An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Early-Years Education Inspection

Report

Crèche Cois Laoi
09CY0072

Brookfield Science Complex
College Road
Cork City
County Cork

Date of Inspection: 23 October 2017
Context of Setting

Creche Cois Laoi is an urban setting, situated on the Campus of Cork University, offering a Montessori room and a Naionra for children on the early childhood care and education scheme (ECCE). Two practitioners and a student were present in the Montessori room on the day of the inspection together with thirteen children. In the Naionra room equally two practitioners and a student were present with eight children. The manager, the two room leaders and a member of the student and facilities Services of UCC attended the post-inspection feedback meeting. The early years setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised of the report, and the response of the setting will 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 good.
- Arrival time is relaxed and unhurried. Practitioners greet the children warmly and exchange information informally with families. Caring and warm relationships between the practitioners and the children are established.
- The daily routine is flexible and the plan of the day is decided as the day progresses. Some of the children are able to follow this ad-hoc daily routine but others seem unsure and appear unable to choose and organise their learning activities without the active support of the practitioners.
- Snack time is utilised as a social occasion and an opportunity to promote well-being and a healthy lifestyle. Some practitioners create a lovely, calm, relaxed meal time atmosphere. They sit with the children and promote social conversation. The practitioners cut up the food and put it on the individual plates, open tubs and packets, and one child serves the prepared plates to all the children. Drinks are also poured by the practitioners.
- The absence of a structured key person system limits the capacity of practitioners to ensure continuity of care, particularly in light of linking planning to the emergent interests of children in the pre-school room.
- Practitioners provide some guidance and encouragement towards positive behaviour.
- Children are appropriately supported to manage their own hygiene needs, to put on their coats and tidy up their toys.
- Practitioners have authentic connections to the children and their families. They verbally acknowledge and show appreciation of the importance of supporting children’s emerging sense of identity and belonging through conversations about their home lives while engaging with the children in play. Photographs introducing births of new family members and their names are displayed.

Actions advised

- To support all children’s physical, social and emotional security, it is advised that the practitioners develop a clear, well-balanced daily routine. Long child-initiated/led playtimes need to be interwoven with short practitioner-initiated/led times, such as morning circle time and story time. Art and craft activities can be offered as choices parallel to free play. The newly developed daily routine needs to be displayed in writing for the parents and with photographs for the children.
- The practitioners are advised to develop and use a key worker system.
- The reorganisation of the snack time routine to give the children more agency and autonomy and to promote important life skills is advised. Children need to be enabled to prepare their own snack, set the table, pour their drink and wash their plates and cups afterwards.
- Practitioners are advised to explore and use problem-solving and conflict resolution strategies which enable children to solve their own issues and thus further develop their personal and social skills.
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 thematic curriculum approach is followed and linked to *Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. Practitioners pick up on the children’s emergent interests and further them in daily practice, as was evident when a child started exploring a world map. The practitioner brought out the continent folder and started a small group exploration of different areas.
- A variety of assessment approaches is used to gather information about children’s learning and development. It is not evident how the outcomes of assessment are used for curriculum planning.
- Currently there is a lack of rationale, purpose, and meaning to the daily routine, the chosen activities, and the materials, toys and resources. The books for story time are chosen randomly; dolls have no clothes, bed or home; junk-art is provided with no guidance or prompts as to what to do with the materials.
- The indoor environments are well maintained and safe, with some good quality resources and materials which could stimulate, support and extend children’s learning and development. Some areas need to be developed and structured to become more inviting, stimulating and cosy.
- The expansive, well-designed outdoor area affords the children a wide range of play opportunities. On the day of the inspection, the natural grass area with the mud kitchen and sand play area were not used. The design of the building and the outdoor area offers the option of keeping the doors open. This would allow the children to choose between playing inside or outside.
- It is evident that the practitioners emphasise table-top work and put more value on it than on child-initiated/led, exploratory, enquiry-based free play in pairs or in small groups.
- Some commendable, natural use of Irish words, phrases, songs, rhymes and whole-body movement games was evident. Songs, rhymes, jingles, poems and games are acted out with whole-body movements; this offers a kinaesthetic experience, aids understanding and deepens learning.
- Children’s emergent language, literacy and numeracy skills are fostered well in a variety of ways.

**Actions advised**

- Engagement with the ‘Planning and assessment’ pillar of the online *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* is advised. Strengths-based, meaningful observations about children’s interests, learning dispositions, values, needs, strengths, knowledge and abilities need to be documented and used to plan the individual and group curriculum.
- Practitioners are advised to reflect on the rationale behind the activities they promote and the materials, toys and resources they offer to the children. For example if dolls resemble babies, then they have to have a bed, some clothes that fit, a place to live and need to be cared for and treated with respect.
- The ‘Environment’ and ‘Play’ pillars of the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* need to be utilised to enhance the play value of the indoor environment. Practitioners in each room could consider using the environmental audit in the Guide to evaluate each other’s room.
- Management is advised to organise full raingear for the children and the practitioners so that the natural environment, its features, plants and materials can benefit the children’s learning and development every day of the year.
- Child-initiated/led exploratory, enquiry-based, interactive free play needs to become the main medium through which the children in this setting learn and develop.

AREA 3
QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is good.
- The children are interested in and demonstrate enjoyment during some of the activities.
- The children display some positive learning dispositions such as self-confidence and natural curiosity.
Some lovely short interactive play episodes show that children are able to play co-operatively in pairs and small groups and that they enjoy such play. For example, two girls worked together at the sand table, one holding the sieve and the other pouring the sand. They clearly enjoyed their collaboration; this needs to be supported and expanded.

The children show increasing confidence and co-ordination over their gross and fine motor skills, particularly during their outdoor play. They effectively use their developing physical skills to manipulate objects and materials. This would be further enhanced if the whole outdoor area were available for play.

The children have opportunities to explore books and to listen to stories. However, the books and stories are randomly chosen and not linked to the curriculum.

The children use language and non-verbal communication strategies to give and receive information, interpret experiences, make requests and clarify their thinking.

There is some evidence that children have opportunities for mark making, free drawing and painting and making art.

**Actions advised**

- Children’s learning dispositions such as resourcefulness, initiative, competence, self-reliance, autonomy need to be fostered more.
- More scope needs to be provided for the children to be active agents in choosing and organising co-operative, interactive play in pairs and in small groups. This type of free play will further advance children’s personal and social skills such as problem-solving, taking responsibilities, negotiating, turn-taking and building relationships.
- Books on display and stories for group story time need to be linked to the current emergent themes. The medium-term curriculum and the children’s emergent interests will inform this choice. High quality stories which need to be interactively explored during story time should be utilised for a period of time and extended through role play, puppet shows, games and story-sacks in order to deepen learning.
- Practitioners are advised to focus on inspiring and supporting children’s creativity, individuality, uniqueness and self-expression when offering art and craft activities as well as in all activities throughout the day.

**AREA 4**

**QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- The current daily curriculum displayed for adults provides no free-play time during the morning session. On the day of the inspection, some free play times were incorporated both indoors and outside, while the main focus remained on practitioner-initiated/led, often table-top, work.
- Management and staff regularly reflect on and review practice. Management plans to facilitate more collaboration and professional teamwork between practitioners in both rooms; this is needed to improve children’s learning experiences and achievements.
- Some opportunities are provided for each practitioner to take a leadership role in promoting learning throughout the morning. Management needs to actively support practitioners to clarify and redefine their roles and responsibilities.
- Good two-way communication channels between the setting and the families exist.
- Transitions into and from the setting are managed effectively and sensitively to ensure continuity of experiences for the children.

**Actions advised**

- Even if most of the children stay for full day care, the three hours of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme need to incorporate all aspects of a comprehensive early-years curriculum. This should include extensive periods of child-initiated/led free-play time, both indoors and outside. It should also include short, practitioner-initiated/led activities based on the emergent curriculum in order to further extend children’s learning and development.
• More collaboration and sharing of experience, knowledge and expertise between the practitioners within and between the rooms is advised. Management is advised to explore and implement strategies to support professionalism, teamwork, collaboration and partnership.

• Outcomes of meetings need to be documented, shared and acted upon so they can subsequently be reviewed and evaluated.

• The roles and responsibilities of some practitioners need to be clarified and redefined. A clear vision and direction for the work of the setting needs to be established. To this end, management and practitioners are advised to engage with the 'Curriculum foundation' pillar of the Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the service to implement the actions advised above is good.
### Summary of Overall Inspection Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Quality Level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of context to support children’s learning and development</td>
<td>Good</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of processes to support children’s learning and development</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of children’s learning experiences and achievements</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of management and leadership for learning</td>
<td>Good</td>
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</tbody>
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### Language used in Early-Years Education Inspection reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Provision that is excellent is exemplary in meeting the needs of children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>Provision that is very good is highly effective in meeting the needs of children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Provision that is good is effective in meeting the needs of children but with some aspects to be developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Provision that is fair requires practice to be improved to meet the needs of children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Provision that is poor is inadequate and requires significant improvement to meet the needs of children.</td>
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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 have two EECE rooms, junior preschool and senior preschool. We have moved our Naíonra into a bigger room and now call it senior preschool. We have three practitioners with sixteen children. Our curriculum allows the children to learn through the medium of Irish a range of learning through play while experimenting with sand, water, playdough, the use of colours, numbers, sound and various art and crafts. In the junior preschool, we have three practitioners with sixteen children. The teacher introduces to each child the skills and qualities necessary to live life in an independent, safe and happy way. It also develops the child to their full potential.

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

Area 1

The routine is displayed on the door for the parents and photographs for the children. We have a Key worker system in place; this will be displayed on the door of the room. Practitioners encourage positive behaviour and allow the children to resolve their issues and this will help develop their personal and social skills.

Area 2

Staff engaged in the planning and assessment guide of Aistear Siolta Practice Guide. Key workers document up to date observations and learning journals. The Aistear self-evaluation tool is used to enhance and utilise both the indoor and outdoor environment. It also ensures materials and resources are being used to the children’s full potential. Children are asked at the start of each year to provide rain pants, raincoat, wellies and a hat to allow for the full use of the outdoor environment in all weather. Staff are provided with warm uniforms and encouraged to wear own coats and hat if needed. A child centred approach to learning is the main medium through which children learn and develop. This is reflected in weekly, medium and long term planning.

Area 3

For the group story time, we link the books to emergent themes. Books are displayed in the book corner.

Area 4

Daily routine has been altered to incorporate all aspects of early learning curriculum, including both free play and practitioner led play during ECCE period. Communication between and within the two EECE rooms is encouraged and supported. Staff work together to ensure experience, knowledge and expertise is shared. Staff meetings give extra opportunities, and are recorded. Ideas are then reviewed and evaluated if needed. Staff use these meetings to share ideas and experiences with other staff members. Each room has the role of each staff member stated at the entry. Each staff member is assigned key children. The staff have the responsibility of ensuring these children have up to date observations and learning journals.