

14 January 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

In December 2017, HM Inspectors published a letter on St Sylvester's Nursery. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the setting and Moray Council. We subsequently returned to the setting to look at how it had continued to improve its work, and published another letter in February 2019. 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 nursery class at the same time and that report will be available at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

**Develop the vision, values and aims in consultation with practitioners, parents, community and children to reflect their values and aspirations for improving outcomes for children.**

Since the last inspection in November 2018, the nursery's vision, values and aims have been reviewed. The manager and practitioners, in consultation with parents, have made changes to the aims which reflects their joint commitment to delivering high quality early learning and childcare. In reviewing these aims, they now need to develop and share them with children, parents/carers and other stakeholders which will support ongoing improvement.

An action plan devised with the local authority and the manager has helped support improvement in the nursery. A focus on improving the environment indoors and the implementation of a new planning format has led to more positive learning experiences for the children. However, there still needs to be improvement in other areas of the work of the nursery, particularly in learning and teaching.

**Develop self-evaluation practices in order to lead to both improvement in the setting and improved outcomes for children.**

The manager continues to encourage practitioners to reflect on their practice at weekly self-evaluation meetings. Practitioners are encouraged to discuss what they do well, what they could do better and identify the next steps to improve children's learning experiences. The manager and practitioners continue to record and collate evidence of their self-evaluation activities. Practitioners are engaging more often with national guidance such as Building the Ambition and How good is our early learning and childcare?. This has supported practitioners in developing a clearer understanding of implementing and evaluating improvements in the nursery. Support visits from Care and Learning Alliance (CALA) and local authority officers has helped in developing self-evaluation practices and improvements in the nursery, leading to improving outcomes for children.

Engagement with professional learning sessions and online learning have supported practitioners to implement improvements in the nursery. They should continue to look

outwards to learn from other nurseries. This will enable them to become familiar with current thinking and research in early learning and childcare, in order to support continuous improvement. The manager encourages practitioners to acquire additional qualifications in order to improve their practice.

The improvement plan includes key priorities which should continue to be reviewed to ensure that they are the most relevant to improve the quality of learning experiences for children. The manager, with support from the local authority, now needs to continue to drive improvements in the nursery to secure better outcomes for children.

**Develop approaches to planning, observing and tracking children's learning to ensure sufficient depth and challenge is offered. This will help children make the very best progress they are capable of.**

The improved layout of the playroom, including increased use of real-life and open-ended natural materials, has given children access to a wider range of resources. The manager and practitioners should continue to review and adjust the layout of the playroom. This will ensure children's experiences continue to improve and meet the needs of all children. This is particularly important for children under the age of three.

The quality of practitioners' observations of children is improving. Practitioners are beginning to focus clearly on aspects of learning. They have recently introduced progression frameworks to track children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. This will help practitioners to develop a shared understanding of the progress children are making. They now need to make more effective use of observations to assess children's progress and identify relevant next steps in learning.

Practitioners have made a few changes to how they plan for children's learning. They are beginning to use their observations to capture children's interests. Continued support will be required to support practitioners to improve further the planning process and involve children more effectively in planning their learning.

**Develop further the opportunities for children to be more active in their learning as well as being more proactive in leading their learning. Practitioners should also be encouraged to be leaders in learning.**

Practitioners should continue to engage with national guidance. This will increase their expectations and aspirations for children's learning and ensure consistently high quality learning experiences for all. There remains potential for the level of challenge and depth in learning to be greater to support children's progress more effectively.

Children now have increased opportunities to undertake early leadership roles such as 'quality checker' and 'art checker'. It will be important for practitioners to encourage responsibility and support children to complete these tasks. Practitioners need to adopt a consistent approach to ensure all children demonstrate respect for resources within the nursery.

Whilst improvements have been made to enable children to be more involved in planning, more work is required to support children to become leaders of learning. Children will benefit

from increased engagement with their individual learning journeys in order that they can reflect on achievements and consider what they might learn next.

All practitioners have engaged in professional learning to support their practice and leadership roles. They recognise that this needs to continue to improve practice and to ensure continuous improvement of the nursery. In particular, practitioners require to deepen their knowledge and understanding of Curriculum for Excellence in order to become leaders of learning.

### What happens next?

The setting has made some progress since the original inspection. We will liaise with Moray Council regarding the setting's capacity to improve. We will return to carry out a further inspection of the setting within one year of the publication of this letter. We will discuss with Moray Council the details of this inspection. When we return to inspect the setting we will write to you as parents informing you of the progress the setting has made.

Dr Noreen Phillips  
HM Inspector