

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Early-Years Education-focused Inspection**

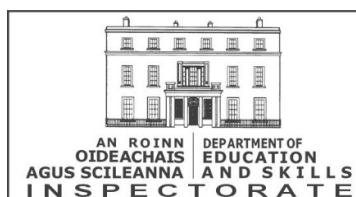
**REPORT**

**Poppets Childcare**

**09DR0047**

**Hills Centre  
Johnstown Road  
Dun Laoghaire  
County Dublin**

**Date of inspection: 01 June 2016**



## **CONTEXT OF SETTING**

Poppets Childcare is a privately owned and managed setting. Established twenty-two years ago, the setting is located in a recently refurbished building in a small business park. A total of 22 children attend the setting, 16 of whom participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. On the day of the inspection, twenty children, one lead practitioner and two other practitioners were present. 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 will be found in the appendix to 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 excellent.
- The children arrive enthusiastically into the setting and are greeted warmly by the practitioners. From the beginning of the session the children have many opportunities to be active decision-makers, electing whether to play indoors or outdoors, selecting food from the daily snack menu, choosing and organising their activities, and planning collaboratively as they engage in imaginative play.
- The children are enabled to manage their own hygiene and personal care needs effectively. They wash their hands unprompted in advance of eating. Snack times are very successful in terms of social interaction and health-promotion. The food menu for breakfast, snack and lunch emphasises healthy eating. The children eat together in a relaxed and convivial way.
- Music and song are very well used to support children's transition into the setting in the morning and between activities over the course of the session. For example, children who choose to participate in the indoor activities at the start of the session are welcomed with a song that incorporates each child's name and a personalised greeting as they clap and sing the song together.
- Cultural diversity is celebrated through a bright family wall display and visits by parents from different countries to talk about their country of origin.
- The practitioners interact kindly and respectfully with the children; their knowledge of the preferences and interests of the children is interwoven through their discussions with them, both individually and in small groups. Child-child interactions are also very positive and it is apparent that many strong friendships exist in the group.
- The setting has made very good connections with the local community. For example, arising from one child's particular interest in cars, the local lollipop lady was invited into the setting; the children made a road and zebra crossing together and learned about road safety. This, and other such connections with the local community, are recorded in photographs in the class learning journal which the children enjoy reviewing regularly.

### **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.
- A broad-based curriculum, informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* as well as elements of the Montessori method of education, is clearly documented and very effectively used to support the children's learning and development. The curriculum also has a bilingual element; simple Irish language phrases are used by the practitioners with the children and Irish language songs and rhymes are also enjoyed by all daily.
- Planning for flexibility, for children's choice, and for active learning is a strong feature of the practitioners' preparation. It is clear from the class learning journal and its photographs, records and descriptions of learning, that the curriculum as implemented is also responsive to the children's emerging interests. The children's strengths, interests and progression in learning are well documented. Child-friendly records of the children's learning are also available in the children's individual learning journals.
- The available outdoor space is organised in a way that provides a varied and stimulating learning environment for the children. It includes slides, playhouses, sand, water, a kitchen area, a bath with

bubbles and boats, various cycles, tubs for planting, books, and a reading bench. There is also very good outdoor provision for free mark-making on a variety of hard surfaces.

- While the children have considerable freedom to choose and make decisions about their outdoor play activities, in some of the outdoor sessions they are required to leave those activities before they are ready in order to participate in more formal 'physical education' activities under the direction of a practitioner.
- Processes to support the development of the children's oral language and comprehension skills are highly effective. The practitioners engage in excellent modelling of language, including mathematical language. They gently and very effectively prompt the children towards expanding their language and vocabulary during interactions. They make excellent use of story-telling and singing to heighten the children's awareness of sound patterns and rhymes and to extend their creative thinking and vocabulary. A particular strength of practice in the setting is the practitioners' promotion of books as opportunities for fun communication and interaction. The children have ready access to a very good range of high-quality books and they were observed exploring books individually and collaboratively several times over the course of the inspection day.

#### *Actions advised*

- Building on the very good outdoor provision for free mark-making, practitioners are advised to offer the children more opportunities when indoors to engage in free mark-making and free painting (as distinct from template activities). This can be achieved, for example, through the provision of large sheets of paper upon which children can engage in mark-making individually or with their peers, and by ensuring that paints, brushes, and other mark-making tools and easels are readily available to the children. Practitioners can then develop further the practice of documenting the children's interpretations of their mark-making and creative drawings.
- Practitioners are advised to ensure that transitions from child-led outdoor activities to practitioner-led outdoor activities be managed in a way that gives the children the time they need to finish their self-selected activities.

### **AREA 3**

#### **QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is excellent.
- The children in this setting clearly enjoy their activities; they present as motivated, creative and inquisitive. They also show self-reliance and confidence as well as a capacity to be resourceful in co-operation with one another. This was illustrated, for example, when a small group of children worked together to make a house out of shells for a spider in the outdoor play area and in how they negotiated and laughed together in deciding on a name for the spider.
- The children generally speak confidently and articulately; they can discuss their learning when prompted and they show interest in the activities and achievements of their peers.
- The children's musical, linguistic, social and creative capacities are developing very well through the lively, energetic musical experiences provided for them in this setting. The quality of collaborative and co-operative music making in the setting is impressive and a love of music is clearly being fostered among the children.
- The children demonstrate a very good ability to organise themselves and others, to take turns, and to share. This was particularly evident during the outdoor play activities when children allocated tasks to one another, decided who goes first and next in ball-throwing games, and shared tools for 'making chocolate cakes'.
- The children clearly enjoy listening to stories and interacting with books. They also demonstrate a very good capacity to sequence events in stories and to guess creatively what might happen next. While waiting for their chosen food to be prepared and distributed in advance of snack times many children, without prompting, pick up books to peruse.
- The children are very aware of their natural environment and its features; they plant flowers, take care of them, and watch them grow. They link their knowledge about their own need for food and water with the things plants need to grow. They also demonstrate a keen sense of the importance of looking after the natural environment.

- The information documented by the practitioners about the children's learning indicates very good progression in that learning across a holistic curriculum that takes account of the children's evolving interests.

#### **AREA 4**

##### **QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is excellent.
- The setting is very well organised. The children are familiar with the routines and procedures. Very good use is made of a key worker system to support the children's social and emotional security. Due account is taken of the views and opinions of the children in decision-making processes affecting them.
- The indoor environment is very well laid out and children have ready access to a very good range of materials and resources to support their play and learning.
- The roles and responsibilities of each practitioner are clear and they work together easily and very effectively.
- The lead practitioner provides excellent leadership for learning in the setting. She holds regular formal staff meetings with the other practitioners to reflect on and review their work. Minutes of the meetings, including the agreed developmental actions, are maintained. The lead practitioner actively oversees the implementation of the agreed actions in the day-to-day practice in the setting. She further provides for ongoing professional development of the practitioners through on-the-ground modelling of highly effective practice.
- Communications with parents are excellent; information about curriculum, policies, and the children's progression in learning is shared very effectively with families. Learning logs containing information about the children's learning are sent home to parents regularly.
- The practitioners instil a sense of confidence in the children through their expectations of them and their affirmation of the children's efforts and achievements. This, and the practitioners' emphasis on the holistic development of the child where he/she is an active agent in his/her learning through play, contributes significantly to the children's readiness for school.

##### **CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE**

The capacity of the practitioners to implement the actions advised in this report is excellent.

### **Summary of Overall Inspection Findings**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Quality Level</b>
Quality of context to support children's learning and development	<b>Excellent</b>
Quality of processes to support children's learning and development	<b>Very Good</b>
Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements	<b>Excellent</b>
Quality of management and leadership for learning	<b>Excellent</b>

### **Language used in Early-Years Education-focused Inspection reports**

<b>Excellent</b>	Provision that is excellent is exemplary in meeting the needs of children.
<b>Very good</b>	Provision that is very good is highly effective in meeting the needs of children.
<b>Good</b>	Provision that is good is effective in meeting the needs of children but with some aspects to be developed.
<b>Fair</b>	Provision that is fair requires practice to be improved to meet the needs of children.
<b>Poor</b>	Provision that is poor is inadequate and requires significant improvement to meet the needs of children.

## **APPENDIX**

### **SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

#### **Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The content of the report is an accurate account of the day-to-day running of Poppets.

#### **Part B: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to address the actions advised in the inspection report**

These are the actions we have taken since the day of our inspection in June:

- Following on from our love of books in Poppets, we have set up a very successful 'Poppets Library'. We have a trolley full of children's books which we wheel out daily (weather permitting) to outside the front door. Children choose a book and then return it when finished. We have had very positive feedback from the children and their parents.
- We are providing extra mark-making opportunities for the children as recommended in the report. We have large sheets of cardboard and paper for the children to paint on. We make notes of what children say while they paint. Their comments are wonderful.
- We also have 'free writing' time while the children are waiting for their snack.
- Chalk boards, white boards, paper, glitter trays are also easily accessible for the children to choose and use.
- We are ensuring that the children have lots of time to transition from their play time to any adult-led activity when such activity occurs.