actively valued and encouraged by the practitioners. Practitioners engage the children in playful activities and lots of playful chat and singing during the session.
- The playroom offers a good range of table top activities and the large hall has been effectively separated into zoned areas to support children's interests such as a sensory table, playdough table, painting, and imaginary play within a small home corner area.
- Children's emergent literacy and numeracy skills are developed within the playful activities such as counting the pieces of playdough and during songs and rhymes.
- Songs, books, and story time are used highly effectively to develop the week's theme of road safety. At the end of the day the practitioners set up a game in the hall where children practise being the lollipop lady. Some children use the bikes and cars and some practice walking across the pretend road.
- Children are provided with paper, crayons and colouring-in sheets.

Actions advised

- Practitioners are advised to develop a learning programme that incorporates the themes of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* within its long-term, medium-term and short-term planning and ensures the children's emerging interests are central to the planning.
- It is advised that practitioners gather information that records children's learning and development and shows the next steps in their learning.
- Increasing the opportunities for children to have easy access to resources and a wider range of mark-making materials is advised.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is very good.
- Children are very happy and engaged in their self-chosen activities. They show positive learning dispositions and are comfortable sharing and discussing their wishes and ideas with the practitioners.
- Children are selected each day to help the practitioners hand out the lunches.
- Children play cooperatively together and are developing good social skills. Some children new to the setting are struggling to share and follow the social rules. The practitioners calmly support them to discuss with their friends what they want and how they are feeling and help them to share with each other.
- The children were observed chatting spontaneously to the practitioners. During the playdough activity, they ask questions about snakes and crocodiles.
- Despite children not being able to access the outdoor area they are given many commendable opportunities to develop their physical skills. For example, the singing and moving to the 'Wriggle Song' while waiting for lunch and the opportunities factored in to the time table to use the hall.
- The children's sense of identity and belonging is promoted through the birthday display, the learning tree, symbols for their lunch boxes, and the use of their names on labels for group time on the table. The use of the floor book is on display for the children and parents to look at.
- Children are asked if they want their comments added to their art work and if they want to bring it home.
- Children are observed engaging in spontaneous singing and asking practitioners to join in. Some children enjoy singing on their own and during song time in the large group the children select the songs they want.
- The practitioners read stories to children as they wish. Before going home the children enjoy the move to a quiet room. The children relax on couches with the practitioners while one of the practitioners reads a story. The children take part in discussing the story and are able and confident to answer questions such as 'Tell me what happened in the story? Can you remember what animals were on the bus?'

Actions advised

- It is advised that children be offered the opportunity to develop their independence and self-help skills by putting on their own t-shirts for painting, opening their lunches and pouring their own drinks at lunck time.
- To optimise the children's helping skills and independence within the group, practitioners are advised to develop a formal child helper display.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- The practitioners come together for formal staff meetings to discuss planning for specific themes.
- The practitioners have worked together for a number of years and this is clearly evident in the strong ethos of partnership and professional collaboration among the team.
- Practitioners support each other seamlessly and there are opportunities for each staff member to take on a leadership role.
- The service receives support and mentoring from Early Childhood Ireland and Fingal County Childcare Committee.
- The practitioners are committed to continuing their professional development and have recently completed training on child protection procedures and first aid.
- An open morning is held for parents and children before they start and an information booklet is given to them. Information on children's learning and achievements is shared informally with parents at the start and end of each session. The floor book is on display for parents to view at the entrance. A folder of children's art work is sent home at the end of the year. Information technology is used to share information on monthly and weekly plans with parents.
- The practitioners currently prepares children for their move to primary school by chatting to them.

Actions advised

- *The Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* is advised to support the team's self-reflection and review of policies and procedures.
- It is advised that practitioners consider additional approaches for sharing information with parents on the setting's curriculum and their children's learning and development.
- The staff is advised to develop policies and procedures to support children's move to primary school by developing links with the local primary schools.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the practitioners of Sutton Playgroup to implement the actions advised above is good as demonstrated during the engagement in the feedback process.

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	**Very 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.

We are happy with the content of the report, however it mentions that the children had no access to an outdoor area, this was true on the day of the Inspection but since then the garden has been fenced and made safe for the children to play in and is also undergoing landscape to create more planting and play areas.

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

Area1 We have taken on board the actions advised and introduced a chart at child height for the daily routine and helpers. We have also introduced two new songs to help with transitions within the daily routine.

Area 2 We are continually developing a learning programme which incorporates Aistear.
Each child has their own scrapbook which is being filled with photographs, artwork and things which are personal to them. The children have daily access to a blackboard, easel and painting as well as paper and crayons for mark making.

Area 3 We now encourage the children to put on their own painting T-shirts and to open their own lunch boxes. We haven't arranged for them to pour their own drinks yet. As mentioned above we now have a chart at child height displaying the helpers.

Area4 To increase information sharing with parents the children are allowed to bring their scrapbooks home and discuss what they did with their parents. The parents are encouraged to make comments about their work.