Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

Report

Our Lady Queen of Peace Pre-school
10LY0048

Our Lady Queen of Peace Primary School
Janesboro
Limerick

Date of Inspection: 15th November 2017
CONTEXT OF SETTING

Our Lady Queen of Peace Pre-school is managed by a voluntary committee which includes parents, the principal of the primary school, the practice manager of the pre-school and a parent community liaison officer. It is located in two modified classrooms of the primary school with its own entrance and a shared outdoor space. It provides morning and afternoon sessions for children availing of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. The same staff work in the morning and afternoon sessions. On the morning of the inspection, twenty children and three practitioners (one of whom is the practice manager) were present. 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.
- A warm, affirming child and family-centred ethos is evident. The practitioners know the children and their families very well. Families are encouraged to come into the room at arrival and departure times and the practitioners prioritise time to talk with them and the children.
- A key person approach is very well established in the setting and this echoes the respect for and recognition of the uniqueness of each child and family. Each key adult prioritises regular connection with their key children, they have conversations with them and their families, they conduct observations, and they plan small-group learning experiences and activities for them.
- The routine and organisational procedures very effectively support children’s well-being, learning and emotional security. A visual of the daily routine with pictures and text is displayed at children’s level and this is used purposefully to support the children in anticipating activities. The children confidently and independently choose and organise their own play activities and experiences and they move between the different rooms with minimal support from the practitioners.
- Very successful strategies are used to support and manage the transitions during the daily routine. Timers, counting down together, creaming hands, gentle-toned chimes and lowering the lights are some of the very effective strategies used. The children have opportunities to take responsibility and they have a purposeful role in a number of the routines and transitions.
- The children’s sense of identity and belonging is promoted and supported very effectively. Photographs are purposefully displayed over children’s coat hooks, in the welcome area, on a birthday display, a friendship display, a family display and in their individual learning books and class journal.
- Very strong links with the local community exist. Engagement with parents is prioritised and occurs very successfully. There is soft seating and a variety of parenting books and children’s books available in the welcome area, family craft mornings are held, seasonal and cultural events take place, and language and literacy programmes as well as other programmes such as the Incredible Years take place.
- The children independently manage their own hygiene and personal care needs. Snack time supports social engagement, independence and healthy eating in partnership with the practitioners.
- The practitioners provide the children with authentic and timely praise. They use clear language, they provide reasons for specific boundaries, and they acknowledge children’s feelings. They make effective use of touch, tone of voice and body language when praising, affirming and encouraging the children.
- The children are enabled to develop an appreciation of themselves as individuals and as members of a group. The attractive photographic displays, free drawings, documentation and resources capture and reflect some of the uniqueness of the children, their families and the community.

Action advised

- To further support the children in gaining a positive sense of their identity as competent and capable learners, the practitioners are advised to take a more purposeful approach to capturing and representing their voice. This can happen through discussions with the children and writing annotations on photographs, free drawings and art work.
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 is clearly underpinned by Aistear, The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. It is very child-centred and places a huge value on play, relationships and interactions as a means through which young children learn. The service documentation demonstrates how children experience a variety of multi-sensory, play-based, hands-on, creative learning experiences.
- Planning is organised on a long-term, medium-term and short-term basis. The detailed planning and documentation take due account of children’s emergent interests and needs and is responsive to those changing interests and needs.
- A variety of very appropriate approaches to gathering information about the children’s learning experiences and achievements are used. These include learning stories, developmental checklists, individual and group learning journals, anecdotal notes and the practitioners’ reflective notes and observations.
- The practitioners very successfully engage and motivate the children in their learning and they use very appropriate pedagogical strategies. They follow the children’s lead in play, give timely and sensitive guidance and direction, and provide gentle prompts and reminders about specific rules. The practitioners also engage in active listening, authentic natural conversations and they ask appropriate open-ended questions.
- Play is central to children’s learning and development in this service. Play opportunities are freely available for the children.
- The play resources, the layout of the environment, and the structure of the daily routine encourage the development of positive dispositions for learning, friendly and respectful relationships amongst the children, and kind and secure relationships between the children and their key person.
- The indoor area is very spacious and is divided into various interest areas. These provide the children with many opportunities to engage in a wide variety of types of play on their own, with peers and with the practitioners.
- The indoor and outdoor environments are very well resourced and support children’s creativity, imagination, curiosity, independence, social skills and physical development.
- Children’s emergent language, literacy and mathematical skills are successfully supported and prioritised within the programme of activities, the environment, the play resources, the activities and the practitioners’ pedagogical approaches. The practitioners are alert to opportunities that emerge to discuss and use mathematical concepts, expand on children’s language, introduce new vocabulary, sing songs and rhymes and use symbols. On the morning of the inspection, the most recent collection of songs and rhymes were displayed for the children and the families. A wide variety of books are accessible to the children; these are effectively dispersed in a number of areas indoors. Opportunities for free drawing and mark making are provided.
- An inclusive learning environment has been successfully created by the practitioners. They accommodate the pace of all the children to ensure full participation and they proactively collaborate with parents to ensure the best possible support is provided to children with additional needs.

**Action advised**

- To build on the good practices noted in relation to curriculum planning and assessment for learning, the practitioners are advised to utilise further the resources available in the ‘Planning and assessing’ pillar of the Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide. For example, the learning record template, the short-term planning template, and the document on the development of an emergent enquiry-based curriculum are pertinent to the ongoing development of this service.

AREA 3
QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is excellent.
- The children demonstrate high levels of motivation and engagement in their own self-initiated learning activities, their care routines, and when engaging in the small-group and large-group planned activities.
The children have developed very appropriate pro-social skills and ways of communicating how they feel and think. They present as caring, kind and empathetic towards each other. They interact very well with their peers and demonstrate commendable capacity to play collaboratively, negotiate roles, and take turns.

The children display very positive attitudes to learning. They are resourceful, persistent, curious and creative.

The children clearly enjoy working with and exploring sensory materials such as sand, water and paint. They demonstrate a keen interest in mark-making, imaginative play, singing songs and performing rhymes. They confidently use their large motor skills. They jump and climb and they listen and follow rules when playing chasing games.

The children are developing a positive understanding of their own identity as competent learners and as members of unique families and the community.

The children demonstrate a keen interest in and understanding of the meaning and uses of symbols and print. For example, they point out the letters in their name and the numbers on the large clock when singing ‘Hickory Dickory Dock.’

Action advised.

The practitioners are advised to note the voice of the children more in the children’s learning journals, in the photographic displays and in the children’s creative art work and free drawings. This will further support the children to reflect on and discuss their learning experiences and achievements.

AREA 4
QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

The quality of management and leadership for learning is excellent.

The sense of teamwork and mutual respect between the practice manager, the practitioners and the principal of the school is commendable. Each practitioner has a leadership role in developing learning activities and experiences for the children. The practice manager is a very good role model for the staff in promoting high standards and a clear vision and direction for the work of the service. She is very open and proactive and makes every effort to ensure that the children, the practitioners, and the families feel welcomed, listened to and included in decisions and reviews.

The manager and the practitioners carry out systematic monitoring and review of the curriculum. Parents participate in this process through a suggestion box and completing an end-of-year survey. Their opinions are noted and acted upon, as are the professional opinions of the staff.

The practice manager and the practitioners meet every month formally to discuss and share thoughts and ideas on the curriculum and practices in the service. These meetings are documented to ensure agreed actions and changes to practice are followed up in order to improve the learning experiences and outcomes for the children. The practice manager also attends termly management meetings where she shares the views of the children, the practitioners and parents with the team.

Communications between the service and the children’s parents are commendable.

Ongoing professional development opportunities are prioritised and facilitated for all staff.

Transitions into and from the setting are managed very sensitively and respectfully to support both parents and children to have a positive experience of the pre-school. Very positive and well-established relationships exist between the adjacent primary school and the service. This was particularly evident when the principal of the school attended the post-inspection feedback meeting.

Parents are frequently present in the service for, among other things, one-to-one meetings with practitioners, art and craft events where parents join in art activities with their children, the Incredible Years programme and celebrations at Christmas and the end of the year.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

The capacity of the service to implement the actions advised above is excellent.
## Summary of Overall Inspection Findings

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<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>Excellent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of processes to support children’s learning and development</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of children’s learning experiences and achievements</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of management and leadership for learning</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
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## Language used in Early-Years Education-focused Inspection reports

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality 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>
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<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>
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<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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