

26 September 2017

Dear Parent/Carer

**Bourtree Pre-School Playgroup & Rising Three's  
Portlethen, Aberdeenshire**

In June 2016, HM Inspectors published a letter on your child's setting. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the setting and Aberdeenshire Council. Recently, as you may know, we visited the setting again. During our visit, we talked to children and worked closely with the manager and practitioners. We heard from the manager and other practitioners about the steps the setting has taken to improve. We looked at particular areas that had been identified in the original inspection. As a result, we were able to find out about the progress the setting has made and how well this is supporting children's learning and achievements. This letter sets out what we found. The Care Inspectorate inspected the setting at the same time and that report will be available at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com)

**Develop the curriculum in line with national guidance to ensure children make better progress in their learning.**

Positive progress has been made in developing a curriculum that better reflects current thinking in early learning and childcare. Through professional learning, including reading and reflective discussion, practitioners have engaged with national guidance. This has supported the development of an understanding of what quality curriculum provision should look like. Improvements have been made to how practitioners plan for and support children's learning with Curriculum for Excellence being used with an increasing confidence. The team recognise that they should continue to develop and deepen their understanding of Curriculum for Excellence. Practitioners now increasingly reflect and evaluate the quality of learning instead of the activity or resources used. A positive start has been made to the use of floor books to support planning for learning. Practitioners have developed their skills and confidence in using these as a way of talking to children about their learning. This is helping children to increasingly lead and direct what they want to learn about. The positive developments in developing the curriculum and understanding of how children learn now need to be introduced to the two's group. This will ensure all children experience higher quality provision.

## **Improve the learning environment, including plans to further develop the outdoor area.**

Everyone has been involved in the development and improvement of the learning environment. There are now clearly defined areas where children are more focused in their learning. During our visit, a significantly calmer setting was observed where children were consistently engaged in purposeful play. There are significantly more opportunities for children to make choices and decisions in their learning. Resources are more attractive and more open-ended which is allowing children to be more imaginative in their play. During our visit we observed children engaging for longer periods of time as a result, for example at the 'Creation Station'. Through related professional learning there is a new focus on the promotion of creativity, curiosity, inquiry and problem solving. There is also a clear emphasis on the development of children's independence. The outdoor area has been significantly reorganised and its use developed. A focus on open-ended materials, the mud kitchen, planting and growing and den building has revitalised learning. The development of the environment has been documented through the use of a floor book which clearly evidences the improvement journey. The views of parents and children have been gathered to inform ongoing developments. There is scope for the outdoor learning spaces to be used flexibly across the two's group and the playgroup to ensure all children benefit from the re-energised spaces.

## **Review and refresh approaches to assessing and tracking children's progress to help plan more effectively for what they need to learn.**

Through professional learning, practitioners are now more aware of children's developmental stages. This has been supported by input from the local authority. A key worker system is now established with practitioners working in pairs to support groups of children across the two's group and playgroup. The team recognise that the key worker approach now needs to be further developed. Practitioners continue to develop their skills in observing children and identifying significant learning. Observations are now more relevant and regular. This is helping build up a coherent picture of the progress children are making in their learning. A positive start has been made to identifying possible 'next steps' in learning for individuals and should continue to be developed. A language of learning is being developed with the children. There is a clearer focus when talking to children about what they are learning rather than 'doing' and 'playing'. Opportunities such as 'gather times' are supporting this well. Learning profiles have been developed. The layout has been reviewed with advice for parents created to ensure a shared understanding of the purpose of the folder. You, as parents and carers, are encouraged to share learning from home. Overall, the profiles show evidence of individual achievements and learning in a much more personalised way. Children should now be even more involved in documenting of learning in their profiles.

## **Develop and implement processes to evaluate and develop the work of the playgroup.**

Following the original inspection, a detailed plan for improvement was established with the support of the local authority. This contains relevant priorities and a clear sense of direction for the development of the playgroup which is being realised. A

calendar of self-evaluation activity has been created and is being implemented. This is resulting in more systematic and robust self-evaluation activity. Regular monitoring is now in place with support from the visiting principal teacher. Feedback is useful and specific. This should continue to be developed. A positive start has been made to using the national self-evaluation framework to help identify what is working well and what needs to improve. The team recognise that this is at the early stages. Your views as parents and carers are regularly sought. Examples include the development of the outdoor area, choice of summer trips and evaluation of stay and play sessions. Since the last inspection, parents and carers are more involved in the life and work of the playgroup. The new committee play a more active role and are clearly a support to the staff team. This includes the securing of funding to protect time for practitioners to meet as a team. This is having a positive impact. By working together, the team and management committee are strongly placed to continue to improve the work of the playgroup.

### **What happens next?**

The setting has made good progress since the original inspection. We are confident that the setting has the capacity to continue to improve and so we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. Aberdeenshire Council will inform parents about the setting's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its settings.

Barbara Daly  
HM Inspector

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