An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

REPORT

Conahy Community Playgroup
09KK0020

Upper Conahy, Ballyragget
Co Kilkenny

Date of issue of report: 18 May 2016
CONTEMPORARY OF SETTING

Conahy Community Playgroup is a sessional pre-school situated in the rural location of Conahy, Co Kilkenny. The setting has fifteen children enrolled on the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. A total of 12 children, 9 of whom were participating in the ECCE Programme, were present during the inspection. Two practitioners were present. The setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised in this report, and the response, and the response submitted on behalf of the setting will be found in the appendix of this report.

AREA 1
QUALITY OF CONTEXT TO SUPPORT CHILDREN’S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

• The quality of the context to support children’s learning and development is very good.
• A community ethos and a warm affirming atmosphere are evident, with opportunities for conversations between children, families and practitioners during the morning transition into the setting.
• Children actively engage in choosing materials, and in organising their own learning activities.
• The promotion of healthy eating in the setting is commended. Children prepare, cut and taste a variety of fruit. Snack time involves practitioners engaging in meaningful discussions with children around healthy food choices.
• Practitioners foster warm, caring relationships with the children. Their implementation of a strategy of ‘feelings and friendship’ very effectively supports children’s emotional development and facilitates positive behaviour management.
• Transitions between activities are supported by adult verbal direction and a visual timetable.
• Children’s sense of identity and belonging is positively supported through individual photographic representation, birthday celebrations and the establishment of some links with families and the local community.

Actions advised
• It is advised that practitioners develop and extend the use of the visual timetable to support children’s transitions between activities and their awareness of the routines.
• To build on existing strategies to support identity and belonging, it is advised that representations of children’s family and the local community be included in the setting displays.

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

• The quality of the processes to support children’s learning and development is very good.
• A play-based curriculum informed by Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework and Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education is used in the playgroup.
• Planning includes long-term, medium-term and short-term plans with direct links to Aistear in the chosen topics and themes. Planning takes account of children’s emerging interests; their interests influence the topics to be explored.
• A variety of assessment approaches is used to gather information about children’s learning and development. These include individual observations, photographic scrap books and children’s individual free drawings and paintings that have the children’s interpretations recorded.
• Interactions between practitioners and children foster child-initiated learning. Practitioners know the children well and use skilful interaction strategies such as open-ended questions to extend children’s interests, questions and thinking.
• Play opportunities are freely available for children in a way that allows them to explore, plan and engage in sustained and meaningful activities.
• The new purpose-built indoor environment is impressive, with specific zoned areas supporting children’s development and interests. Resources include natural and sensory materials that allow the children to interact with nature, for example, when exploring bug habitats and growing
sunflowers. Sand, water and paint are available but were not observed to be in use during the inspection.

- Children have regular access to an outdoor garden. The garden and a large hall are well used to support the development of gross motor skills and free play.
- Language and literacy skills more generally are fostered in a highly effective way. For example, children have ready access to books and stories, they visit the mobile library, they sing and recite rhymes and the practitioners make a purposeful effort to include the children’s home language in the activities.
- Cultural diversity is celebrated in the setting and there are specific strategies in place to support children for whom English is an additional language.

**Actions advised**

- It is advised that practitioners develop strategies for sharing with children and parents how planning for learning is implemented and extended. This might include using photographs and documentation of children’s learning experiences.
- To extend the current provision for play in the indoor environment, it is advised that children have daily access to open-ended and creative materials such as sand, water and paint.

**AREA 3**

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

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is very good.
- Children demonstrate enjoyment, interest, self-confidence and creativity in their learning and development.
- Children explore and confidently discuss their interests and make connections to their existing knowledge.
- Children are developing positive awareness of the importance of selecting healthy food choices and of personal care routines.
- Children use a broad range of methods to confidently communicate their feelings and ideas. Including strategies to extend the meaning and use of mathematical language would further support and extend learning opportunities.
- The provision of opportunities to explore the natural environment and a physical fitness programme is very effective in supporting children’s well-being.

**Action advised**

- To further develop children’s learning experiences, and in particular their understanding and use of mathematical language, it is advised that practitioners exploit further the mathematical potential of play activities, for example, during activities such as slicing fruit and exploring bugs.

**AREA 4**

**QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is very good.
- There is evidence of very good support from the community management committee.
- An ethos of professionalism and shared leadership is clearly apparent in the setting.
- Planning for children’s learning and development is informed by the practitioners’ comprehensive knowledge of *Aistear* and *Siolta*, their attainment of academic qualifications and their attendance at workshops provided by the local County Childcare Committee.
- Practitioners use non-contact time to plan, discuss and review practice.
- The setting’s open-door policy and incidental engagement with parents foster positive communication with children’s families. Extending communication strategies in a way that would include working parents would further support this consultation process.
- Highly commendable links with the local primary school are fostered. Children and staff from the pre-school and the primary school visit each other, thereby effectively supporting positive transitions for the children.
**Actions advised**

- To build on the good self-review practice being undertaken in the setting, it is advised that practitioners keep note of their reflections on their practice and the changes they have implemented.
- It is advised that practitioners explore strategies to broaden communication with children’s parents in order to share further information regarding the progress in the children’s learning and development.

**CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE**

The capacity of the practitioners to implement the actions advised above is very 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>Very Good</td>
</tr>
<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>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>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>
</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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APPENDIX

SETTING RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SETTING

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

Report very positive. Easy to read.

Part B: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to address the actions advised in the inspection report

We will be implementing the suggestions.