An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

Report

N.C.R. Childcare
09DY0074

466 North Circular Road
Dublin 3

Date of Inspection: 23 September 2016
CONTEXT OF SETTING

Nurture, Care & Recreation (N.C.R) Childcare is a privately owned and managed full day-care service that is located on a busy thoroughfare on North Circular Road in Dublin city for ten years. The setting provides a play-based curriculum with elements of the Montessori Method to twenty-two pre-school children aged between 2½ and 4 years. The inspection took place at the start of the new school year. On the day of inspection there were twenty-two children present supported by the room leader and two recently employed assistant practitioners. The owner/manager spent some time in the room to celebrate a child’s birthday. 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 good.
- There is a warm, caring atmosphere and children and parents are welcomed into the setting. On the day of inspection, one child is struggling to settle back after an absence from the pre-school.
- Children are comfortable and confident in managing their own personal and hygiene needs.
- Some of the children are able to follow the daily routine but others seem unsure and appear unable to choose and organise their learning activities without the active support of the practitioners. The creation of a visual daily routine would support the children to organise their learning.
- A variety of techniques is used to signal changes in the routine such as the use of a bell, songs and turning the light off.
- The practitioners encourage the children to be kind to each other and promote caring and respectful child-to-child relationships.
- The uniqueness of each child is celebrated through the birthday display and parents are invited into the setting to celebrate their child’s birthday.
- There is a very high number of children with English as an additional language attending the setting and some of these children struggle to have themselves understood by the practitioners and to express themselves clearly. The practitioners reported that they use puppets, visual cards and books to support the diverse needs of children and families. The practitioners speak different languages and can interpret the wishes of some children and parents if needed.

Actions advised
- The introduction of a key person approach is advised in order to enhance the relationships between the practitioners and the children.
- It is advised that the practitioners prioritise methods of engaging and communicating with the high number of children from diverse backgrounds and languages attending the setting in order to avoid children feeling frustrated and discouraged.
- Practitioners are advised to develop consistent procedures for meeting the needs of children requiring security and comfort. For example, children who are upset during settling-in require additional supports such as one-to-one attention from a practitioner until they feel confident to join in group activities.

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.
- Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework informs the monthly theme-based approach the setting uses in planning for the group activities. The planning is not yet informed by the children’s emerging interests and requires flexibility to meet the children’s learning needs.
- A range of assessment approaches, underpinned by the themes of Aistear, is used to gather information on children’s learning and development and an observation folder is kept on each child. This is shared through informal discussions with parents.
• Play is valued by the practitioners. In the indoor environment, a range of resources within the clearly defined areas is provided to engage children in learning and to support the development of their creativity.
• The small outdoor area is used every day. It has a tree house and offers opportunities for children to develop physical skills through their use of bicycles and engagement in ball play.
• The practitioners communicate with the children respectfully and calmly, encouraging and motivating them. On the day of the inspection, practitioners were observed directing children in their tasks and at times were observed interacting kindly with the children but then leaving to deal with a situation.
• Children are divided into weekly groups for the purpose of the large-group activities that are led by the lead practitioner. This approach did not work for all children and resulted in some children struggling to stay involved in the activities.
• Practitioners use yoga movements to help children understand the movements of animals such as the recent theme on hedgehogs.
• Practitioners are vigilant in their attention to children with additional needs. On the day of the inspection, one practitioner focused on supporting a child with additional needs by encouraging him to take part in the group activities and offering materials he enjoys.
• The children have daily access to a good range of art and mark-making materials.

*Actions advised*
• It is advised that the children’s individual learning needs and their emergent interests be included in the planning for an inquiry-based curriculum.
• Practitioners are advised to gather information that records children’s progress and plans for their future development.
• The use of consistent approaches by practitioners to interactions with the children, such as the use of open-ended questions and prompts to support and motivate children’s thinking and language skills is advised.
• Reducing the number of large-group activities and the creation of more focused small groups is advised to support children’s concentration and sense of well-being.

**AREA 3**

**QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

• The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is good.
• On the day of the inspection, some children appeared happy and content in their play. Practitioners offered comfort to children who were observed displaying frustration and distress.
• Children who are more confident display success within self-chosen activities.
• Some children are struggling to follow social rules and play cooperatively. A number of children find it difficult to play cooperatively and to follow directions. Practitioners are observed leaving children they are working with to negotiate with children to play more respectfully.
• Children particularly enjoy the yoga that is practised as part of the circle time routine.
• Some children experience difficulties in expressing their needs within the play activities and this results in a lack of awareness regarding respect for the play of others.
• Children’s sense of identity and belonging is fostered through photographs with their names on the coat hooks. There are limited opportunities for children to show their independent skills.
• Some children are beginning to recognise and name feelings, for example when a child is crying another child asks why he is sad.
• There are displays of children’s mark-making and colouring in. The focus on templates and colouring in limits children’s self-expressions through freely chosen art activities.

*Actions advised*
• Practitioners are advised to adopt approaches to recording information that reflects the uniqueness of each child’s ability and achievements.
• The development of a child-helper routine will help the children develop their independence and promote feelings of identity and belonging.
• Supporting children’s social skills and enabling all children, but especially children with English as an additional language and children with additional needs, to play cooperatively requires additional
behaviour management strategies to be implemented. For example, the use of visual cards that are made accessible to children, the taking of time to give children the words to share their feelings will support children’s communication and social skills.

• Increasing opportunities for children to express themselves through free-art activities and the reduction of the use of stencils and template is advised.

AREA 4
QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

• The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
• There is a good ethos of professional collaboration and teamwork among the new staff team.
• The room leader provides good role modelling and direction for the assistant practitioners.
• Practitioners discuss their practice informally at the end of each session and weekly planning meetings take place to discuss upcoming themes that will underpin the programme of activities for the children.
• The staff is committed to their ongoing professional development and the room leader has recently begun a training course that will lead to a level eight qualification in Early Childhood Education and Care.
• Practitioners in the setting commenced training in the Síolta, Quality Assurance Programme a number of years ago but due to staff changes have yet to complete it.
• The owner/manager accesses support and mentoring from the Dublin City Childcare Committee.
• An information booklet is shared with parents at the start of the year and discussions of children’s learning and the sharing of observations take place informally. At the end of the year parents are given their child’s scrapbook.
• Practitioners prepare children for their move to primary school through discussion of the relevant themes and parents are given an information leaflet on transitions. The owner/manager has developed good informal links with the local primary school through the setting’s afterschool programme.

Actions advised

• The use of the Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide is advised to support the staff’s self-reflection and review of policies and procedures.
• It is advised that the staff build on and complete the work undertaken as part of the Síolta, Quality Assurance Programme.
• Practitioners are advised to consider additional approaches to developing communication with parents by sharing observations more regularly of children’s learning and progression.
• It is advised that the owner/manager develop a more formalised, systematic approach to engaging with the local primary schools to ensure a smooth transitional experience for children from the pre-school to the primary school.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The owner/manager and the staff team contributed positively in the professional dialogue around the key findings of this report. Their capacity to implement the actions advised is good.
## Summary of Overall Inspection Findings

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<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>
</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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