

14 June 2016

Dear Parent/Carer

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

Recently, as you may know, my colleague and I visited and inspected your child's early learning and childcare (ELC) setting. Throughout our visit we talked to parents and children and we worked closely with the manager and staff. We wanted to find out how well children were learning and achieving and how well the ELC setting supported children to do their best. The manager shared with us the ELC setting's successes and priorities for improvement. We looked at some particular aspects of the ELC setting's recent work including the development of the outdoor learning environment and the pace and structure of the session. As a result, we were able to find out how good the ELC setting was at improving children's education. I would now like to tell you what we found.

How well do children learn and achieve?

In the Two's group children benefit from the developing relationships they have with staff. These help them to feel safe and secure and ready to take part in the activities on offer. They enjoy using glue when creating their own pictures and building towers with large foam blocks. Staff recognise that children now need to have more experiences that allow them to learn through their senses, be curious and investigate. Children attending playgroup are confident and settled. Most play well together and are learning to share and take turns. We have asked staff to develop learning experiences to make them more interesting. This will encourage children to spend more time exploring them rather than move so quickly between activities. Staff use 'Big Books' to record activities. We talked to staff about the potential use of these to help children to be more involved in and talk more about their learning. All children have individual profiles that document episodes of their learning. These should also be developed to help children know what they are good at and what they need to learn next.

While children are making progress in early language and mathematics they are capable of much more as a result of their playgroup experiences. Staff recognise

that there is considerable scope for increasing learning in literacy and numeracy in the playroom. This will help children to build on what they already know as well as develop new understanding and skills. The majority of children listen well and contribute at Together Time. We spoke to staff about the benefits of developing listening skills in smaller groups and they are keen to try this. A few children choose to look at books and are familiar with a range of texts. Books now need to be promoted through greater use across the playroom and the development of the story corner. A few children show interest in mark-making in their play. Routines such as helping to prepare snack help children develop an awareness of number in a meaningful context. Games, singing and puzzles also support children to learn about numbers and develop mathematical language such as describing and comparing size. Children now need to be learning through even more purposeful and real life situations.

How well does the early learning and childcare setting support children to develop and learn?

Staff show a high level of care and respect for children. Positive relationships between you, as parents, and staff create a partnership between home and playgroup. Staff make observations of children as they play. These now need to be more regular and focused on learning to help identify what individual children need to learn next. The playroom is set up daily which presents a challenge to staff. In discussion they recognise that the environment for learning needs to be improved to ensure that children can develop more independence in their learning. Overall, children experience a range of activities at playgroup. These should now be based on what children need and want to learn about. This will help provide the right amount of support and challenge in their learning. Staff want to do their very best for children. They recognise when a child may need extra support to help them learn. We discussed the importance of identifying and recording approaches used to support children. Where other professionals are involved these approaches need to be agreed with everyone who supports the child. Together this will allow staff to support children more effectively.

Overall, the curriculum is based on play. Staff have recently begun to meet more regularly to plan for children's learning. In order to better meet the learning needs of children, staff need help to understand Curriculum for Excellence and other national guidance. Recently the outdoor area has been developed with funding from a national charity. This is an exciting development which has the potential to provide quality learning opportunities across the curriculum. We also spoke to staff about using the local community and visitors more to enrich learning for children. Many children move onto other early learning and childcare settings following their playgroup experience. There is potential for closer working relationships to be developed with other settings. This will support children to experience greater continuity and progression in their learning as they move on.

How well does the early learning and childcare setting improve the quality of its work?

There is a clear commitment and desire from staff to develop the quality of the work of the playgroup. There have been significant challenges over the last year and the

recently settled staff team are keen to drive improvement together. They recognise that the systems required to identify what is working well and what needs to improve should be developed. This includes close monitoring of the progress children are making in their learning to ensure they each fulfil their potential. As parents, you have the opportunity to share your views through daily contact, the management committee and questionnaires. A few of you told us through inspection questionnaires that you would like more information on the progress your child is making. We discussed this with staff and how you could be more involved in deciding what your child will learn at playgroup. Staff need, and will benefit from, the support of the Early Years team from Aberdeenshire Council to make the significant improvements required.

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the setting had no requirements and two recommendations. From these, two recommendations have been met. As a result of this inspection, there are two requirements and four recommendations.

Our inspection of your ELC setting found the following key strengths.

- Happy children who enjoy coming to playgroup.
- Positive relationships between parents, staff and children and the nurturing approach to supporting children.
- Commitment and enthusiasm of the new staff team to developing and improving the playgroup.

We discussed with staff and the education authority how they might continue to improve the ELC setting. This is what we agreed with them.

- Develop the curriculum in line with national guidance to ensure children make better progress in their learning.
- Improve the learning environment, including plans to further develop the outdoor area.
- Review and refresh approaches to assessing and tracking children's progress to help plan more effectively for what they need to learn.
- Develop and implement processes to evaluate and develop the work of the playgroup.

What happens at the end of the inspection?

As a result of our inspection findings we think that the ELC setting needs additional support and more time to make necessary improvements. Our Area Lead Officer and Lead Officer Early Years and Childcare along with the local authority will discuss the most appropriate support in order to build capacity for improvement, and will

maintain contact to monitor progress. We will return to carry out a further inspection within a year of publication of this letter. We will then issue another letter to parents on the extent to which the ELC setting has improved.

Barbara Daly
HM Inspector

Marion Sutherland
Care Inspector

Additional inspection evidence, such as details of the quality indicator evaluations for your setting can be found on the Education Scotland website at <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/school/eyc/BourtrePreschoolPortlethenAberdeenshire.asp>.

If you would like to receive this letter in a different format, for example, in a translation please contact the administration team on the above telephone number.

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