

19 February 2019

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. 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.

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.

- At the time of the original inspection in October 2017, the nursery's vision, values and aims had not been reviewed for over a decade. The manager and practitioners have recently made changes to the aims which reflects their commitment to delivering high quality early learning and childcare. They recognise that a refreshed vision, values and aims, developed and shared with children, staff, parents/carers and other stakeholders would support ongoing improvement. These now need to be reviewed urgently to improve the aspiration of the nursery community and include current thinking and developments in early learning and childcare.
- Across all developments in the nursery there now needs to be, as a matter of urgency, a considerable increased pace of change and improvement. As discussed, a partnership agreement co-created with the local authority and the manager should provide a helpful and detailed framework to support this improvement.

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

- The manager has made a positive start encouraging practitioners to become reflective by the use of the weekly self-evaluation tool. Through its use, practitioners are encouraged to discuss what they do well, what they could do better and identify the next steps to improve children's learning experience. This has been used well to improve the literacy area in the nursery. The manager and practitioners use the 'self-evaluation improvement folder' to record and collate evidence of the self-evaluation. This should be continued allowing the involvement of all stakeholders. The manager should continue to encourage practitioners to be more outward looking. This will help them to develop a deeper understanding of quality early learning and childcare.

- Practitioners recently attended professional learning sessions to support them to identify the setting's strengths and key areas for improvement. Building on this, approaches to self-evaluation now need to be more systematic. This will ensure a coherent approach to identifying what is working well and what needs to improve.
- The improvement plan includes key priorities which should 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 drive improvement at a consistent and increased pace. Support from the local authority will be essential in building the required capacity, in order to be able to coordinate and lead the significant improvement agenda.

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.

- Practitioners are at the early stages of improving planning, observing and tracking children's learning. They are starting to use children's interests in planning, for example, looking at autumn. Mind maps and floor books are beginning to be used to record, share and involve children in the planning process. The development of this approach needs to be continued to allow children to be consistently and meaningfully involved in planning their own learning.
- The assessment of learning is not yet appropriately robust or monitored to ensure sufficient depth and challenge in children's learning. Too often, children's learning is not supported and extended well enough. Most children spend significant time in low level, repetitive activities and play which does not reflect their capabilities nor ensure sufficient progress in their learning.
- Practitioners are beginning to use tracking tools to demonstrate children's progress. Further work needs to be carried out to show what children need to learn and identify next steps in learning. As a matter of urgency, the manager and practitioners now need to develop a shared understanding of children's progress and what this could look like in the nursery.

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 build on the start they have made on using children's interest to plan their learning. They now 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. 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. 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. Children enjoy being snack helpers. They should also be encouraged to take on other leadership roles, such as risk assessors.

- Since August 2018, the two senior practitioners are now responsible for the running of the nursery on the four mornings that the manager is not present. They are both excited and motivated to do well in their new roles. However, to be successful in their leadership roles the senior practitioners need to become more familiar with current effective practice.

What happens next?

The setting has made insufficient 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 six months 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