An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

REPORT

Tots of Fun
09DS0157
Cothurst Crescent, Lucan
Co Dublin

Date of inspection: 15 April 2016
CONTEXT OF SETTING

Tots of Fun operates a play-based, sessional pre-school service and is situated in a housing estate in Lucan, Co. Dublin. It is in operation for nineteen years. The service caters for twenty-two children who participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. On the day of inspection there were twenty children present. The owner/manager and assistant practitioner were present on the day of inspection. The lead practitioner was not 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 of this report.

AREA 1

QUALITY OF CONTEXT TO SUPPORT CHILDREN’S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- The quality of the context to support children's learning and development is very good.
- A warm, welcoming and nurturing atmosphere was in evidence.
- Children were observed as full active agents in choosing their own activities and in following their own interests.
- Communicative relationships with parents were evident, with parent and practitioner conversations observed at collection and drop-off and parents being afforded the opportunity at collection time to come in to the setting to see their children’s work.
- There were no specific transitioning strategies used during the day to enable the children to understand what happens next in terms of routines.

Actions advised

- Practitioners are advised to give consideration to the development of transitioning strategies such as a countdown, singing a rhyme, the use of an egg timer between activities to support children to move from one activity to another easily.
- To build on good practice, practitioners are encouraged to provide additional opportunities for children to develop an appreciation of themselves as individuals through the use of photographs, displays of their work and a birthday wall chart. These pictorial representations could be extended further to include recognition of family diversity.

AREA 2

QUALITY OF PROCESSES TO SUPPORT CHILDREN’S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- The quality of the processes to support children’s learning and development is good.
- The service is beginning to engage with Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework having just introduced the concept of learning stories with children.
- Some planning on a short term, medium term and long term basis is evident.
- Children are viewed as competent and confident learners and there is a high level of child-initiated learning and development activities.
- Peer interaction in pairs is encouraged and supported among children, with staff nurturing relationships and different child pairings based on common interests and on peer support.
- The environment and resources are varied and tailored to support children’s learning and development across a wide range of interests. These include a very well-resourced kitchen, a cosy couch area and a wide variety of natural and sensorial materials.
- The setting has a variety of literacy and numeracy/mathematical resources which are located at child level and are accessible at all times.
Actions advised

- Practitioners are advised to build on their good work with Aistear and to reflect this in their planning for curriculum implementation on a long term, medium term and short term basis.
- Continuing engagement with the themes and learning goals of Aistear, making clear connections between resources and the curriculum plan will provide further focus to supporting learning and development.
- It is advised that children be further supported using the wide range of mathematical and literacy resources available, through guidance, feedback, prompts and intentional use of language to enhance their learning.

AREA 3
QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of children’s learning experiences and achievements is good.
- Children were very happy to express their views and emotions and demonstrated enjoyment in their learning.
- Children were observed playing co-operatively in pairs and in small groups.
- Children have full autonomy to make decisions about their experiences.
- Children confidently discuss their interests, family backgrounds and offered their opinions.
- Children are inquisitive and confident in exploring their learning experiences.
- Children were observed collaborating with each other to share interests and ideas.

Actions advised

- Children will benefit from additional opportunities to plan for, talk about and reflect on their play experiences.
- Further development of children’s learning stories is advised to include a broad range of assessment information which will enable children to continuously reflect on their achievements and show connections to specific learning.
- It is advised that practitioners explore how to provide opportunities for children to expand their understanding of the meaning and use of mathematical language.

AREA 4
QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- Parents are made aware of the policies and procedures in operation in the setting.
- The voice of the child is very much sought and respected in all actions concerning them.
- Practitioners avail of mentoring and external advisory supports having recently engaged with the Elevate Programme, a quality mentoring programme supported by the local County Childcare Committee providing mentoring on environments as well as Aistear and Siolta. Continuing professional development opportunities are also planned.

Actions advised

- The adult role in the room is of paramount importance and practitioners need to be accessible to children at all times. In the event of release situations, all practitioners should be familiar with the various roles as some uncertainty was noted on the day of inspection about roles and routine procedures.
- Management and staff are advised to review their planning processes for curriculum implementation.
- Staff and management are advised to develop policies and procedures to promote the sensitive management of transitions within and between settings.
CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

There is a very good capacity and interest from both the manager and staff member present to implement the actions advised in this report.
### 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>Very Good</td>
</tr>
<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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality</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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Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The feedback provided in this report was useful and appreciated at Tots of Fun as we are committed to quality improvement and will use this report to develop strategies and planning in order to address the actions advised.

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

Two members of staff are starting the level 8 degree in Maynooth Early Childhood Teaching and Learning in September which will increase our skills in providing more opportunities for learning and development in the service.

We have developed a plan that will enable children to document their learning journey, diversity and individuality with the use of a camera that will be accessible to them. We will encourage the children to take their own photos of things that are important to them, food, family, pets, etc and we will display the photos giving due respect to each child ensuring that all children in the service are represented.

We are in the process of reviewing our procedures for short, medium and long-term planning to ensure that our curriculum plans adhere to the principles of Aistear and Síolta. We are currently reviewing our curriculum, materials, how we present them and the language and prompts that we use in order to ensure that all activities are meaningful and purposeful, are linked to Aistear and Síolta and support early learning and development.

On the day of inspection our lead practitioner was absent as acknowledged in the report. We work very well as a team and will take action to ensure seamless provision.