Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

REPORT

Chuckleberries Montessori and Crèche
09FL0029

Westmanstown Sports Complex
Westmanstown, Clonsilla
Dublin 15

Date of inspection: 25 April 2016
CONTEXT OF SETTING

Chuckleberries Montessori and Crèche is one of a group of four privately owned pre-schools in the Chuckleberries chain which are located in the greater Dublin area. Provision in the setting incorporates principles of Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework and is also informed by the Montessori Method. A total of 9 children were present during the inspection visit, 6 of whom were availing of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. Two practitioners were present. The setting was given the opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised in this report; the setting chose to accept the report without a response.

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 and caring atmosphere in which children are treated with kindness and respect is evident.
- The practitioners consistently model positive behaviour and positive social skills.
- The practitioners know the children and their families very well and they make very effective and respectful use of news time to support the children’s transition into the setting at the start of the day. Gentle, effective strategies are used to ensure that all children have an opportunity to share their stories and ideas with one another. Connections between the children’s home lives and their experiences in the pre-school are further cultivated through the inclusion of family photographs in the children’s copybooks.
- The promotion of the uniqueness of each child is an underlying theme of many of the activities; in particular, the practitioners make very effective use of picture books to promote individuality, to encourage independent thinking and to foster respect for all.
- The setting has made good connections with the local community through visits from a local Garda, a visit to the nearby sports complex and a display of pictures of people who help in the community.
- Snack time is organised in a way that enables the children to interact with the younger children and other staff members, thereby fostering positive social engagement and well-being.

Action advised

- It is advised that practitioners monitor the length of time that children spend sitting at any one stretch with a view to reducing this time and promoting children’s ongoing active and physical engagement in the activities.

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 very good.
- Within the context of the Montessori Method, planning and approaches are informed by Aistear with photographic displays illustrating the links between the curriculum and Aistear themes.
- Planning supports the provision of rich, interconnected learning experiences. One illustration of this was the approach to the growing of sweet pea and poppy seeds, outdoor planting, discussion about ‘Grandad’s garden’, and a practitioner sharing her experience of a trip to a garden centre.
- The indoor environment is very well prepared with the zoned layout facilitating individual, paired and small-group work and with ready access to a very good range of Montessori materials and resources. The children also have regular access to an outdoor tennis court, a garden area and a sports hall.
- The practitioners recognise that play is central to children’s learning and development. During free play, the setting resources are used very effectively to stimulate and extend the children’s learning and development. For example, schemas such as enveloping were supported through ‘present’ wrapping activities, with the practitioner skilfully extending the language learning opportunities this activity offered.
- Literacy and numeracy skills are fostered very effectively through interactions and through use of Montessori mathematical materials. During the inspection, children looked at and discussed books animatedly in the reading area.
• Opportunities are provided for the children to experience success, mastery and fulfilment in their chosen activities.
• Strategies to include all children in the day’s activities are evident in the setting. Most notable in this regard is the practitioners’ very effective use of a ‘talking frog’ to support children speaking in a group situation and to promote turn-taking.

**Actions advised**
• The extension of the range of children’s mark-making activities is advised in order to include more opportunities for free drawing and painting (as distinct from template art), and commentary by the practitioners that records what the children say about their work.
• The inclusion of children’s free paintings and drawings in art displays and in art folders is advised.
• It is advised that children with a particular interest in literacy and numeracy be provided with a broader choice of stimulating play activities that promote letter and number awareness.

**AREA 3**

**QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS**
• The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is very good.
• The children demonstrate confidence, enjoyment and motivation in their learning. They make decisions around the activities they engage in and they have developed the ability to play cooperatively with one another. They can explain what they are doing and what they are attempting to do.
• The children were observed using a variety of very effective communication, mathematical, and oral language skills during the inspection. They competently discussed topics of interest to them including books, the 1916 Commemoration and the story of milk.
• A very good level of fine and gross motor skills was noted among the children.
• The children are able to describe their interests, feelings, families and personal experiences. They interact with one another respectfully and meaningfully as they listen, discuss, question, and take turns in conversations.
• Several children show an awareness and understanding of a very good range of symbols, pictures, print, numbers and early mathematical language. The children also demonstrated that they understood that books are fun, provide information, and are for sharing.

**AREA 4**

**QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**
• The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
• Management and staff regularly review their practice at individual room level, setting level and across the group of four pre-schools. The shared outcomes of such reviews have led to positive developments in practice in the setting.
• There is clarity amongst room leaders and at management level about roles and responsibilities.
• A disposition of professionalism and teamwork is evident amongst the practitioners. The practitioners work together with ease and their continuing professional development is effectively supported.
• Information is shared effectively with families in a variety of ways; for example, through an information booklet, the setting’s website, daily informal conversations, formal meetings, and end-of-year gatherings.
• Management and practitioners are cognisant of the need to manage transitions from the setting into primary school in a way that supports children’s learning and development. Constructive steps have been taken by management with the assistance of parents to communicate to primary schools, where relevant, important information regarding children’s special educational needs.

**Action advised**
• The development of a strategy to support transitions to primary schools in line with *Aistear* and in consultation with parents and children is advised.
CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the practitioners in this setting to take the actions advised above is very good, as evidenced by management’s sharing of best practice across each of the four settings in the pre-school group, and the high level of critical engagement by the manager and practitioners during the inspection feedback meeting.
## 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>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of children’s learning experiences and achievements</td>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of management and leadership for learning</td>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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## 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>
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<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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