An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

Report

Angel Guardian Community Preschool
Ltd.
09CY0101

Silverpoint
Ashmount
Mayfield
Cork City

Date of Inspection: 14th September 2017
CONTEXT OF SETTING

Angel Guardian Community Pre-school is an urban service located in a housing estate. There are two morning sessions and one afternoon session. Six practitioners and one trainee provide care and education for those children on a daily basis. Both morning groups were visited during the inspection. For half of the morning, both groups were together in the outdoor area. On the day of the inspection, thirty children were present, eleven of whom were relatively to the service. The manager and five staff members 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.
- A strikingly calm, peaceful, very happy, welcoming atmosphere is prevalent. Practitioners show sensitivity, warmth and a very positive regard for the children and their families. This was highly evident in the informal, caring conversations between the staff and the parents and grandparents.
- Children’s uniqueness, individuality and autonomy are very much recognised, respected and supported.
- The very attentive practitioners show great awareness in relation to ‘pointing and surrounding’. They have a commendable ability to give children space and time to explore by themselves, while at the same time being present and supportive when needed. This provides diversity in the style, pace and focus of children’s learning and development.
- The daily routine as displayed offers a very good balance between adult-initiated/led and child-initiated/led activities and highlights the importance of physical activity. Outdoor play time needs to be added to the daily plan. On the day of the inspection, after indoor free-play time the rest of the morning was spent outside because the weather was so good.
- Practitioners are role models worthy of imitation. They foster good habits, good behaviour and life skills very effectively throughout the day. One practitioner was handed a doll by a child to mind it for a while. The positive role modeling was striking, in the way the practitioner cradled the baby doll in her arm, bottle feeding her and eventually tucking her into bed nicely, while being involved in several different play situations during this process.
- Snack time is organised very well as a social occasion, with children sitting and eating together. Practitioners have a ‘floating’ role during this time; they help children with tasks, such as opening bottles and yoghurts, comment positively on healthy food choices, and have short conversations in the process.
- Practitioners are very conscious of keeping transitions to a minimum. They announce transitions ahead of time to give the children a chance to finish their activities and prepare for the change. As a result of this, transition times are seamless. Children get naturally involved in cleaning, sorting, pairing, matching of materials and organising the environment, following the commendable modelling of this by the adults.
- A broad range of opportunities is provided to bring together children, families and practitioners over the course of the year.
- Children’s identity and belonging are nurtured through the interactions and through the ongoing development of displays such as a family wall, a birthday chart, art and craft work displays. A helper chart is already in use.

Actions advised

- Practitioners are advised to follow the daily routine and to offer adult-initiated/led activities parallel to indoor and/or outdoor free play. Those adult-led optional activities could include arts and craft activities and morning circle with songs, rhymes, finger-games, whole-body movement games and news time. This provides a choice for children to participate or to carry on with their own playful explorations.
- Practitioners are advised to sit, eat and chat with the children during snack time, creating a relaxed, family-type meal time, conducive to small group conversation and the promotion of a healthy lifestyle.
Practitioners are advised, in the future, to ask parents for photographs at enrolment stage or on the first days of pre-school, so that children’s pictures can be above their coat hook, the family wall and/or the birthday chart, and can already ‘greet’ the children at arrival, thereby aiding their sense of belonging.

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 very broad-based, long-term, medium-term and short-term curriculum is developed and implemented. Practitioners in the service are involved in the development of an emergent curriculum and demonstrate some knowledge and understanding about putting these plans into practice.
• A variety of assessment approaches is used to gather information about children’s learning and development. Information documented about children’s learning reflects their achievements and with due regard for their individual interests, needs and preferred learning styles.
• Practitioners’ documented observations of the children are shared with families at the end of the month.
• High quality interactions with children are facilitated. Practitioners engage and motivate children in their learning and development in a very positive way, using a range of appropriate interaction strategies, such as active listening, asking open-ended questions, and prompting. In such ways they co-construct knowledge with the children.
• The highly aesthetically pleasing indoor and outdoor environments support children’s learning and development at a very high standard. The environments are well designed, clearly structured and afford a wide range of opportunities for the children to learn and develop in a variety of contexts throughout the day. Management and practitioners are continuously working together to raise the play value, particularly of the outdoor area even more, for example through the creation of a big sand play area.
• Play is clearly recognised and utilised as the central medium through which the children learn and develop.
• Children’s emergent language, literacy and numeracy skills are fostered in a variety of ways. High quality books are available for individual and small-group exploration throughout the day. A lovely puppet show captivated children’s attention at the end of the outdoor playtime. There is lovely evidence of a variety of mark-making opportunities for the children; these include chalk boards outside on the fence, blank paper and crayons, and a well-resourced junk art area.
• A very inclusive approach is adopted to ensure the engagement of all learners in the setting, with specific attention paid to the learning and development of children with additional needs.

Actions advised
• Practitioners are advised to further develop their understanding and knowledge about implementing an emergent, enquiry-based curriculum.
• Streamlining assessment and utilising it to inform individual learning plans, as well as the group curriculum is advised. The link between assessment outcomes and curriculum planning needs to be made visible in the short-term plans. Practitioners are advised to display the plans in the foyer for parents to see.
• Practitioners are advised to create a group learning journal, and to extend the individual learning journals with regular learning stories, which can be easily shared on a weekly basis with children and families.
• Practitioners are advised to become even more conscious of the use of songs, rhymes, finger-games, whole body movement games and sensory games throughout the day, as well as mathematical language related to everyday life-situations, such as ‘taller than’, ‘smaller than’, ‘higher’, ‘lower’, ‘above’, ‘behind’, ‘in-front of’.

AREA 3
QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS
• The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is excellent.
• The children clearly demonstrate engagement and enjoyment in their learning and development together with a very positive sense of well-being. They are developing their learning dispositions, such as initiative, resilience, self-reliance, self-competence and resourcefulness during the rich play opportunities provided.
• Children’s developing capacity to remember, reflect, and make connections to prior knowledge was clearly demonstrated during lunch time discussions as well during the puppet show.
• The very interested, engaged and motivated children are already playing in pairs and small groups and show a good understanding of the rules and boundaries of acceptable behaviour.
• Children’s personal and social skills such as self-regulation, conflict resolution, turn-taking, cooperating, negotiating and building relationships are developing fast through the children’s engagement in the broad variety of exploratory, interactive play options.
• Verbal and non-verbal conversation skills are utilised well by the children to give and receive information, interpret experiences, imagine and create roles, and generally clarify their thinking, feeling and ideas.

AREA 4
QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

• The quality of management and leadership for learning is excellent.
• Management and staff regularly reflect on and review their practice, policies and procedures in order to continuously improve children’s learning experiences. The outcomes of these meetings are documented so that they can be shared, acted-upon and reviewed. The use of a daily diary might aid this process even more.
• Exemplary practice with regard to self-review by each practitioner is in place. Management has developed a highly effective self-review sheet, reflecting on areas such as ‘positioning’, ‘describing’, ‘questioning’, ‘listening’, ‘modelling’, ‘reinforcing’, ‘scaffolding’, ‘democratising’, ‘problem solving together’ and ‘task analysis’. Each practitioner reflects on one particularly noteworthy situation each day on their sheet, thus gaining a comprehensive picture over time of their individual strengths.
• The centre participates in regular professional network meetings in the local area.
• Management and practitioners within the setting provide for a high quality learning and development experience for the children. A clear vision and direction for the work of the service are very evident. Practitioners’ engagement in continuous professional development and the distribution and implementation of the new knowledge amongst all staff in the setting is obvious.
• Effective two-way communication channels between the service and the families exist. Information is shared in a spirit of partnership, transparency and mutual respect.
• Transitions into and from the service are handled effectively, with sensitive and efficient settling-in procedures in place. Practitioners are encouraged to continue their efforts to establish close links with all of the local primary schools in order to make transitions into primary school easier for the children and their families.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the service to implement the actions advised above is excellent. This was evident in the active engagement of all practitioners in the post-inspection feedback meeting and in the ongoing striving of all practitioners and management to upgrade their practice.
Summary of Overall Inspection Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Quality Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of context to support children’s learning and development</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of processes to support children’s learning and development</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of children’s learning experiences and achievements</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of management and leadership for learning</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Language used in Early-Years Education-focused Inspection reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>