

Summarised inspection findings

Torphins Playgroup

Aberdeenshire Council

8 November 2022

Key contextual information

Torphins Playgroup is based in Torphins, a village in Royal Deeside, Aberdeenshire. The playgroup is located in a bungalow and overseen by a parent and community volunteer committee. The setting has had several new staff and a new manager in the past two years. The setting is registered for 18 children at any given time. Children can attend the playgroup from the age of two through self-funded places and can stay until they are of school age. Funded places are available for children aged from three to five years and eligible two year olds. Children attend from 9am - 3pm during term time, although morning and afternoon places are available to suit parental need.

1.3 Leadership of change

good

This indicator focuses on working together at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which reflects the context of the setting within its community. Planning for continuous improvement change should be evidence-based and clearly linked to strong self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure that the pace of change is well judged and appropriate to have a positive impact on outcomes for children. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the setting and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- Torphins Playgroup continues to evolve over time and is a valuable asset within the community. The vision, values and aims are an identified area for improvement, as they currently have little meaning or relevance. As changes to staff and the environment have taken place, the team recognise that the vision, values and aims are not representative of their setting. The manager clearly recognises the unique aspects of the setting and their place in the new vision, values and aims. There are plans to involve fully all stakeholders to ensure everyone has their say and feels valued.
- Practitioners strive to improve their practice, utilising training opportunities where possible. They are committed to share their learning across the team to ensure consistency of approach for all children. All staff have completed their core training with most seeking additional training opportunities to enhance their practice. The manager supports practitioners well and the team receive helpful support from the peripatetic principal teacher for early years. Practitioners use their knowledge and skills well to support and meet children's individual needs.
- Leadership roles are being developed in line with staff skills and interests. The manager leads by example and nurtures the team skilfully to achieve their best. She works very well with the lead practitioner to support the organisation and running of the setting. Prior to the expansion of 1140 hours of funded early learning and childcare, the setting only offered part time sessions. The team have adapted very well to offering full day places, alongside part time if required. A chairperson and committee govern the setting well, however, the manager is responsible for leading and managing on a day-to-day basis. The committee are supportive through the governance and financial aspects of the setting, working well with the manager and wider community.
- Monitoring and reviewing of key areas of practice takes place using the setting's quality assurance calendar. There are plans to revisit the calendar to ensure it is appropriate and manageable, whilst ensuring all practitioners can be involved. The improvement plan has helpfully identified appropriate priorities to take forward the work of the setting. The reflective

team, who identify and discuss change when needed, have collectively identified the priorities. The pace of change needs to continue to be appropriate, as a result, embedding fully identified areas of change.

- The manager, with support from the local authority, uses Aberdeenshire Council self-evaluation processes very well to identify areas for improvement and subsequent actions. There is a need for the manager to continue to look forward leading the team through her skilful and positive manner.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

satisfactory

This indicator focuses on ensuring high quality learning experience for young children. It highlights the importance of a very good understanding of child development and early learning pedagogy. Effective use is made of observation to inform future learning and identify the progress made. Children are involved in planning for their own learning. Together these ensure children's successes and achievements are maximised. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of interactions
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- Relationships between children and practitioners are positive and nurturing. This supportive learning environment is helping children to feel safe, secure and develop confidence as they take part in spontaneous play. Almost all children are caring and kind to each other and play well together.
- Almost all children are engaged in learning as they choose from the resources available. Free flow access to outdoor learning is encouraged. The well-developed areas within the outdoor play space provides opportunities to develop children's creativity, resilience and independence as they explore the environment.
- A keyworker system is in place and this allows practitioners to know and understand children as individuals. Practitioners should now use this knowledge of children to build more effectively on children's strengths and interests. Practitioners understand children's care needs very well, carefully listening and responding effectively to children to ensure their views and choices are respected. Practitioners now need to consider how interventions can support children to learn more effectively, building on their prior knowledge and experiences.
- Practitioners use online learning journals to record observations about each child's progress. These include photographs and descriptions of children's learning experiences. Parents are encouraged to contribute and comment on their child's online learning journal. Practitioners should now continue to develop their skills in observing and recording observations of significant learning for each child. Overall, practitioners should capture children's progress and achievements more regularly, to ensure that interventions and next steps in learning are well timed. As identified by the setting, increased opportunities for professional dialogue about assessments and observations will help support practitioner's professional judgements of children's progress in learning. Parents receive a useful twice-yearly update on children's progress.
- Practitioners are at an early stage of developing a new planning format. The introduction to this new approach began last session. As correctly identified, they should continue to review how they plan responsively to take forward children's interests and build on children's prior knowledge as they play. An overview of the curriculum would be helpful to ensure staff develop their understanding of the totality of the curriculum. While doing so, practitioners should focus on supporting children to plan and evaluate their own learning. Practitioners are considering their approach to monitoring children's progress using information from each child's online learning journal. As planned, they should continue to develop this work to improve children's progress in learning.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and development pathways

- Children are developing and learning through play in a flexible, relaxed environment, which supports their age and stage of development. Children have opportunities to explore outdoors and indoors, developing their sense of curiosity through engagement with loose parts and natural materials. Practitioners are developing their skills in supporting and extending children's learning, this should include taking account of children's prior learning. A focus on schematic play is supporting children to develop and learn in an age appropriate manner.
- The curriculum rationale is an area for development within the setting. Practitioners need support to consider what their curriculum offer is, capturing fully the uniqueness of their setting. The team should have a clearer focus on developing children's literacy and numeracy skills across all areas of the curriculum. As practitioners develop their practice, it would be helpful to revisit the national practice guidance Realising the Ambition. In doing so, the team should build on what is working well in terms of interactions and spaces. They should also increase their focus on the experiences they provide, using the guidance as support.
- Tailored transitions into the setting meet the individual needs of children and families. Flexible drop off times support the needs of families well. Transitions across the day are managed well, with children given warning of impending interruptions, for example, lunchtime. The team actively support transitions from the setting and split placements are supported well to ensure consistency of approach. To ensure there is continuity in learning, the team should continue to develop links and processes to transfer information about children's learning at points of transition.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Torphins Playgroup is run by a committee, which supports all governing aspects of the setting. Relationships within the setting are strong and parents actively engage where possible. Parents choose the setting to meet the needs of their child, with many self-funding their child's place.
- Partnerships within the community are supporting the setting and children to have an identity within Torphins. Fundraising and charity events contribute to the playgroup funds allowing positive changes to be developed. A recent refurbishment has transformed the environment indoors, leading to a bright, airy and newly floored space. The creation of a new website allows parents, community and stakeholders to access very helpful information relating to the setting.
- Parents have opportunities to engage daily in the life of the setting. Prior to COVID-19, parents could volunteer for duty and this is starting again soon. Parents have two formal meetings a year and receive regular updates through the learning app. Parents are very happy with the setting and many choose to travel from neighbouring villages to attend.

2.1 Safeguarding

- The setting submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

good

This indicator reflects on the setting's approach to children's wellbeing which underpins their ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of each individual. A clear focus on wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all children to be the best they can be and celebrates their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- Positive relationships are a key strength of the setting. As a result, most children settle quickly and appear safe and secure. Practitioners nurture children and clearly demonstrate the values of being kind, respectful and inclusive. As a result, children are kind and respectful to their peers, demonstrating age appropriate behaviour.
- Getting it right for all children is core to the ethos of the setting. Children are beginning to engage with the wellbeing indicators in an age appropriate manner. 'Wooden spoon characters' support children to talk about being happy, sad and angry in a confident way. Practitioners recognise the importance of making the wellbeing indicators relevant and meaningful, taking full account of the children's age and stage of development. Moving forward, practitioners should continue to develop and increase their use of the language of the wellbeing indicators with children and parents.
- Children engage in an enjoyable and flexible lunch routine, which takes place in a dedicated eating space. Staff collect their meals from the local school and children receive a well-balanced nutritious hot meal. Practitioners sit with children and engage in social conversation, allowing children the opportunity to enjoy their food in an unhurried manner.
- Leadership opportunities are developing for children through the snack routine. Children help prepare snack and are increasingly becoming independent as they pour their own water and milk. The snack experience causes minimal disruption to children's play, as they access it on a rolling basis, indoors or out.
- The setting has an engaging and inviting outdoor space, where children can explore, take risks and have fun. Outdoor learning supports children's wellbeing, developing their resilience and confidence as they navigate the extensive outdoor space. The mud kitchen is engaging and supports children's imaginative play very well.
- The team are fully aware of the expectations in terms of fulfilling their statutory duties. The manager has attended enhanced training. All children have a care plan, which the setting have identified as needing developed further. Regular reviews and updates to care plans should be actioned for all children. The manager seeks to establish relationships and support from outside agencies actively, to ensure they meet children's individual needs. At times, this can prove to be challenging due to the status of the setting.
- Inclusion and equality are promoted well throughout the setting. Children, families, practitioners and visitors are treated with respect. The setting welcome diversity and challenge discrimination. Children's individual needs are met well within the setting as practitioners seek to upskill themselves to offer appropriate and relevant support when required.

3.2 Securing children's progress

satisfactory

This indicator relates to the development and learning of babies, toddlers and young children. It requires clear understanding of early learning and development and pedagogy. It reflects the integrated way young children learn and the importance of experiences and development happening on an individual basis within a supportive, nurturing and stimulating environment. High quality early learning and childcare contributes significantly to enhancing children's progress and achievement as they grow and learn. It can benefit all children by closing the attainment gap and ensuring equity for all. It is about the holistic nature of development and learning ensuring these foundations are secure in order to achieve future attainment success. The themes are:

- progress in communication, early language, mathematics, and health and wellbeing
- children's progress over time
- overall quality of children's achievement
- ensuring equity for all children

- Children are making satisfactory progress with early language and communication skills. Almost all can talk confidently about their ideas and experiences to adults and other children. Practitioners interact well with children to support their early language and communication while they play. The majority of children show a keen interest in sharing books and taking part in rhymes and songs. Practitioners should now develop a more progressive approach to developing early literacy skills, which everyone understands.
- In numeracy and mathematics, children are making satisfactory progress. They develop their skills as they count in routines, in their spontaneous play or when sorting loose parts. Practitioners provide real life experiences for children to develop numeracy and mathematical skills both indoors and outdoors. There is scope to develop this further, for example, using the language of measure when using ingredients to make playdough. Practitioners would benefit from deepening their understanding about numeracy and mathematical development at the early level of Curriculum for Excellence.
- Work to support children's health and wellbeing is a focus within the setting. Almost all children are developing their understanding of their own feelings and of others. The extensive outdoor play space and resources provides exciting opportunities for children to develop their gross motor skills as they negotiate different terrains, surfaces and gradients. Through a wide range of experiences and resources provided indoors and outdoors, children continue to develop their fine motor skills and coordination. Children are aware about healthy food choices when eating snack and lunch and are aware of the benefits of tooth brushing and handwashing.
- Almost all children are showing increased confidence, resilience, and independence as they progress in learning. Children explore the learning environment enthusiastically when engaging in free play, particularly when outdoors.
- As a result of their early learning experience and from information gathered from individual learning journals, children are making satisfactory progress. Practitioners should continue to develop further their curriculum offer across all curricular areas. As practitioners become more confident in documenting significant observations of each child's learning across all areas of the curriculum, a clearer profile of progress will emerge.
- Practitioners use praise and encouragement to celebrate children's efforts and successes. Children are nominated for "Bee" awards for their contributions towards the setting.

Practitioners are beginning to capture aspects of the children's individual achievements within learning journals. There is significant scope for children's wider achievements and interests from home to be encouraged. This would further promote progress in learning.

- Practitioners provide an inclusive and supportive ethos, built upon mutual respect and trust. The team have a good understanding and knowledge of the needs of children and families within their local community. They work well with outside agencies to address any identified gaps in learning. The manager continues to develop approaches to partnership working, in order to support children who may experience barriers to their learning.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.