**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

# Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

# Report

## Tiny Toes Crèche
## 09DY0335

## The Basement
## 42 Manor Street
## Dublin 7

## Date of Inspection: 12 December 2016

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

## CONTEXT OF SETTING

Tiny Toes Crèche is a community service, based in the basement of the Gateway Project, an education and training programme. The service was set up fifteen years ago and provides full day care service to children from two years to school-going age. The service provides two sessional pre-school services in the morning. The practitioners and management understand the needs of the families attending from the local community and these are met sensitively within the service. On the day of the inspection, there were four of the eight children normally in attendance in the room observed. The lead practitioner of this room and a relief worker were present. The lead practitioner and the manager of the centre 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 very good.
- Parents and children are greeted very warmly as they arrive in the morning. The lead practitioner in this pre-school room takes the time to chat with them and it is clear that the parents and practitioners know each other well.
- As the children arrive into the room, they sit at the table with the lead practitioner and play with the construction blocks. Throughout the session, the children make decisions about what they would like to play with and these decisions are supported by the practitioners.
- The children are given choices about what they would like for breakfast. The practitioners sit and chat with the children about what they did at the weekend. The lead practitioner knows the children well and this is reflected in the conversations she has with them about their time outside the pre-school.
- The daily routine is displayed but is not visible to the children. The routine is flexible and children are encouraged to move from one activity to another without waiting for the practitioner to signal a change. Practitioners remind children that it is time to tidy up the room as a means of managing the transitions that occur during the session.
- The practitioners show positive and respectful regard to the children. On the day of the inspection, the lead practitioner was observed to be vigilant in paying attention to a child who was shy, by encouraging her to ask her friend for the pink plate.
- Throughout the session, the practitioners regularly offer meaningful praise and encouragement to the children by giving high-fives and using positive phrases such as well done, good job.
- The uniqueness of each child is reflected by the photographs on the children's coat hooks at the entrance to the setting and in the birthday display in the room.
- The parents visit the setting for the annual Christmas party and are invited on outings. Visits are organised to support continuity between home and the pre-school which include the children's parents who share their work experiences.
- The children enjoy many valuable opportunities to develop their understanding of and sense of belonging to the local community. They go on visits to the local playground and to see the animals in the pet shop. They go to the local chemist to buy sun cream in the summer. The local nurse comes to visit and when they go on their annual outing they go with the local Garda bus.
- The room leader uses books and discussion to help the children understand the diversity of family life.

*Actions advised*

- It is advised that the practitioners extend the use of the daily routine by placing it at child height and by adding photographs of the children engaged in daily activities.
- To further support the children's understanding of the local community, it is advised that the practitioners use visual displays and resources in the setting to demonstrate the diversity of the families in the community in the setting.

## 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.
- A tree depicting the themes of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* is at the entrance to the room. It contains photographs of the children engaged in different activities. The practitioners use monthly broad, theme-based planning. These plans then inform the weekly topics. The planning omits the children's emergent interests but on occasion a child's interest is incorporated into the daily routine. This happened when a child had discussed with the practitioner a gingerbread house she had seen in the bakery. The children were observed using a cardboard box, painting it to make a gingerbread house for their room.
- A range of approaches is used to regularly gather and record information on the children's learning such as checklists and templates. At the time of inspection, these approaches did not include the next steps in the children's learning.
- The practitioners use a variety of positive interactions consistently, such as open-ended questions and prompts, to extend the children's thinking and problem-solving skills. An example of this was when the practitioners and children were using the blocks and the children were discussing the houses they were building.
- The practitioners listen carefully to the children and effectively encourage them to listen to each other and to wait till their friend has finished talking. The practitioners play alongside and with the children. Many playful interactions were observed such as when they were discussing mermaids.
- The room indoors is small with a range of well labelled resources. Some of these are not accessible to the children.
- The children access the commendably, well-designed and well-prepared outdoor area on a daily basis. It offers opportunities for climbing, running, an outdoor home corner area and different surfaces.
- Mark-making materials are freely available to the children.
- The practitioners support the children's understanding of shapes and numbers within their play experiences such as counting the animals and discussing whether the house was big enough for the cows. During the arts and crafts observed, the children discussed what shape the Christmas chimney was and the number and sizes of the Christmas balls they were decorating.

*Actions advised*

- The practitioners are advised to use the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* to support them in planning for a learning programme that includes the children's emergent interests.
- It is advised that the practitioners use observations on a regular basis. Recording aspects of children's learning and achievements and including the next steps to support their development will enrich the practitioners' knowledge of the child.
- Practitioners are advised to enhance the room by adding additional resources to the existing play materials and making these more accessible to the children. The use of the 'Indoor Environmental' audit resource from the *Aistear* toolkit will support the practitioners in this regard.

## 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 enjoyment and pleasure in their activities. One child spontaneously announced: 'I love my crèche'. This resulted in a discussion by the children about how much they love the crèche, with one child stating, 'It's not yours only, it's yours and mine'.
- Children were observed making decisions about what they want to do with the items they have for making their Christmas decorations and discussing how they would glue and stick.
- Children demonstrate confidence in discussing and extending their play by adapting the construction of the houses to make farms and zoos so they could include animals and dinosaurs.
- The children's art work was not on display on the day of the inspection as the room had recently been painted but the art work was observed to have the children's comments recorded on their drawings.

- The children are confident and comfortable in talking about their families and home life. The children talked about feeding the pigs and then the conversation turned to feeding babies. Some children discussed new babies due and others discussed how their younger siblings feed.
- Some children are eager to chat and interrupt other children. The practitioner calmly and positively helped them to think about their friends and talked about how they were feeling.
- Children are learning to play cooperatively together and to ask for what they want.
- The children are developing a positive sense of self and are eager and confident to converse and engage with visitors. Their positive sense of identity and belonging is supported by their individual baskets with their names and photographs which they use to keep their 'treasures' and drawings.
- The children display their independence when choosing and selecting their play materials. At snack and lunchtime the practitioners serve the children and pour the drinks. Additional opportunities to support the children's independence and self-help skills within the daily activities would greatly increase the children's self-reliance and autonomy.
- The children regularly take part in singing with the karaoke machine and some children enjoy singing on their own.
- The children are aware of the natural environment and use the outdoor area for planting.
- The children display the ability to respond to 'I wonder why? Questions such as, when the practitioner asked the child will the glue stick here?
- Children bring books from home and share these with their friends at story time.

*Action advised*

- It is advised that the setting develop a child-helper routine to promote the independence and self-help skills of the children by encouraging them to be helpers in the setting, serving each other, pouring the milk and buttering their own toast.

**AREA 4**

**QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- The practitioners come together as a staff each quarter for formal team meetings.
- The service has recently engaged an external agency to support them in revising their policies and procedures.
- There is a strong ethos of team work and partnership among the practitioners in the service.
- The manager places a strong focus on continuing professional development. Staff has recently completed Paediatric First Aid, and the Dina training through the Incredible Years programme to strengthen the children's social and emotional development and academic competencies. The practitioners have also taken part in Meitheal training as part of the ABC initiative in Grangegorman.
- The manager and room leader offer support and mentoring to staff who are undertaking training in childcare.
- The service avails of ongoing support and training from the ABC Initiative in Grangegorman. The manager receives support and mentoring from Dublin City Childcare Committee. The manager and the practitioners are involved in an area network of providers.
- The manager provides informal support and supervision to the practitioners and offers regular formal appraisals.
- There is a strong awareness of the needs of the local community and this is recognised by the manager's encouragement of parents to take part in training and to become involved in the Gateway project that is based in the same building.
- The service shares information on the setting's policies and procedures through a parent information booklet given to parents at the start of the year.
- The practitioners encourage parents to be involved in the settling-in of their child and the parents are encouraged to stay until their child has settled. The setting has developed very good links with the local primary schools through a transition project developed by the ABC Initiative. The practitioners bring the children to the schools to be introduced to their teachers and at the end of the school year there is an outing with the practitioners, children and the teachers of the primary school.

*Actions advised*

- It is advised that the practitioners use the examples and templates in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* to support their professional self-reflection and review of their recently developed policies and procedures.
- It is advised that the practitioners develop additional regular opportunities to share children's achievements with their parents.

## CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The manager and the lead practitioner in the room inspected in Tiny Toes Crèche engaged positively and enthusiastically in the post-observation feedback meeting. Their capacity 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 | **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 | **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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