An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Early-Years Education Inspection
Report

BEL Childcare, Bilingual Early Learning
Childcare Ltd.
14CC0494

1 Calderwood Road
Donnybrook
County Cork

Date of Inspection: 22\textsuperscript{nd} September 2017
CONTEXT OF SETTING

BEL Childcare is a privately owned, urban service located in Donnybrook, County Cork. Education and care on a sessional, as well as a full-time basis are provided for babies, wobblers, toddlers, and pre-school children. Four practitioners work in two separate pre-school rooms in the morning. Two of these practitioners also operate an afternoon pre-school session. On the day of the inspection there were twenty children and two practitioners in one room and fifteen children and two practitioners in the other room. While both rooms were visited, the main inspection took place in the room with the twenty children. The owner, the manager and the acting assistant centre manager 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 caring ethos and an affirming atmosphere prevail. Practitioners have a very friendly, warm and sensitive rapport with the children, showing a positive regard for them and their families.
- Some thoughtful opportunities are provided for the children to help them develop an appreciation of themselves as individuals and as members of a group. These include a birthday calendar, children’s pictures on their coat hooks, a ‘signing-in’ chart and a visual display of the daily routine.
  - Language diversity is recognised, valued and affirmed within an inclusive language-rich learning environment. The large wall map on display could be utilised more effectively to foster children’s identity and sense of belonging.
- Recognition, praise and encouragement are regular features of the practitioners’ responses to the children.
- Snack time is effectively utilised as a social occasion where the children sit, eat and converse with each other. Currently practitioners organise the tables, they hand out food and drink, and do not sit or eat with the children.
- The daily routine consists of too many transitions; this is not conducive to the development of in-depth exploratory, interactive play.

Actions advised

- Practitioners are advised to utilise meal times more effectively. To foster children’s agency, autonomy and self-help skills, children should prepare the table by themselves with plates and cups and help themselves and each other to food and drink. Practitioners are advised to create a relaxed, family-type meal-time where they sit, eat and converse with the children, providing a positive role model for well-being and a healthy lifestyle. News and reflections can be shared over the meal. Given the high percentage of children whose first language is not English, informal, small group conversations in a relaxed atmosphere will naturally support language acquisition.
- It is advised to change the daily routine to minimise transitions and to afford long, uninterrupted child-initiated/led free-play times indoors and outside. Those times can be interspersed with short, practitioner-initiated/led activities such as circle-time and story time. Art and craft activities or experiments, related to the current theme or interests, can be offered parallel to free play as a free choice activity for children who want to join in.

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 broad-based curriculum, informed by Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework is implemented. There is evidence that children’s emergent interests and dispositions are acknowledged and followed.
• Information about children’s learning and development is regularly documented and shared with the families.
• There is some opportunity for children to be active agents in their learning during the different play periods. Overall, the activities and interactions are too directed and influenced by the practitioners.
• The environments are well maintained and safe. The materials and resources provided stimulate and support children’s learning and development.
• A variety of artwork is displayed. Activity areas and material/resource boxes are well labelled.
• The children have regular access to an outdoor environment which is currently being developed further to enhance its play value.
• Opportunities are provided for the children to engage in a variety of types of play throughout the day.
• Children’s emergent language, literacy and numeracy skills are fostered through the use of songs, rhymes and games, the provision of high quality books, and some opportunities for mark-making, such as chalking outside.

Actions advised
• Practitioners are advised to ensure that assessment outcomes are utilised to inform curriculum planning. This needs to be made visible in the short-term plans.
• Practitioners are advised to implement a more child-led approach, using appropriate interaction strategies and methods such as asking open-ended questions, prompting, and scaffolding to follow children’s interests and lines of exploration. This will facilitate a broader range of learning experiences. Practitioners are advised to engage with the ‘Interaction’ pillar of the online Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide for more advice on this point.
• The learning environments need to be restructured to create designated play areas conducive to exploratory, interactive play. The ‘Environment’ pillar of the Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide provides useful guidance in this regard. Practitioners are advised to organise full rain gear for the children and themselves so that the benefits of outdoor play can be utilised daily.
• Play needs to become the central medium through which the children learn and develop. Currently the flow of children’s engagement in their play activities is often interrupted through practitioner/initiated activities and through adults directing play. Practitioners are advised to consult the ‘Play’ pillar of the Aistear, Síolta Practice Guide to gain a more profound understanding of the centrality of play for children’s learning and development.
• Opportunities for using songs, rhymes, finger games and whole-body movement games throughout the day should be explored. There is also scope for developing mathematical language and concepts linked to everyday things and life situations.

AREA 3
QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

• The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is good.
• The children demonstrate enjoyment, particularly during free-play periods. They are motivated, interested and engaged in their activities and display some positive learning dispositions such as initiative, self-confidence, resourcefulness and persistence.
• During outdoor free play the children are beginning to show some confidence and coordination over their gross motor skills. This will be expanded through the enhanced play value of the developing outdoor area.
• The children are well-spoken and use their communication skills, both verbal and non-verbal, quite competently. They give and receive information, use judgement, reflect and imagine, and recreate roles to clarify their thinking, feeling and ideas.
• The children are using their developing physical skills to manipulate objects and materials, particularly during outdoor play.
**Actions advised**

- Practitioners are advised to focus on providing plenty of opportunities for the children to play cooperatively in pairs and/or in small groups. This will enable the children to practise and refine their personal and social skills such as problem solving, conflict resolution, negotiating, turn-taking and taking responsibility.
- More scope needs to be provided for the children to express their creativity, uniqueness and individuality through role-play, drama, story-telling and art work. Provision of a broad variety of mark-making options during free play times such as blank paper and crayons, a richly resourced junk art table, and a painting easel is further advised.
- Making the natural environment more accessible to the children is advised, in order to provide rich sensory impressions and to make children aware of the natural environment, its features, materials, animals and plants.

**AREA 4**

**QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is good.
- Formal, documented whole-staff meetings are held once a term. The practitioners running the preschool have some individual time to write observations and planning sheets. At the time of the inspection, there was no provision for the pre-school team to have regular, formal meetings for professional teamwork, or for review and planning of practice, policies and procedures.
- There is no evidence of practitioners’ involvement in the development of the ethos and direction for the work of the setting. Roles and responsibilities in relation to educational activities within the rooms are not clearly defined. Strategies for professional reflection, mentoring and continuous professional development need to be developed.
- Clear two-way channels between the setting and the families are established.
- Transitions into and from the setting are handled effectively and sensitively, with gradual settling in procedures in place and current work on a ‘passport’ for children going to primary school next year.

**Actions advised**

- Regular formal reflection and planning meetings for the pre-school team are advised. This will further create an ethos of professionalism, teamwork, collaboration and enable the sharing of knowledge and skills to enhance pedagogical performance in each room.
- Management is advised to include the pre-school team in the development of a clear vision and direction of the pedagogical work of the setting. Roles and responsibilities within the rooms need to be defined. Management needs to develop strategies for practitioners to avail of continuous professional development opportunities, within and outside of the setting.

**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>
</tr>
<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>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Provision that is excellent is exemplary in meeting the needs of children.</td>
</tr>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Provision that is fair requires practice to be improved to meet the needs of children.</td>
</tr>
<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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