

3 October 2017

Dear Parent/Carer

**Acrewood Nursery
Stirling**

In July 2016, HM Inspectors published a letter on your child's early learning and childcare setting. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the setting and Stirling 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.

Improve children's experiences in early language and mathematics to ensure children make better progress.

Across the setting, the quality of children's learning experiences has improved. Positive changes have been made to the playroom for children under three years. Children are now able to freely explore and investigate a wider range of natural and sensory materials. They enjoy looking at books with practitioners. A few children are becoming aware of number and colours through their play experiences. Practitioners within the playroom for older children now have a clear focus on ensuring learning environments promote early language, numeracy and mathematics. Children now access a wider range of resources and experiences both indoors and outdoors to support the development of these skills. Floor books and children's individual learning journals demonstrate children are making better progress in their learning. We have asked practitioners to consider ways to enable children to develop further their early literacy and numeracy skills through real-life situations. Specific 'learning intentions' have been identified for your child to support their progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. These are included in their individual learning journals. It will be important for practitioners to ensure that individual learning journals demonstrate the progress your child is making in all areas of their learning. As these journals develop, an appropriate balance of photographs and examples of work will help your child to talk confidently about their experiences and learning.

Improve the curriculum to ensure children receive better learning opportunities which helps them progress more quickly and builds on their prior learning.

Across the setting, practitioners continue to build their knowledge and understanding of national guidance. They require ongoing support to ensure a consistent approach to supporting children to develop and learn and make the progress they are capable of. Planning for children's development and learning is improving and is now more responsive to children's needs and interests. Practitioners working with older children have made a number of positive changes to the playroom and outdoor area. These are encouraging children to explore, be curious and develop their creativity. Children now have greater choice and are making decisions about their play. We observed a few practitioners using effective approaches to support and extend children's learning. This now needs to be more consistent across all practitioners. The floor book approach to planning continues to develop. By talking to children and looking at these books, we could see that practitioners are taking better account of Curriculum for Excellence and involving children in planning. Children are beginning to experience greater depth in their learning through specific learning contexts such as volcanoes and the lifecycle of a butterfly. The opportunity to release the butterflies into the garden brought great excitement for the children.

Transition into the setting and the move between playrooms is handled sensitively to meet the needs of children and their families. Practitioners working with children under three years, use initial information from parents to ensure their care needs are met. We have asked the manager and practitioners to consider ways to gather information on children's prior experiences. This will enable them to build upon children's development and learning more effectively. As children move into the next playroom, practitioners share information on your child's progress and care needs. Primary teachers and school buddies visit children in the setting who are moving on to P1. Helpful information on your child's progress is shared with the school to support your child as they move on to the next stage in their learning.

Improve self-evaluation and leadership at all levels to evaluate and monitor the work of the nursery and ensure necessary improvements are made.

The manager has provided ongoing support and guidance to practitioners. As a team, they have worked hard to make a number of improvements identified at the last inspection. The vision, values and aims of the setting have been reviewed and refreshed. Practitioners help children to become familiar with the values of 'care, cooperation, happiness and respect', through appropriate experiences. The manager has introduced systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the setting. The creation of an 'improvement board' has provided opportunities to identify what is working well and what needs to improve. Visits to other early learning and childcare settings and support from the local authority have enabled practitioners to think more deeply about their practice. The manager now needs to have a more focused and in depth approach to monitoring and evaluating the work of the setting. This includes monitoring children's progress. In doing so, the setting will be able to identify the overall impact on children's learning. To ensure the setting continues to improve, practitioners require clear direction from the manager. Moving

forward, it will be important for the manager and practitioners to continually improve their practice to ensure delivery of high quality early learning and childcare.

What happens next?

Since Education Scotland's visit, Acrewood Nursery is no longer in partnership with Stirling Council to deliver early learning and childcare. As children will no longer be receiving their funded entitlement to early learning and childcare in the setting, Education Scotland will have no further involvement with the setting.

Sandra Kehoe
HM Inspector

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