An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Early-Years Education-focused Inspection
Report

Castlefinn Partnership Initiative (CPI)
Community Childcare
13DL0179

Knockrawer
Castlefinn
County Donegal

Date of Inspection: 7th September 2017
CONTEXT OF SETTING

Castlefinn Partnership Initiative (CPI) Community Childcare is a community-based service located within the rural village of Castlefinn. The setting provides a full-day care service, which offers a morning sessional pre-school facility to children participating on the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. The pedagogical approach is informed by the principles of Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. On the day of the inspection, one lead practitioner, two practitioners and fourteen children were present. The manager and lead practitioner 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 excellent.
- There is an affirming, comforting and caring atmosphere within the setting. This is represented through the warm and reassuring manner in which the practitioners greet the children and their families.
- The transition into the room in the morning is positive and sensitively managed by the practitioners who utilise the children’s interests to encourage them to settle in during this first week.
- The organisation of the session enables the children to freely explore and actively choose from an array of activities on offer. Practitioners value this independent approach and encourage the children to interact respectfully with one another.
- Practitioners position themselves effectively at snack time and utilise this social occasion to familiarise themselves with the children’s personal interests and family backgrounds.
- Relationships are fostered between the practitioners, children and families using the key person approach. This approach fosters secure relationships through the observation of designated ‘key’ children throughout the year. Parents are verbally informed about their child’s key person and photographs of each practitioner are displayed on the parent’s notice board.
- Positive behaviour is encouraged through the use of visual rules, visual props and gentle reminders from the practitioners. Soft tones and encouraging redirecting strategies are used by the practitioners when reminding the new children of the rules.
- The children’s identity and belonging is respectfully nurtured in the pre-school setting. Children are individually represented through the use of photographs, name labels and the display of their paintings. These visual displays together with the respectful exchanges which occur between the children and the practitioners throughout the session help to establish a strong sense of belonging within the setting.
- The practitioners are resourceful when planning experiences to connect the children with the local community. The location of the pre-school within a community building enables them to maximise on opportunities to visit the pharmacy, surgery and local community hall during the year.

AREA 2
QUALITY OF PROCESSES TO SUPPORT CHILDREN’S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- The quality of the context to support the children’s learning and development is very good.
- There is a broad-based curriculum on offer informed by the aims and goals of the Aistear the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. It is organised on a long-term, medium term and short-term basis, with weekly evaluations to review the planned activities.
- The practitioners are developing an emergent curriculum which is evident in the recognition of some of the children’s emerging interests, highlighted in the weekly plan. This is in its infancy and there is scope to develop this approach further.
- The practitioners use a suitable variety of methods to gather and analyse the significant information relating to the nature and range of children’s learning. They record learning stories that are personal to each child, reflecting their individual interests and temperaments.
• Practitioners facilitate high quality interactions with the children and between the children; they recognise them as active agents in their own learning. Practitioners are considerate in their approach, responding to the needs of the children, motivating them through encouraging commentary and playful exchanges.
• The indoor environment is well defined using a variety of discrete areas and multi-sensory experiences to support the children’s learning and development. The wide range of resources is accessible to the children which encourages them to explore and choose areas which appeal to their individual preferences.
• The children have regular access to the outdoor environment and community hall which provide a multitude of experiences to develop their physical fitness. The children have the opportunity to explore the outdoor house, play train, play basketball, football and ride on wheeled vehicles.
• The practitioners encourage the children to think about their play experiences when concluding the session. The children are encouraged to discuss these, along with their personal preferences, which are noted to assist with the planning of subsequent daily activities.
• The play environment is print rich, using labelling and resources such as recipe books and shopping lists to extend the language experiences within the home corner. Practitioners provide daily activities such as songs and stories to further promote language development during the session.
• A praiseworthy approach is noted in the provision to support children to learn in an inclusive environment. The practitioners have established links with the Better Start Access and Inclusion model (AIM) and have utilised the Leadership for Inclusion in Early Years (LINC) training to implement effective strategies, such as a visual ‘first and then display’.

Action advised
• It is advised that practitioners continue to develop an emergent curriculum that is reflective of a holistic approach to the development of the children’s learning. This will be achieved by purposefully utilising the children’s interests and the recorded learning observations to continually inform the planning of activities and experiences.

AREA 3

QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

• The quality of the context to support the children’s learning and development is very good.
• The children are highly motivated and eager to explore the range of multi-sensory and physical experiences on offer within the daily session. Children display imaginative dispositions as they willingly collaborate when producing a variety of cuisines in the home corner.
• On the day of the inspection, there were missed opportunities to support the engagement of some individual children and also the whole group during story-time. This created occasional periods of low engagement where the introductory period to the story was too long and individual children were at times observed on the perimeters of play.
• Children experience personal achievement and success through the increasing confidence in their developing physical skills. This is apparent when they persevere to complete jigsaws and when throwing the basketballs into hoops in the hall as they celebrate their accomplishments.
• The sample portfolios provided from the previous year have a personal style, celebrating the children’s creative achievements and reflecting their individual play preferences. A more holistic approach to documenting the child’s progression in learning, reflective of a variety of connected experiences is yet to be explored.
• Children have settled in well and confidently discuss their family backgrounds and feelings within the pre-school room. Children are aware of the role of people within the local community and regularly observe the bin man and post man on duty from the window.
• The children are beginning to respond to and understand the rules and boundaries of acceptable behaviour. The children are demonstrating social skills such as turn-taking, co-operating and are developing the ability to show responsibility during tidy-up time.
• Children communicate with the practitioners and their peers during interactions by discussing their play experiences and responding to questions. They express their emotions and have the ability to justify the rationale for their feelings.
• Children with additional needs are supported to communicate using visuals such as the ‘first and then’ strategy to assist them with choosing their desired play activities.
• Children demonstrate an awareness of the natural environment through the acknowledgment of the harvesting season and the use of the machinery on their family farms.
• Children are encouraged to discover and explore during the introduction of new sensorial activities, for example, investigating the textures and marks made during foam play.

**Actions advised**

- It is advised that children experience sustained levels of engagement through various opportunities provided within the routine. This will support individual children to become involved in playful activities of interest through the introduction of timely activities from the practitioners.
- It is advised that practitioners develop a holistic approach to the information documented about the children’s learning. This will support a connected progression of learning, reflecting the children’s individual interests, needs and approaches.

**AREA 4**

**QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

- The quality of the context to support the children’s learning and development is very good.
- There is an ethos of professionalism, teamwork and collaboration among staff in the setting. The practitioners work in partnership to provide a variety of learning experiences for the children.
- Management and staff utilise continuing professional development training to reflect on and review their practice. Most recently, the lead practitioner has completed the LINC training, which created an introduction to reflect on practice using the Aistear, Siolta Practice Guide.
- Staff meetings occur bi-monthly within the crèche, with each member of staff receiving the opportunity to input into the agenda prior to the meeting. There is scope to develop the agenda to include a more organised focus to the ongoing review and evaluation of practice.
- The room leader effectively organises appropriate systems to enable the planning and provision of a variety of learning experiences for the children. The key person system enables all practitioners in the pre-school room to gain responsibility for the recording of observations of individual children.
- Parents are valued within the setting and are provided with an annual questionnaire to comment on and review the provision of experiences within the setting. Outcomes from the reviews and implementation of improvements within the setting are not yet shared with the parents.
- The setting are open to and are of recent, registered to engage in mentoring from the Better Start Quality Development Service and Access and Inclusion Model.
- Parents and families are proactively consulted regarding their children’s learning and development. Practitioners work particularly close with the parents of children with additional needs, providing specific and useful information to support the children’s learning.
- Parents have the opportunity to informally discuss matters with the practitioners on a daily basis and two planned meetings occur during the year to review their children’s learning.
- The transition into the setting supports the children and parents through the provision of an open day and individual registration meeting. The setting obtains information from the parents about the children to promote a continuity of experiences from home to pre-school.
- A commendable approach is in place to support the children with their transition to school. The setting extended an invitation to the teachers of junior infant classes from five local primary schools to visit the pre-school. Four teachers subsequently attended in the final term and a completed transition statement for each child was delivered to the school with parental permission.

**Action advised**

- To build on the culture of self-review and ongoing improvement that has been established, it is advised that the manager and practitioners develop and embed systematic review within the setting to support with the development of ongoing improvement practices.

**CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE**

The capacity of the service to implement the actions advised above is very good given the strong leadership in place and the clear commitment of all staff to the children in their care.
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>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of children’s learning experiences and achievements</td>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of management and leadership for learning</td>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Language used in Early-Years Education-focused Inspection reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Level</th>
<th>Provision</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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