Early-Years Education Inspection
Report

Beehive Childcare
10CC0382

Gortnarea
Berrings
County Cork

Date of Inspection: 10 November 2016
CONTEXT OF SETTING

Beehive Childcare is a rural setting located opposite the primary school at the edge of the little village of Berrings. The setting offers a pre-school room, a crèche and full day-care facility, as well as after-school care. Practitioners have a Montessori background, but have adopted a play-based approach with a strong emphasis on outdoor play. The manager and room leader both attended the post-inspection 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 good.
- A cosy, warm atmosphere welcomes the families in the morning into a highly aesthetically pleasing environment.
- The practitioner shows a very caring, sensitive and positive regard for the children and their families. Recognition, praise and encouragement are regular features of her responses to the children.
- The children’s identity and their sense of belonging within the setting are fostered through a large variety of meaningful and very tasteful displays. A family wall is created in such a commendable, beautiful way and the children spend time exploring it together. The displays in the hallways are created in a similarly commendable fashion. Photographs of the activities from the last few months are displayed, together with explanations for parents and carers of the benefits of those activities. Children’s photographs and names are displayed above their coat hooks and cubby holes, this further provides a sense of belonging for the children.
- The children are very much active agents in choosing their activities and following their individual interests, which is commendable. Currently there is a strong sense of disjointedness, restlessness and frustration amongst the children. This calls for the establishment of a clear structure, and the bringing of the children together to form a group identity.
- Transition times need to be utilised better to provide learning opportunities for the children. Announced a few minutes ahead of time, following the practitioner’s example, all of the children need to get involved in valuable learning activities such as sorting, pairing, sweeping, and putting things in order. It is important that the room is neat and tidy so that play materials are not left on the floor to distract children from the following activity. Clarity and tidiness in the environment will also have a calming effect on everybody in the room.
- The classical music, which was playing in the background all through the morning of the inspection, creates considerable noise and may lead to sensory over-stimulation. If used, it needs to be very quiet and only played during certain specific times such as at arrival time or during a meditation. The same is relevant for the scent dispenser. Children’s senses are wide open and are still developing, so they need to be protected from over-stimulation.
- A proper meal time needs to be created, with both children and practitioners preparing the table with plates, cups or glasses, the water jug, the flowers (which are there already). All of the children and the practitioner sitting and eating together will enhance the feeling of being part of a group. The event can be framed by a finger-game, rhyme or song to create the right mood at the beginning and end of the meal. The meal time has the potential to be a pleasant, social occasion, promoting well-being, identity and belonging and a healthy lifestyle. It also provides an opportunity for communicating in a nice, relaxed atmosphere. This will further aid the group identity.
- Opportunities are provided for families and the setting to come together and good connections to the local community are made.

Actions advised

- The practitioners are advised to establish a good structure and routine to the day. The daily routine needs to be evaluated with a focus on bringing more clarity and structure to the day in order to provide security and guidance for the children. Practitioner-initiated/led activities and child-initiated/led activities both have a role to play in the children’s learning and development. Bearing in mind that there are only seven children and one practitioner in the group, the offering of...
interesting, fun-filled, inviting whole-group activities as practitioner-initiated/led activities should be based on children’s interests, needs and dispositions in order to make them attractive and meaningful for all the children. As the practitioner is not able to be in different places at one time, practitioner initiated/led activities, such as circle or story time, need to be offered to the whole group. If a child really does not want to participate, he/she needs to be nearby and offered some quiet activity, which they can do without the practitioner’s help, so the circle-time or story will not be interrupted and disturbed for all of the other children. The curriculum foundation section of the Aistear/Síolta Practice Guide will provide relevant guidance in this regard.

- The practitioner is advised that working together as a whole group, promoting peer interaction in pairs or small groups, and having the snack-time together will bring the children together and promote whole-group identity.

**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.
- A broadly based medium-term and long-term curriculum, which is informed by and linked to Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, is documented effectively to support children’s learning and development. Children’s developmental needs, their strengths and dispositions as well as their emerging interests are captured, documented and used to inform the short-term curriculum. Currently children’s art and craft is shared regularly with the families. The Aistear learning record templates need to be added to that, in order to further share children’s learning and development and support consultation with parents and carers in a spirit of mutual respect and transparency.
- Both the indoor and the outdoor environment are well structured and resourced in a way that provides good support for the children’s learning and development. The children and practitioners are equipped to spend roughly an hour each day outside, regardless of the weather; this aids the overall well-being of the children in an important way.
- Play is very much the central medium through which children in this setting learn and develop. Children are afforded extensive periods of free play, with approximately one hour of outdoor free play and another hour of indoor free play daily. This provides a perfect opportunity for the children’s deep engagement, exploration and learning through play. It further aids the children’s confidence and co-ordination over their gross and fine motor skills, which are vital components of school readiness.
- Emergent language, literacy and numeracy skills are fostered through the regular engagement with the Montessori materials. The children have access to high quality books and, on the day of the inspection, some children spent time together with the practitioner, exploring some of those books. Daily interactive story time, circle-time, news and/or review time, would offer more opportunities for the children to use language, make predictions and judgements, memorise, reflect and discuss their ideas and feelings. This would further aid good communication skills, such as listening, considering, discussing and taking turns in conversations.

**Actions advised**

- Parents as primary care-givers need to be proactively consulted and the children’s learning records need to be shared with them regularly so that the practitioner and the families work in partnership to improve learning experiences and outcomes for the children.
- In order to create more scope for interactive role-play, socio-dramatic play, as well as pretend play and construction play, the establishment of a home corner, a shop, a dress-up area, a building corner and similar needs to be considered. This will afford opportunities for interactive play in pairs and small groups, which will benefit the social aspect of the group. The play value of both environments would be further increased by adding loose, versatile, natural materials such as conkers, acorns, sea-shells, and pine cones. The practitioner and management are advised to engage with the ‘Environment’ and the ‘Play’ section of the Aistear/Síolta Practice Guide.
- The daily use of interactive story time, circle time, news time, and/or review time is advised.

**AREA 3**
QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is good.
- The children present as inquisitive and confident in their daily explorations of the environment and are competent in discussing their learning experiences. They demonstrate a good awareness of the natural environment and its features, and of animals and plants. They competently care for and are able to cuddle the pre-school's ‘bearded dragon’ each morning.
- A big supply of art and craft material enables the children to work autonomously and create unique, innovative pieces of art, some of which are on display in the pre-school room and in the hallway. Good habits around the care of the environment and its resources and materials need to be established. This is best done through role modelling and diligent reminders of how to mind and care for the environment.
- There is scope for fostering the children’s emotional security and for guiding and encouraging the children towards positive behaviour and good habits. During the inspection, the atmosphere grew more and more unsettled, with frequent arguments among the children over the course of the morning, and the children’s general disregard for positive behavioural rules within the room.

Actions advised
- The practitioner is advised to create, together with the children, a positive behaviour chart, which can be displayed creatively on the wall of the play room and referred to as necessary. The practitioner is further advised to invest time in discussing personal and social skills with the children, particularly how to be respectful of other people’s views and rights and how to use materials and resources and care for the environment. Children’s capacity for self-regulation and conflict resolution needs to be fostered with the aim of developing personal and social skills such as turn-taking, co-operating, negotiating, taking responsibility and building relationships.
- It is important that the practitioner provides strong guidance and clearly communicates expectations around acceptable behaviour, reinforces good manners and the respectful use and treatment of material and equipment. The practitioner needs to intervene and redirect or correct inappropriate behaviour every time in order to provide clear guidance and security to the children at all times. Exploring conflict resolution strategies is advised.

AREA 4
QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- Management and staff engage in daily informal reflections on practice. More formal meetings are necessary on a regular basis in order to critically review practice and procedures. The outcomes, ideas and decisions of those meetings need to be documented, shared and implemented in order to improve learning experiences and outcomes for the children.
- The practitioner is advised to keep a daily diary for self-review, and to make brief notes reflecting on activities, children’s emergent interests, and developmental observations of the children.
- A clear vision and direction for the work of the setting needs to be developed cooperatively between management and staff.
- Effective strategies for continuous professional development are in place and managers and practitioners regularly avail of them.
- The room leader has established very good links with the families and clear two-way channels of communication are fostered. Numerous formal and informal opportunities are utilised to exchange information between the practitioner and the families. Some examples are an in-depth parental handbook, a social media page and a social App, texts, monthly printed newsletters and lovely informal daily chats.
- Transitions into and from the setting are managed sensitively and effectively to ensure continuity of experiences and progression in the children’s learning and development.

Actions advised
- Regular staff meetings are advised, the outcomes of which need to be documented, shared and acted upon.
- Keeping daily notes, possibly in form of a diary, will help the practitioner to review and plan more efficiently.
Management and staff need to develop a clear vision, possibly in form of a new mission statement, for the setting. The ‘curriculum foundation’ section of the *Aistear/Siolta Practice Guide* is a valuable resource for this work.

**CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE**

The capacity of the service to implement the actions advised above is good.
## 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>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>
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## Language used in Early-Years Education Inspection reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Excellent</strong></td>
<td>Provision that is excellent is exemplary in meeting the needs of children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Very good</strong></td>
<td>Provision that is very good is highly effective in meeting the needs of children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Good</strong></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><strong>Fair</strong></td>
<td>Provision that is fair requires practice to be improved to meet the needs of children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Poor</strong></td>
<td>Provision that is poor is inadequate and requires significant improvement to meet the needs of children.</td>
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