

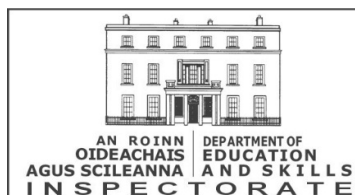
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Early-Years Education-focused Inspection
Report

Rainbowland Childcare
09OY0015

Larkins Lane
Carrick Road
Edenderry
County Offaly

Date of Inspection: 12 December 2016



CONTEXT OF SETTING

Rainbowland Pre-school is situated in the village of Edenderry in Co. Offaly. It has been in operation for twenty-seven years. It provides both a morning and afternoon session for children participating in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. The children in the morning session are grouped into six groups and rotate with their group across three out of four play rooms which are identified as Adventure Island, (an indoor playground), the main playroom and either the Montessori room or the arts and crafts room. On the day of inspection, the children and practitioners assigned to the purple group were followed across three rooms. Ten children were present in the purple group together with one practitioner and one assistant practitioner and a floating assistant manager. The owner/ manager was also present for the feedback meeting. 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 excellent.
- The atmosphere at the setting is characterised by sustained warm, kind and caring interactions between staff and children and staff and parents. Relationships are secure and respectful of children.
- The daily routine has been carefully considered to best support children to engage in valuable learning and development activities. While comprehensive and organised, it is also flexible affording all children an opportunity to move between rooms. Each group of ECCE children have designated time periods in three out of four rooms each day.
- Children are supported to move between rooms. Varied transitioning strategies are used such as a bell and songs including in Irish. Children are very aware of the routines around transitions.
- An effective key person system is in place to support the development of positive relationships between children and practitioners at the setting. This system is used to very good effect to provide individual attention to children.
- Children are very much viewed as active agents who are provided with plenty of choice and opportunities to negotiate activities and materials.
- Snack time is seen as a social occasion and the children engage in conversations with each other and with the practitioners. Children tidy up after snack time.
- Children's sense of identity and belonging is positively supported through strategies such as the celebrating of birthdays and through photographic representations of children as individuals and in groups. A group-learning journal of past events is available to the children to view.
- Regular opportunities are provided which bring together families, children and practitioners. Examples include parent visits to a nativity play and graduation events. An annual event involving grandmothers has been successful in developing links with extended families. In line with the Christmas theme, the 'Elf on the Shelf' is used, connecting practice at home with practices at pre-school for children.
- The setting has made excellent links with the local community. Visits in from community members have included the dentist, the librarian, firemen and women. The children have been involved in various charity events such as pyjama day.

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 excellent.
- Provision in the setting is fully informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the principles and themes of *Aistear* are used comprehensively to inform and guide curriculum

planning and implementation. Montessori practices and principles also inform provision at the setting.

- Planning is organised on a long-term, medium-term and short-term basis. Plans are adaptive and flexible based on the changing needs and interests of the children.
- A variety of strategies is used to gather information about children's learning which include both formal and informal approaches and these are fully aligned to the themes of *Aistear*. Practitioners record anecdotal notes about aspects of children's learning and also complete a variety of checklists to monitor children's progress in language, fine motor and social development. Strengths-based, learning story observations are carried out and a learning and development support plan is in place for each child, which provides scope for evaluation. Parents comment on children's observations. Each child has a 'Mo Aistear Book', which is used as a pedagogical tool to support future learning for children. Group learning journals are in place and displayed creatively for parents to view. The combination of methodologies of assessment builds a rich picture of children's learning.
- The carefully developed indoor environment provides extensive opportunities for the children to engage in various play experiences moving from room to room in a very considered fashion. One playroom includes a large water table with a wide variety of resources such as funnels and tubes and pourers of different sizes that allow children to manipulate the materials and to develop hand eye co-ordination. It also includes a well-stocked book area, a home corner with real materials and a corner shop and puppet theatre. A second room has been developed as an art room with a variety of art materials available for the children to use. A third room referred to as Adventure Island consists of a soft jungle gym climbing area, areas for seating and a rocking horse. A fourth room is equipped with a wide range of Montessori resources. The group of children followed on the day of inspection did not use this room.
- Excellent props are used to support learning. A visual board is used at circle time to assist children connecting with the topics being discussed. A creative season's chart was used very effectively to prompt the children's discussions about weather and seasons. A visual of 'Our Feelings' is on display to support emotion regulation for children and this is used effectively. Benny and Jenny puppets are used to introduce new ideas and concepts to children assisting in the co-constructing of knowledge.
- The outdoor area is equipped with an extensive range of resources which stimulate children's exploration and learning. These include a music wall, a blackboard, a large climbing frame, basketball hoops, a playhouse, ball-runs, picnic table, outdoor kitchen and a planting area.
- Very positive and effective interactions between practitioners and children are evident. They are characterised by meaningful conversations around children's interests that are open-ended and extend learning. Children are continually encouraged and re-affirmed with regular acknowledgement of their efforts and achievements. Practitioners facilitate strong peer interactions between children which contribute to rich collaborative learning experiences for them.
- An effective circle time afforded opportunities for children to clarify their thinking, to come up with ideas and to discuss their feelings about a range of topics. Songs were sung at circle time, learning consolidated on the weeks' number, shape, and colour. A counting exercise supported mathematical language and thinking. Provision was inclusive and met the varying needs of children. It acknowledged the critical learning achievements and took maximum advantage of the incidental learning opportunities which arose to extend thinking and understanding of mathematical ideas and language.
- There is a strong balance between adult-directed and child-directed activities with both practitioners and children taking the lead.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is very good.
- Children present as very comfortable and content at the setting and they are very familiar with the routines of their day. They are motivated and fully involved in all their learning experiences.
- Children show determination and perseverance. An example being two children at the water tray who were not happy with how they were collecting water. They adapted their play to use the right funnel and measure, learning mathematical concepts of measurement in doing so.

- Some children shared their learning stories with the inspector displaying competence and confidence.
- The children have been involved in numerous planting and growing events at the service such as growing parsley, chives and beetroot. In this way, they are developing a growing capacity to learn about how food is grown and the concepts of healthy food.
- The children help and assist each other throughout the morning and engage in different groupings. An example observed was where one child showed another child how to put on their shoes, explaining the steps to doing so to its peer.
- The children demonstrate good gross motor and fine motor skills through the wide range of opportunities available to them.
- Children express themselves creatively through mark making and through song.
- A recent project has been carried out in conjunction with the local library with the children creating a Christmas scene for their library. This is an example of very good community and service collaboration and supports children's sense of community very well.

Action advised

- Building on the very good practices in place in relation to community involvement, it is advised that children be provided with continuous visual representation of their involvement with community and of their families. This will provide a visual stimulus for children to develop a sense of identity and belonging and to support connections. Dating children's artwork is advised to document their progression.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is excellent.
- Management have established comprehensive organisational systems to ensure efficiency in the setting's day-to-day functioning and provide excellent role modelling and leadership to staff.
- The Aistear Síolta Practice Guide informs setting reviews at this service and a comprehensive knowledge of *Aistear* is evident. Parents are invited to give feedback and to contribute to the reviews on practice.
- Staff meetings are held regularly to discuss practice and staff are encouraged to engage in reflective practice to continually improve the learning experiences for the children.
- Training Needs Analyses are carried out periodically with practitioners and in-house training regularly provided for staff. The practitioners evaluate curriculum implementation and its impact on children's learning regularly as a staff team. A pedagogical co-ordinator is in place to lead change and the manager advises this has contributed significantly to the implementation of improvement initiatives. As an example the introduction of learning stories and in-house staff training events have taken place. The continuing development of the emergent curriculum in place is the current initiative being undertaken.
- The service engages in regular and continuous professional development and is a member of different voluntary organisations that promote best practice in early educational provision. They liaise with their county childcare committee to support this professional development further.
- An open door policy are in place where parents are welcome to visit the service at any time. A Parent Handbook is in place. A noticeboard provides information for parents on current activities and events. A group learning journal displayed in the foyer documents group learning of children. Social media and a setting website are also used regularly/ effectively as communication vehicles for sharing information with parents
- Information is sought from parents prior to children commencing at the setting about their likes, dislikes and individual needs. This information is used to assist children transitioning into the service and to inform future plans and the learning programmes.
- The management at the setting has made effective links with their local primary schools to support children transitioning from pre-school to primary school and connections are maintained with children who previously attended the service. A local primary school teacher visits the pre-school supporting these transitions further and the school principal attends graduation events. A policy

to support children transitioning into and out of the setting has been developed in collaboration with the key partners.

- The service welcomes transition years' students to do work experience at the setting supporting links with the local secondary school.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the service to implement the action advised above is excellent. The service shows a great insight into early educational pedagogical issues and interest in ensuring the continuous improvement of practice.

Summary of Overall Inspection Findings

Area	Quality Level
Quality of context to support children's learning and development	Excellent
Quality of processes to support children's learning and development	Excellent
Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements	Very Good
Quality of management and leadership for learning	Excellent

Language used in Early-Years Education-focused Inspection reports

Excellent	Provision that is excellent is exemplary in meeting the needs of children.
Very good	Provision that is very good is highly effective in meeting the needs of children.
Good	Provision that is good is effective in meeting the needs of children but with some aspects to be developed.
Fair	Provision that is fair requires practice to be improved to meet the needs of children.
Poor	Provision that is poor is inadequate and requires significant improvement to meet the needs of children.