An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

Report

Venessa's Little Legends
16LH0192

Blackridge
Markethouse Lane
Ardee
County Louth

Date of Inspection: 13th October 2017

CONTEXT OF SETTING

Venessa's Little Legends is a private early-years service located in one room in a private dwelling in the town of Ardee, County Louth. The service was established in 2016 and provides a morning sessional pre-school programme for children enrolled on the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of inspection, the owner/practitioner and six children were present. 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.
- There is an extremely friendly, relaxed and 'home-from-home' atmosphere in this service.
- The practitioner has established very positive and supportive relationships with the children's parents and each family is welcomed in a responsive and warm manner at arrival. A fully effective open door policy is in place. On the day of inspection, parents felt very comfortable to come into the service; they sat with their children in the cosy/book area chatting and reading until the children were ready to say goodbye and join the group.
- Relationships between the practitioner and the children are highly sensitive, responsive and reciprocal. The practitioner knows each child and their family very well and has an awareness and knowledge of each child's life outside the service.
- The children hear many positive and accurate statements and acknowledgements about themselves, their ideas and their achievements from the practitioner, throughout the session.
- There is a consistent daily routine in place with time allocated to indoor and outdoor play each day. The practitioner ensures that the routine is sufficiently flexible to meet the children's changing rhythms and needs.
- Transitions during the session are signalled and verbally announced and the practitioner uses these transitions times to engage children in activity and learning in a highly effective manner. The children are given time to complete an activity before joining the next activity.
- The children's developing sense of identity and belonging is nurtured commendably in the service. There are low level mirrors in the room and each child has their own labelled shelf to store their belongings. There are many photographic displays of the children and their families in the playroom. Each child has made their own book about themselves. There are wonderfully detailed books recording the activities and events in the service and illustrated with many photographs. They are easily accessible for the children and their families to explore.
- Parents and family members come into the service to celebrate events with the children and to share talents and information.
- The practitioner has made arrangements for local community helpers, such as the local Garda, to visit the service over the coming months. The children will also visit a local care home to perform as a choir for the residents.

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 very good.
- The practitioner implements a play-based curriculum which is very strongly aligned to *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. It is documented and is very broad-based in the range and scope of learning and development covered.
- The practitioner plans for medium- and short-term curriculum implementation. Medium-term planning consists of loose themes, events and celebrations which may trigger interests for the children. Short-term planning consists of plans for specific books, songs, play and learning activities. The plans are informed by, and adapted in response to, the children's current interests

and engagement with the themes introduced by the practitioner. Planning documentation does not yet clearly indicate children's interests, engagements and responses to themes and activities. The current planning system plans for the whole group of children and does not include any plans for individual children's learning and development.

- The practitioner completes a very wide range of observations and assessment of the children's progression in learning and development. A daily diary of each child's activity, engagement and achievements is maintained and this is shared with parents each Friday. Narrative observations, illustrated with a photograph and linked to *Aistear,* are completed each month and are sent home for parents to review with samples of the children's creative art work from that month.
- The indoor learning environment is bright, attractive and very well-maintained. It provides for many types of play in separate interest areas, such as book and cosy, art and mark-making, socio-dramatic and dress-up, small world, small construction, manipulatives and puzzles. The outdoor learning environment is easily accessible from the playroom. It is a large space with long grass, spaces for digging and planting vegetables, sand and water play, a musical fence constructed with old pots and spoons and a small barked area. This wide variety of play and learning opportunities will be further enhanced with the addition of new equipment which will include a climbing frame, a tepee and a mud kitchen.
- The practitioner has a very strong belief in the importance of outdoor play and learning and the provision of heavy-duty wet clothes and welly boots ensures that the children play outside each day. On the day of inspection, the children played outdoors in heavy rain showers.
- The practitioner utilises interactions which very skilfully support the children's learning and development. She engages as a play partner and follows the children's play and investigation leads. The children's thinking is supported and deepened through the practitioner's use of open-ended questioning and prompting to wonder and think at a deeper level about their activities, ideas and things they encounter.
- The children's language and early literacy development is effectively supported through well-paced conversations with a good balance between speaking and listening. On the day of inspection, it was noted that no children engaged in book play or used the materials in the art and mark-making area.
- The children's early numeracy development is very effectively supported and promoted by the practitioner in natural everyday situations, such as counting the number of children to determine 'how many' are present and using mathematical and positional vocabulary while engaged in construction play.

Actions advised

- It is advised that the practitioner further develops short-term planning by recording the children's current interests and how they are being incorporated into and shaping the plans for the emerging curriculum. Additionally, some planning for the developmental needs and next steps in learning for individual children should be undertaken.
- It is advised that the practitioner prompts and nurtures the children's playful and imaginative use of books, art and mark making materials during the session.

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 very well-settled in the service and display positive and secure connections to the practitioner. They demonstrate a sense of belonging in the service and are eager and very willing to care for the environment and to complete jobs and tasks. On the day of inspection, the children were dependent on the practitioner to allocate these jobs and tasks to them.
- The children arrive eager to begin play and were engaged and motivated throughout the session observed. They are active agents in their learning and development and are continuously engaged in making choices and decisions.
- It was observed that the children are developing very positive social skills. They are forming strong friendships and show care and concern for each other.
- The children are developing the skills needed to play in different social situations and groupings; alone, in pairs and in small groups. Many children invite others into their play.

- The children enjoy and work positively in whole-group activities such as circle time. They are competent and confident to share their news, ideas and thoughts in the group. The children do not yet converse and share directly with each other at this time.
- Many children are engaging in imaginative and creative play. Two children played together for an extended period of time constructing a bat cave and car. They jointly created a detailed and imaginative story about their play scene.
- While using small manipulatives and play dough with tools, the children demonstrate good motor coordination and dexterity. The daily use of the outdoor play space is ensuring that the children are developing good fine and gross motor skills. The addition of new outdoor play equipment and materials will further enhance this development and learning.
- The children's social and emotional development is very consciously supported by the practitioner and the children are demonstrating capacities to name and express their emotions. Some children, with the gentle support of the practitioner, are also beginning to empathise with others and acknowledge the impact of their words and actions on other people.
- The children engage with each other in a very caring and respectful manner. Adult-guided activities, such as meditation and yoga practice each Friday are supporting the children to gain self-awareness and positive regulation of their feelings and behaviours.

Actions advised

- It is advised that a jobs board be introduced for the children so that they can 'read' their jobs and complete them independently.
- To support the children to develop higher level conversational skills such as questioning, acknowledging and adding to another's contribution, it is advised that the practitioner begins to encourage and facilitate the children to speak directly to each other at circle time.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of the management and leadership for learning is very good.
- The owner/practitioner articulates a very passionate commitment to providing positive quality learning experiences for the children attending the service.
- The practitioner engages in a highly professional manner. She has just completed degree level studies and maintains her continuous professional development by attending training such as The Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years (LINC) programme. She is linked to local early-years agencies from which she accesses support and advice.
- The session observed was very well-organised and ran very smoothly.
- Parents are provided with very comprehensive information about the service and the curriculum programme through many different media; a handbook for parents, newsletters and social media applications. The practitioner has not yet consulted the parents on their wishes for their children's learning and development.
- Information about individual children's progression in learning and development is very effectively shared with parents through a weekly diary, monthly observations and work samples. A memory book is compiled through the year and shared with children and parents at the year-end.
- The children's voices and opinions about things that are meaningful to them, such as when to have lunch or what activity to do next, are actively sought by the practitioner. The practitioner introduces the children to the concepts and vocabulary of 'voting, majority and minority and group decision making' throughout the year.
- As this service was established last year, the practitioner has not yet established professional links with the local primary schools that the children transition into.

Actions advised

- The practitioner is advised to proactively seek the parents' views and feedback on the service and consult with them on their hopes and wishes for their children's learning and development.
- The practitioner is advised to begin to make plans to build links with the local primary schools in order to support smooth transitions for the children at the end of the pre-school year.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The owner/practitioner engaged in the co-professional feedback discussion following the inspection. 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	**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.

Published March 2018