An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

REPORT

Ballyspillane Childcare Service
09KY0106

Family Resource Centre
Ballyspillane, Killarney
Co Kerry

Date of inspection: 04 May 2016
CONTEXT OF SETTING

Ballyspillane Childcare Service is a community-based service, located in Co. Kerry which provides a sessional service for children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. The setting has a room leader and an assistant. A second assistant provides support occasionally to a child who presents with specific needs. On the day of the inspection, the leader and the two assistants were present. It is reported that approximately twenty-two children typically attend. On the day of the inspection, sixteen children were 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 good.
- Children and parents receive a warm welcome and the practitioners interact positively with the children throughout the session. The children’s efforts are acknowledged and praised.
- Children are afforded independence in managing their own hygiene and personal care needs and they assist with some routines. A healthy eating policy is implemented.
- Although the day-to-day procedures are clear, transition periods could be better managed to promote and support more consistent and positive learning experiences for the children.
- The displays and materials available to the children and the range of rhymes and songs recited by the children are limited and do not adequately reflect their identity and cultural backgrounds.

Actions advised
- To ensure that transitions are managed more effectively, rules need to be reinforced in a positive manner and incidents of minor misbehaviour need to be managed more consistently.
- The uniqueness of the children and their families could be celebrated to a greater extent. Visual materials, displays, rhymes, stories, signage, costumes and play materials should incorporate a focus on the various types of family backgrounds and countries of origin which are represented in the setting.

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 fair.
- The programme of learning activities provided for children is based on themes from Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework and on the children’s emerging interests.
- Some checklists are used to monitor the children’s progress.
- Assessment practices need to be developed to ensure that the practitioners’ observations are used to inform planning to a greater degree.
- The indoor and outdoor environments are well maintained and adequately resourced and overall, they are used effectively to support the children’s learning and development.
- Social interactions between the children and the practitioners are good and play is promoted.
- The purpose of the activities undertaken is not always clear and some of the activities are not sufficiently linked to the children’s interests and needs.
- Children’s emergent language, literacy and numeracy skills are fostered to a limited extent through interactions and play.
**Actions advised**

- Practitioners are advised to align planning and assessment more closely together. To this end, their observations of children’s learning could be used to provide insights into their emerging interests and needs.
- Practitioners need to ensure that they have a shared vision for the purpose of learning activities so that the activities are more focused, purposeful and challenging.
- Additional rhymes, songs, discussions and open-ended games which promote mathematical thinking need to be used to enhance children’s learning and development.

**AREA 3**

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

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is fair.
- While the children demonstrate some engagement and enjoyment in their learning, opportunities for considerable improvement exist.
- Many of the children are developing social skills and the ability to follow instructions. They demonstrate good capacity to work in small groups and in pairs. Some of the children are experiencing difficulties in this regard. This is impacting negatively on some of their interactions with their peers and on the overall sense of unity within the group.
- It is evident that the children are keen to explore their environment and to interact with each other. While some good quality exploration and interaction were noted, the quality of the activities made available to the children is only fair. In the case of a significant number of children, this results in fragmented and limited engagements with the materials and activities.

**Actions advised**

- The practitioners in the setting are advised to focus on developing all of the children’s social skills and their ability to follow instructions, so that the full group of children can engage more effectively with their peers and benefit more from mutual learning experiences.
- Children’s learning experiences will benefit from being more sustained and productive through the provision of an improved range of materials and activities. In particular, additional open-ended materials need to be provided and the quality of the story-time activities needs to be enhanced.
- The setting needs to take steps to involve the children in planning their activities and in reflecting on their learning.

**AREA 4**

**QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- The setting has established good links with families and parents. Parent-teacher meetings and family days are held annually and relevant information is displayed in the setting.
- The setting communicates with the local primary schools and transitions to primary schools are supported.
- The practitioners meet formally on a monthly basis to reflect on aspects of practice. This reflection could be more focused on the improvement of children’s learning experiences and on the development of the setting.
- The setting is well organised. There is scope for more delegated leadership among the practitioners.

**Actions advised**

- Staff and management are advised to use the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* as a guide for review and development in their setting.
• The work of management needs to foster a clear vision for the educational activities undertaken and for the future direction of the work of the setting.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The manager and the practitioners engaged well in professional dialogue around the key findings of the inspection and they demonstrated good capacity to implement the actions advised above.
## Summary of Overall Inspection Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Quality Level</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of context to support children's learning and development</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of processes to support children's learning and development</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements</td>
<td>Fair</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>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

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

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

Area 1
We have updated our dress-up to include a variety of cultural dress in relation to the different nationalities of the children in our setting. We also have created a diversity wall displaying flags and welcome signs in various languages. We have created a visual timetable for the children in the setting to make transitions run more smoothly.

Area 2
We are using Aistear Learning Stories Observation templates as our observation on the children and base our planning on these observations to focus our activities on the children’s individual capabilities.

Area 3
We have begun a planned focus group with the children at the beginning of the week to discuss and plan with children what they would like to achieve for that particular week in relation to our planning, i.e., art activities, construction etc. We have acquired additional resources to promote mathematical thinking and exploration in our setting, i.e., magnifying glass, weighing scale, measuring jugs and tweezers.

Area 4
We are actively using the Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide in our setting to improve the quality and educational activities throughout the entire service.

Published June 2016