An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Early-Years Education-focused Inspection

REPORT

The Beeches Montessori
09MH0025

Colpe East
Donacarney
County Meath

Date of inspection: 21 April 2016
CONTEXT OF SETTING

The Beeches Montessori operates a rural Montessori sessional pre-school service and is located in Donacarney, Co. Meath. It is in operation for twelve years. The service caters for children engaged in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme in two rooms within the setting. On the day of inspection there were eighteen children present in the one room visited. The owner/manager, the lead practitioner and an assistant practitioner were present on the day of inspection. The setting was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and actions advised in this report, and the response submitted on behalf of the setting will be found in the appendix to this report.

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.
- The atmosphere is warm, calm and inviting. Children are supported to engage in enriching and meaningful learning experiences.
- Opportunities are regularly provided to bring together children, families and practitioners in the setting and these include, Sports Day, Christmas Concert, Book Day, Pyjama Day and Trick or Treat Day.
- Family trees and individual photographs of children support children developing an appreciation of themselves as individuals and as members of groups.
- Snack/meal time is observed as a social occasion with soft relaxing music playing while the children are eating.
- A soap and snack helper system supports the children to manage their own hygiene and personal care needs.
- The setting has made good links with the local community, with a suitable range of visits and visitors organised.

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 very good.
- The practitioners use the themes of Aistear the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework in collating, information about children’s learning in their individual learning scrapbooks.
- Observations of children engaged in the Montessori activities are taken throughout the session to inform planning. This planning is detailed and viewed from a strengths base and supports progression in children’s learning in accordance with their individual needs.
- There are weekly planned topics of interest to the children such as the farm. These topics are supported by the presence of tailored books, jigsaws and visual displays.
- The indoor area has a wide variety of interest areas and high quality resources that are used effectively to support children’s play. A table set up in the play area with real flowers, a real teapot and utensils and complete with tablecloth is an example of how children are supported to engage in meaningful play experiences.
- The outdoor area provides a range of opportunities to support children’s physical skills and a wide range of resources.
- High quality interactions with children and adults are facilitated and these interactions provide good opportunities to stimulate language development.

Action advised

- To build on the good practices established in conducting observations of engagement with Montessori equipment and in compiling the children’s scrapbooks, practitioners are advised to broaden the observations of children to take account of holistic development. Developing additional links to the themes of Aistear in conducting child observations will ensure observations and planning take account of children’s emerging interests, cultural backgrounds, strengths, needs and previous learning experiences.
AREA

QUALITY OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The quality of the children’s learning experiences and achievements is excellent.
- The provision of carefully thought out materials and resources contribute to children’s high levels of engagement, feelings of success and enjoyment.
- Children persevere and concentrate as individuals and in pairs to support and motivate each other.
- Children discuss their achievements and success with the practitioners and their peers with ease.
- Children are comfortable discussing and using mathematical language.

AREA 4

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

- The quality of management and leadership for learning is excellent.
- Team meetings take place every month, where decisions are noted and used for planning events and outings and curriculum, being also used to identify priorities and for the provision of additional learning opportunities for the children.
- Management and staff have availed of a number training courses and are committed to ongoing professional development through attendance at Siolta workshops and engagement with their County Childcare Committee.
- Staff engage in regular self-review and use this to inform children’s learning opportunities and to support ongoing improvement initiatives in the setting.
- Individual self-assessment forms are filled out by staff members as part of their reflective practices.
- Parents are consulted both formally and informally about their child’s learning on a regular basis.
- A newsletter is shared each term with parents.
- Detailed information is gathered from parents and families prior to children starting at the service in order to support transitions and settling in. This is further augmented by a transitions project that the children engage in prior to starting school.

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIONS ADVISED ABOVE

There is a very good capacity and interest from both the manager and staff to implement the actions advised in this report.
Summary of Overall Inspection Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Quality Level</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of context to support children’s learning and development</td>
<td>Excellent</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>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of management and leadership for learning</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Language used in Early-Years Education-focused Inspection reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Provision that is excellent is exemplary in meeting the needs of children.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<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

We felt that the inspection was a great help to all the staff in helping us improve our school.

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 are very happy with the report. Since the report all staff have taken part in Aistear training. This has helped us all in the school with developing our children’s observations. We are working hard to improve our cultural work to help teach the children their backgrounds and their interests.