

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

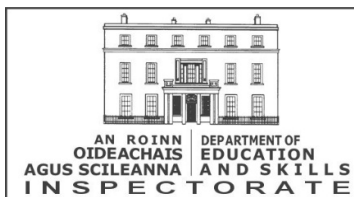
**Early-Years Education-focused Inspection**

**Report**

**Pinocchio's Little Treasures  
11DY0476**

**Silverdale  
Old Swords Road  
Santry  
Dublin 9**

**Date of Inspection: 13 December 2016**



## **CONTEXT OF SETTING**

Pinocchio's Little Treasures is a privately-owned, full day care service in Dublin 9. Two morning sessional services are offered to pre-school children. The service has recently undergone a period of change which has resulted in a change of management. On the day of inspection, there were sixteen children, the owner, manager and assistant practitioner in attendance. A number of families attending this service come from a variety of cultural backgrounds, with many children presenting with English as an additional language. The owner, the manager and the assistant practitioner attended the post-observation 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.
- The practitioners warmly welcome the children on arrival and take the time to chat to the parents.
- The tables are already prepared with a selection of activities in advance of the children's arrival. The children select the table and the activity.
- The children have developed close secure relationships with the practitioners. Many of the children demonstrated their affection for the practitioners by giving them spontaneous hugs throughout the session.
- The practitioners know the children well. They offer regular praise and encouragement to the children and provide guidance towards positive behaviour. The practitioners foster caring child-child relationships by encouraging the children to be kind and not disrupt the other children's games.
- The setting operates a healthy-eating policy. Snack time is valued as a social occasion with the children and practitioners sitting and chatting together.
- Children know the daily routine well. Transitions during the session are signalled to the children by the practitioner giving them a verbal reminder of the time left for the activity. The children sing the tidy-up song and take an active part in tidying up, some brushing the floor and others wiping the tables after snack time.
- The uniqueness of each child is represented through the birthday display that shows each child's birthday.
- The parents visit the setting for the Christmas play, the annual sports day and the end-of-year graduation. In previous years, parents who worked in the fire brigade and the ambulance service came to visit the setting.
- The practitioners celebrate the different cultural festivals. The cultural diversity of the children and families attending the service is not visually represented in the room.

#### *Actions advised*

- To support all children's sense of involvement within the daily learning programme, it is advised that the practitioners display the daily routine at child height, with photographs of the children engaged in different activities.
- The use of consistent approaches when signalling changes in the routine is advised such as the use of visual and verbal cues and the provision of ample time for children to settle to the new activity. These will ensure that all children will have a clear expectations of what is coming next.
- Visual representation of the cultural diversity of the children and families present in the setting and local community is advised. This will build on the existing awareness of cultural diversity and support the development of a more inclusive environment.

## **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 fair.

- The practitioners undertake annual planning, based on seasonal themes and practitioners' ideas. The planning is not underpinned by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and does not include the children's emergent interests. The practitioners have recently introduced a new electronic system and the short-term planning was not available on the day of inspection.
- The practitioners use photographs of the children engaged in different activities to describe the learning from the different themes.
- The practitioners are in the process of changing their system of gathering and recording information on the children's learning. They have recently moved from using written observations to an electronic system. At the time of inspection, the next steps for the children's learning were not recorded.
- On the day of the inspection, there were limited opportunities for children to initiate and lead their own learning. The practitioners organised activities for the large group and there was little evidence of small-group work or paired activities. The practitioners prepared the activities such as the playdough and the sensory activity and then selected the children to go to each table.
- The indoor environment is large and bright with one end of the room used for table-top and large-group activities. The other half is used for imaginary play. This is equipped with a small kitchen area and a dolls' house. There were some suitable table-top activities and construction materials but these were not available or accessible to the children. The limited resources did not sufficiently support and extend the children's play experiences.
- Some children enjoy looking at the books; the number and range of books available is insufficient to support a choice of interests and topics.
- The children have access to the outdoor area when the weather is fine but not if it is wet.
- The practitioners engage the children in conversations about what Santa is bringing them but it was noted that there were missed opportunities to support the children's thinking and problem solving. On some occasions, the underuse of open-ended questions and prompts limited children's learning.
- An overemphasis on adult-directed teaching and testing of children's knowledge of phonics, shapes and numbers was observed which resulted in reduced time for children to develop through self-initiated playful and meaningful activities.

#### *Actions advised*

- Practitioners are advised to use consistent approaches in their interactions with the children and to use strategies which will support the significant number of children for whom English is an additional language. These could include taking the time to be beside the child when giving directions to ensure he/she has understood the message, giving the children time to respond and by using more open-ended questions and prompts.
- The practitioners are advised to avail of the resources in the *Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide* to support them in their development of an emergent curriculum that reflects *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* in its planning and floor book.
- It is advised that the practitioners gather and record information on the children's learning that includes the next steps for their learning. It is advised that the practitioners adapt their current approaches to gathering information on the children's learning by integrating the next steps for their learning.
- Practitioners are advised to reduce the use of resources such as work-books and colouring-in templates and to increase the provision of open-ended resources that support children's play in meaningful contexts. The use of the resources in the *Aistear Toolkit* and the 'Indoor Environmental Audit' will help in this regard.

### **AREA 3**

#### **QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

- The quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements is good.
- The children are generally happy and show enjoyment in their self-selected activities. Some children struggled to stay focused on task; they became distracted in the large-group activities and interrupted the other children. On the day of the inspection, the room leader stopped what she was doing on several occasions to engage these children. This impacted on the overall involvement and engagement of the children.

- The children are learning to play socially together and are learning to engage with each other cooperatively. Some children display kindness and consideration to each other. This was demonstrated during snack time when a child spilt his yoghurt and another child went to get the napkin and started rubbing his jumper.
- The children who are attending for a second year of pre-school have developed strong friendships.
- Children demonstrated confidence in communicating with each other and the practitioners as they discussed their Christmas decorations at home and visiting Santa.
- The children are developing a positive sense of self and are eager and confident to converse and engage with visitors.
- The children demonstrate an awareness of their changing abilities. When looking at the floor book they chatted to the practitioner and other children about what they had done previously. They displayed confidence in discussing a previous topic on healthy eating and hygiene during the circle group discussion.
- The child-helper routine encourages the children to feel connected to the group and promotes children self-help skills and independence.
- Children experience the natural environment through their interactions with the nature table that is changed by the practitioners for each season. The children have gathered leaves from the garden and placed them on the table.
- There are very few opportunities for the children to engage in self-initiated, purposeful, playful learning activities. There are many examples of the children's art work and template-based activities, linked to the children's learning with workbooks and colouring-in on display.
- A learner book is collated for each child that includes examples of their artwork and templates and this is sent home with their workbooks at the end of the year.

#### *Actions advised*

- It is advised that practitioners promote children's free choice and review the balance between adult-led and child-led activities to ensure that children have sufficient opportunities to engage in self-initiated, purposeful and playful learning activities.
- The introduction of small-group activities rather than the overuse of large-group activities is advised in order to support the children in developing their social skills and abilities to play cooperatively together.
- Practitioners are advised to extend the established system for choosing helpers by creating a visual child-helper chart. This will help children recognise when it is their turn and the job they have to do such as line leader, serving snacks, pouring drinks.
- It is advised that the practitioners provide additional opportunities for children to express their creativity and engage in open-ended art and mark-making activities.

## **AREA 4**

### **QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- The practitioners come together every month to plan for the upcoming topic which will underpin the programme of learning activities for the children. Recent changes in management have identified the need for more systematic reviews of policies and procedures.
- The manager, who is recently appointed to the position, presents a good role model to the practitioners and promotes a clear vision for the children's learning. In her new role as manager, she has commenced the work of developing their policies and procedures and the information booklet for parents.
- There is clarity around the roles and responsibilities of the practitioners with evidence of good teamwork and collaboration among them.
- The owner avails of mentoring and support from Early Childhood Ireland and Dublin City Childcare Committee in order to support the practitioners.
- The practitioners are committed to their ongoing professional development and regularly attend workshops.
- At the start of the year, parents are given an information booklet on the setting's policies and procedures. Computer technology is used for the sharing of observations. Parents are updated of their children's learning informally at drop-off and collection times and an annual formal meeting is held with parents to discuss their child's development.

- The practitioners give parents an information leaflet on transitions and support children's move to primary school by chatting with them about the new experience. The primary school sends a questionnaire to the pre-school in advance of the children starting school.

*Actions advised*

- The *Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide* is advised to support the practitioners' professional self-reflection and their review of the settings policies and procedures.
- The practitioners are advised to begin the process of building relationships with local primary schools and to develop procedures to support the children's transition from pre-school to primary school.

**CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE**

The owner, manager and assistant practitioner engaged professionally and positively with the post-observation feedback and their capacity to implement the actions advised above is good.

### **Summary of Overall Inspection Findings**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Quality Level</b>
Quality of context to support children's learning and development	<b>Good</b>
Quality of processes to support children's learning and development	<b>Fair</b>
Quality of children's learning experiences and achievements	<b>Good</b>
Quality of management and leadership for learning	<b>Good</b>

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

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