

Summarised inspection findings

**St Sylvester's Nursery (early learning and
childcare standalone setting)**

The Moray Council

SEED No: 5211514

12 December 2017

Key contextual information

St Sylvester's nursery is based in a church hall in the centre of the town of Elgin. The hall is partially partitioned into two playrooms with access to an enclosed play area. One playroom is used for children aged three to five years and the other for children aged two to three years. Children aged two to three years only attend in the morning. There is a roll of 45 children who attend a variety of different sessions.

Since April 2017, when the manager left, there has been a high turnover of staff. Out of 11 practitioners there are only four original staff remaining. One of those is now the acting manager. This high turnover of staff has caused difficulties in the setting. The committee have supported both the acting manager and practitioners well throughout these changes.

1.3 Leadership of change

weak

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.

- The setting's vision, values and aims were developed over a decade ago. As discussed, they now need to be reviewed urgently to ensure that they fully reflect the aspirations of the setting community and current thinking and developments in early learning and childcare. Management and practitioners in the recently established team are committed to delivering high quality early learning and childcare and recognise that a refreshed vision, values and aims, developed and shared with children, staff parents/carers and other stakeholders would support this further. Once established these should be revisited and reviewed regularly and be used to underpin and inform daily practice.
- There has been a high turnover of staff since April with seven out of 11 practitioners leaving the setting. The new manager is keen to improve the setting. She is building positive links with the local school, church, convent and community. To promote distributed leadership she is planning to give leadership roles to practitioners. However, to be successful in their leadership roles practitioners need to become more familiar with current effective practice. Children should also be encouraged to take on leadership roles such as snack helpers and risk assessors. This will develop the distributed leadership in the setting even further.
- There is evidence of some attempts at planning for improvement. The setting's improvement plan includes key priorities. These should be reviewed to ensure that they are the most relevant priorities to improve the quality of learning experiences for children. However, the purpose of the approaches to planning in improving learning and teaching are unclear. Practitioners should use the cycle of observation, assessment and planning more effectively to have a better holistic picture of children's progress.

- The manager, rightly, has a key priority in the improvement plan to focus on self-evaluation for improvement. This remains at a very early stage with little robust self-evaluation in place. As planned, the setting should fully implement the national self-evaluation framework; How good is our early learning and childcare? and the guidance from the local authority on self-evaluation to support and drive improvement. In order to effectively meet the needs of all children attending the setting and to fully implement a self-evaluation framework, the manager and practitioners require support from the authority. They will also need to update their knowledge of the current thinking in early learning and childcare to support improvement. As discussed, a planned series of visits to other establishments would help with the implementation of these improvements.
- The manager and practitioners responded positively to the professional dialogue during the inspection. They are committed to improving their practice. However, they now need support and further professional learning opportunities to improve the learning experiences and outcomes for children.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

weak

This indicator focuses on ensuring high quality learning experiences 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.

- Overall, practitioners have developed positive and caring relationships with children. As a result, children feel safe and secure in the setting. Children aged two to three years are happy and relaxed and are becoming confident as they explore their environment. They enjoy play in the sensory room and are enthusiastic about learning outdoors. Children aged three to five years are polite and friendly. They play well together and show kindness and consideration to each other. They enjoy 'welly walks' and are most engaged during experiences outdoors. Practitioners now need to engage with national practice guidance to increase their expectations and aspirations for children's learning and to ensure high quality learning experiences for all children. They need to develop approaches to better support children in making more informed choices about their learning and in taking an increasingly active role in leading their learning.
- Many of the experiences planned for children do not yet motivate and engage children sufficiently. As a result, the majority of children are not able to sustain engagement and to experience success in their learning. Staff need to work together to support children to sustain appropriate levels of engagement across the curriculum and throughout the time children spend in setting. This is particularly important for children who have extended time in the setting and children who are learning English as an additional language. The team in the setting will benefit from further developing their understanding of how young children learn and communicate. Improving their use of comment and questioning will assist in enabling them to engage, challenge and support children better.
- Practitioners have recently begun to explore how they can make more use of open ended and natural resources to promote children's curiosity, creativity and inquiry. Experiences outdoors in the local community provide children with scope to develop imagination and develop physical skills. However, many opportunities to promote literacy, numeracy and independence are currently missed in the course of learning visits beyond the setting.
- Planning for children aged two to three years takes account of national guidance Pre-birth to Three. In planning for older children practitioners take account of the experiences and outcomes from Curriculum for Excellence. Practitioners record some observations in online learning journals and in floor books. The manager recognises that the quality of observations needs to be improved to capture what is important in children's individual learning through play. Practitioners will benefit from support to develop confidence and skill in making and using consistently high quality observations. This will enable them to identify appropriate next steps for individuals and provide a sound basis for planning

learning experiences to build on children's skills and provide needed support and challenge for all children.

- Practitioners have made a start in using floor books to record evidence of children's experiences. They now need to develop skill in using these and other approaches to support children to reflect on their learning.
- No system is in place to monitor and track children's progress. The manager has rightly identified the need to introduce an effective and manageable approach based on a shared understanding of standards across the team. This will assist practitioners to ensure that learning experiences and interactions meet the individual needs of children and ensure that changes to learning and teaching result in necessary improvements for learners.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and development pathways

- The manager and practitioners need to work together to develop a curriculum rationale which reflects the unique context of the setting. This need to be informed by national practice guidance and by the design principles of Curriculum for Excellence. This will ensure that practitioners share high expectations and aspirations for children's learning and will assist them in providing greater depth, choice, challenge and progression in children's learning.
- Practitioners need to further improve the curriculum to support children in developing essential aspects of early learning including mathematics, curiosity, inquiry and creativity. In planning to secure the best outcomes for children they need to improve how they support children to develop and extend their early literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum within the playrooms and beyond.
- Practitioners use floor books to record the experiences children participate in over the session. The manager should now develop a manageable way to keep track of the range of experiences available across the curriculum. As part of effective monitoring and tracking this will help practitioners to identify where they need to further improve learning experiences across the curriculum. For example, looking in depth at provision for literacy/numeracy/health and wellbeing.
- The setting is well placed to develop rich learning experiences for children in the surrounding local environment. Already this is providing opportunities for children to develop aspects of learning including elements of health and wellbeing. As discussed, practitioners should consider ways to offer more opportunities for children to be independent in their learning and to make their own decisions about how and what they learn. This will provide opportunities for children to experience success, and build resilience and confidence in themselves as learners.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families - parental engagement

- Information is shared with parents about children's learning and progress in both formal and informal ways. There is a monthly newsletter and information is also put on the social media page. Both the newsletter and social media page could be used to inform the parents more about what their children are learning. There are regular parents' evenings. A few parents would like more information on what their children are learning.
- Practitioners involve parents by encouraging them to come to 'stay and play' sessions where they can see and contribute to the variety of learning experiences available to the children. Parents are also encouraged to join the children on excursions within and beyond the local community. They are very supportive of fundraising events and see the setting as making a valuable contribution to their community. The setting is well supported by the committee who are keen to promote it to the community. Parents have been fully involved and consulted about changes in the setting in the last six months.

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

weak

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.

- There are caring relationships in the setting and practitioners have a positive relationship with families. The setting is at a very early stage of developing a shared understanding of wellbeing indicators. They now need to support children and parents to develop an awareness of what it means to be safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, responsible, respected and included. Practitioners need to encourage children to express their choices and opinions. At times, children's interests are used as a basis for planning experiences and opportunities in their learning. However, practitioners need to build on children's interests further instead of following their own activities and plans. They should also encourage the children to be aware of their rights by promoting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This could build on the development of a shared understanding of the wellbeing indicators.
- Practitioners are proactive in seeking appropriate help from other agencies for children with additional support needs at an early stage. There is planning using the local authority staged intervention process for children identified with additional support needs. However, practitioners who are working with the children are not aware of the contents and recommendations for learning outcomes in these plans. The contents of these plans should be made more widely accessible to all practitioners in order to ensure that relevant interventions are carried out consistently. There are several children with additional support needs including children with English as an additional language attending the setting. Practitioners should ensure that they know both appropriate interventions and specific individual learning needs of these children to ensure that they are making appropriate progress. They should continue with plans to receive further training on supporting children with additional support needs. As a recommendation within the Care Inspectorate report September 2016 all personal plans should be reviewed and updated with parents at least once every six months or sooner in line with current legislation. As yet, there are no personal plans for any of the children. This needs to be addressed urgently. The manager engages and complies with statutory duties. The manager and practitioners would benefit from attending appropriate training on current legislation, to further build on their knowledge of statutory duties.
- Children's achievements are celebrated using praise and reward. The setting is at an early stage in the use of an achievement tree to celebrate achievements from home. Practitioners should continue to work toward celebrating achievements outside the centre. Positive behaviour is encouraged throughout the setting. However, developing collectively with children a shared understanding of expected behaviour would better promote positive behaviour. It would be useful for practitioners to have training on equality and inclusion to

ensure a robust understanding of the legislative framework around this. This will ensure that managers and practitioners are aware and monitor issues relating to equality and diversity to ensure best practice.

3.2 Securing children's progress

weak

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 aged two to three years enjoy interactions with adults and are beginning to use language to communicate with adults and peers. This is helping them to develop their vocabulary. Children aged two to three years have opportunities to play with a range of resources which is enabling them to develop their early understanding of shape, colour and number. Practitioners are responsive to their interests and strive to support their social, emotional and physical skills through a range of experiences indoors and out. They now need additional opportunities to develop their understanding of how children aged two to three years learn and develop. This will help to meet the individual needs of children.
- Children aged three to five years are making progress in some areas of the curriculum. Practitioners need to review the range and quality of learning experiences provided to ensure that all children are offered sufficient opportunities to develop and apply their early literacy and numeracy skills in meaningful contexts both indoors and beyond in the local environment. Further developing their understanding of how young children develop early language skills and mathematical thinking will enable them to support children more effectively through an improved blend of quality adult supported and child initiated experiences.
- Most children are not yet making sufficient progress in important aspects of their early literacy. They need more opportunities to develop their skill and enjoyment in playing with the sounds of language through rhyme, songs and playful language exchanges with adults and peers. Most would benefit from better opportunities to engage with stories and non-fiction texts in smaller, more focused groups and settings. Practitioners would benefit from further professional learning to support their understanding of how to build on children's interests to create engaging opportunities for them to extend their vocabulary and confidence in talking about their thinking and their knowledge of the world. Through inspection activity it is clear that children need to be encouraged to explore written language for a wider range of meaningful purposes indoors and out.
- The majority of children can sort and match objects by shape, size and colour and are developing an awareness of pattern. Most children can recite counting words within ten and are learning to recognise number. Most children now need to develop their mathematical thinking and to apply their numeracy skills in play across the curriculum.

- In health and wellbeing, children are developing their fine and gross motor skills. They benefit from exercise and enjoy the freedom and fresh air of the attractive local green space. Children are developing confidence for example by testing their balancing skills when crossing a muddy puddle on a narrow board. They are developing awareness of how to keep themselves safe by washing their hands before eating. They can talk about keeping safe on expeditions in the local environment. Practitioners should consider how they can make more use of the wellbeing indicators to broaden and deepen their own concept of supporting and developing children's wellbeing through the curriculum.
- Practitioners encourage children and families to share children's interests and achievements beyond the setting. The manager should continue with plans to develop this to ensure that this information can be used to promote children's achievement and progress. Children will benefit from more opportunities to achieve through taking on roles of responsibility within the setting. There is scope too for children to have a more active role in their wider community. This, alongside engagement with UNCRC, will support children to develop their understanding of themselves as global citizens.

Setting's Choice of QI: 3.3 - Developing creativity and skills for live and work

- **Theme 1 Developing creativity**
- **Theme 2 Developing skills for live and work**

- Practitioners have developed the outdoor area and are beginning to encourage children to be inquisitive and to take risks in their learning. The use of loose parts play has given the children more opportunity to be more creative. Experiences outdoors in the local community provide children with scope to further develop their imagination and creativity. However, practitioners need to encourage children to explore more possibilities, lead their own learning, and plan, design and evaluate their solutions during play. Many opportunities are currently missed in the course of learning visits beyond the setting to encourage these skills.
- Practitioners are at the early stages of developing the children's wellbeing. Practitioners should encourage children to express their ideas and feelings. They support children well to help them to resolve disagreements. Children are not yet able to ask questions, consider and make connections across learning experiences to make sense of the world around them. Practitioners should encourage children to participate in the planned improvements in the setting.

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.

Education Scotland

Denholm House
Almondvale Business Park
Almondvale Way
Livingston EH54 6GA

T +44 (0)131 244 4330
E enquiries@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk

www.education.gov.scot

© Crown Copyright, 2017

You may re-use this information (excluding images and logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence providing that it is reproduced accurately and not in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Education Scotland copyright and the document title specified.

To view this licence, visit <http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence> or e-mail: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.