Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

REPORT

Jolly Tots
09LH0114

Drogheda Resource Centre
7 North Quay
Drogheda
Co. Louth

Temporary accommodation address: Unit 7
Mayoralty Street
Drogheda
Co Louth

Date of inspection: 27 April 2016
CONTEXT OF SETTING

Jolly Tots is a community-based service in the Drogheda Resource Centre and provides a sessional programme for ten preschool children. Due to a recent flood in the centre the service was located in temporary accommodation on the day of inspection. There was a team leader, three childcare assistants on a Community Employment scheme and eight children present on the day of the inspection. The children come from diverse backgrounds and more than half do not have English as their first language. The practitioners adopt a play-based approach to children’s learning and development. The setting was given the opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised in this report; the service 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 good.
- Practitioners are warm in their interactions with children and show a positive regard for the children.
- Parents are greeted warmly at arrival and departure times and some information is shared informally about the children.
- A basic weekly routine is in place which includes an hour of free play each day.
- There is a healthy eating policy and adults sit with the children at snack and converse with them.
- The team is beginning to explore ways to make stronger connections with families, by inviting them to attend events organised by the service such as the Christmas play.

Actions advised
- To build on the good practices, practitioners are advised to include additional opportunities for children to develop an appreciation of themselves as individuals and as members of the group. Greater use of strategies which recognise, affirm and celebrate the wide diversity of backgrounds among children and families using the service is advised through use of their home languages, photos/displays and curriculum activities.
- Activities to develop connections and links with the local community are advised.

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 learning environment and resources present on the day of inspection do not meet the needs of the children. On the weekly routine an hour of free play is scheduled each day, however the resources and materials provided during this time were extremely limited. Neither the permanent nor temporary facility has an outdoor play space.
- Practitioners play with children, engaging with them at their physical level.
- The learning activities provided for the children are not currently supported by a documented curriculum or planned programme.
- A basic checklist of developmental milestones is completed for each child. The children’s learning experiences and achievements are not currently being documented.
- The team has a focus on promoting the children’s language and literacy. It was noted that the learning activities observed were predominantly adult directed and did not match the children’s developmental levels and stages of English language acquisition.
- There was little recognition of children’s first language in the setting.
- Songs and rhymes are used effectively during some parts of the day to support children’s learning. On the day of inspection children had no access to books or reading materials.
Actions advised

- The provision for play and learning opportunities needs to be addressed without delay. The learning environment should provide for a wide variety of play experiences to support each child’s early learning and development. It is advised that the amount and variety of materials and resources in the learning environment is increased.
- In order to ensure learning and development for all children, the curriculum needs to be specifically planned for on a short-term, medium-term and long-term basis, aligned to the children’s interests and developing capabilities, and firmly based on Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework and documented.
- It is advised that all children’s oral language development is supported and promoted through increased opportunities for children to converse about things that interest them with adults, in pairs and in small groups throughout the day.
- Practitioners are encouraged to record strengths-based observations of the children’s development, learning and achievements and to use these observations to plan for the children’s next steps in learning.

AREA 3
QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is fair.
- Children are engaged in play at free play time and can make some very limited choices.
- Due to the lack of resources and materials children’s opportunities to engage, explore and investigate are very limited.
- Children are developing capacity to play cooperatively in pairs and small groups. There is much scope to develop the children’s sense of individual identity and belonging and awareness of their own uniqueness.
- Group activities are facilitated by the practitioners where children have some opportunities to discuss, question and express their feelings.

Actions advised

- All children would benefit from an increased focus on supporting them to develop independence and self-care skills, initiative and self-confidence through play activities and routines.
- Practitioners are advised to use observations of the children’s current interests and achievements as a source of planning for group activities and to begin activities by asking the children to share their knowledge, thoughts and ideas. This will enable effective extension and scaffolding of the children’s learning.

AREA 4
QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is fair.
- Management structures and systems are in place and there is a willingness to develop a clearer focus and direction for improvement of service quality. Systems for self-evaluation and planning for improvement are not currently used.
- The service has made links with external agencies to aid parents in obtaining assessment and support for their children.
- The service has made links with their County Childcare Committee and has drawn down administrative supports.

Actions advised

- Management and practitioners are strongly advised to access support and mentoring to assist them to develop understanding of early education and pedagogy, the Aistear and Siolta frameworks and establish clarity around curriculum priorities.
- It is advised that management and practitioners begin to engage in systematic review, evaluation and planning for improvement.
It is advised that a parent handbook be developed that includes policies and procedures and a clear curriculum statement.

To increase the opportunities for exchange of information, it is advised that meetings with parents commence in order to share observations of the children's development, learning and achievements.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The management and room leader engaged very openly and professionally in the discussion of the key points outlined above and displayed an enthusiasm for implementing the actions advised. Professional support and mentoring would enable the service to implement the actions advised.
## 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>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>Fair</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Provision that is excellent is exemplary in meeting the needs of children.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<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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