

11 February 2025

Dear Parent/Carer

In July 2024, HM Inspectors published a letter on Victoria Quay Nursery. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement, which we agreed with the setting and The City of Edinburgh Council. Recently, as you may know, we visited the setting again. During our visit, we talked to children and worked closely with the head of setting and staff. We heard from the head of setting and other staff 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.

Establish settled leadership as a priority. The nursery group should secure permanent leadership for the nursery as quickly as possible.

Overall, there has been an initial, positive start to addressing this area for improvement. Leadership has improved and is now stable. The manager has clear plans to move forward at a brisk pace to improve the nursery further.

Following the original inspection in May 2024, North Edinburgh Childcare appointed a temporary manager to Victoria Quay Nursery. This appointee continued in post until late September 2024, when a new permanent manager was appointed. To address parental concerns related to the inspection, the area manager had held three meetings with parents to share plans for the necessary rapid improvements. These meetings will continue into 2025.

Parents report that this ongoing communication has enabled them to raise concerns and seek the necessary assurances about how the nursery would improve. The area manager continues to visit Victoria Quay every week to offer support and monitor improvements.

At the time of the further inspection, the new manager had been in post for almost nine weeks. To enhance her leadership skills, she had undertaken leadership training. During her short time in post, she had focused appropriately on improving the ethos of the nursery and developing staff teamwork. The staff team showed greater confidence and felt motivated about making changes to improve their practice. The manager had worked successfully with practitioners in playrooms for children under three, to increase resource provision and offer more stimulating play spaces. However, work to improve the environment and learning experiences for children aged three to five years remains at a very early stage of development.

The manager and area manager now need to focus on developing the knowledge and skills of the staff team. A next step is to ensure all staff have a role in supporting ongoing improvements. Quality assurance arrangements across the nursery need to be strengthened to ensure that all aspects of provision are kept under review. This has the potential to help managers track the impact of changes they make. It will be important for the manager to ensure that any changes made result in clear improvements to children's experiences, and their progress in learning. In her short time in post, the manager has made a positive impact on the setting. Moving forward, she should share her vision for the future development of the

nursery with parents. This will support parental partnerships and ensure that parents' views are reflected in future plans.

Improve the range of play spaces, both indoors and outdoors, to ensure that children have better learning experiences.

The staff team has made insufficient progress in addressing this area for improvement. The playroom and outdoor area still need significant development. However, managers have plans in place to address areas of weakness over the next few months. The manager undertakes a weekly audit to ensure that basic provision is in place for children aged three to five years. These audits do not yet focus enough on ensuring richly resourced spaces for each of the curriculum areas.

This playroom is small and needs better overall provision to ensure that children experience their entitlement to a broad and balanced early years curriculum. Literacy and numeracy provision are weak, overall. Practitioners need to strengthen the provision for listening, talking, reading and early writing. They need to develop a rich numeracy environment where children can explore mathematics in play contexts. Most playroom spaces need higher quality resources to engage children more fully. Practitioners have not yet improved the large outdoor area. The space offers the potential for rich play spaces for children. but it is not yet being used effectively. To address this, the manager plans to use her knowledge and skills as a trained forest school leader to develop more creative outdoor spaces. This has the potential to encourage children to explore and investigate their environment.

Improve the quality of learning and teaching. Practitioners should provide more stimulating and challenging activities to ensure that children are more engaged, motivated and progressing more securely. Staff should improve their interactions with children to include more open-ended questions and explanations.

Overall, there has been insufficient progress in addressing this area for improvement. However, there have been a few key improvements to learning and teaching approaches. Practitioners are motivated and enthusiastic. They now engage more frequently with children and, at times, play alongside them. They give clear, age-appropriate explanations and ensure that children have appropriate thinking time. Where practice is best, practitioners use open-ended questioning and explanations to enhance children's learning. This is not yet consistent across staff or playrooms. The staff team would benefit from professional learning on high quality interactions with children. Practitioners display increased confidence in developing experiences from children's ideas and interests. A few children engage well in their learning, but their interest is limited by a lack of stimulating resources and books. Staff need to improve the quality of play spaces and resources to ensure better levels of engagement and concentration in children. Most children need a greater level of challenge to help them make better progress, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Practitioners need a better understanding of children's learning and development, and the purposes of assessment. The staff team need to develop more accurate information on children's progress and achievement. This will help them to plan high quality experience for children, and to challenge them in their play. As they develop their approaches to learning and teaching, the manager and practitioners should share these fully with parents. This will

support partnership working and ensure that families are well informed about ongoing changes and development.

Improve approaches to planning and assessment. These need to include more child-centred planning and an assessment framework that will help staff gather reliable evidence about children's progress. Practitioners should use information about progress more effectively to plan children's learning.

Overall, the staff team with support from the area manager has made an appropriate start to addressing this area for improvement. Practitioners should continue to collaborate with senior leaders to develop further their understanding and use of effective planning and assessment approaches. The team would benefit from continued focused support, regular feedback and continued professional learning from the parent company. They should access the training on offer from the City of Edinburgh Council. They need to improve their knowledge and understanding to help them improve how they observe, assess and record the progress children make.

Staff have engaged positively with a few professional learning opportunities to inform how they plan for children's learning. The team are enthusiastic about changes they have made to their planning. Practitioners now meet every week, in their individual playrooms, to plan intentional learning, reflect on children's interests, and discuss children's interests. These new processes do not yet show significant impact on the quality of learning spaces or experiences. Practitioners need to continue to improve how to plan learning, using their knowledge about the skills, capabilities and achievements of all children.

Practitioners are at the very early stages of improving the quality, frequency and use of their observations of children's learning. The staff team have made an initial, positive start to agreeing a minimum expectation of how often they record observations of children in nursery. Observations are not yet personalised to individual children or focused on their learning. Senior leaders and practitioners, need to develop further their understanding of the purpose and use of the observations they record on their online platform. They need to share this approach with families and children, as part of their wider approach to assessment.

Improve the content and use of personal plans to ensure that children's health, welfare and safety needs are met.

Overall, there has been a positive start made towards addressing this area for improvement. Staff have now created individual plans for the few children who need additional support with their learning. The manager has begun to improve record keeping. The manager, practitioners, parents and partners now share and record relevant information about the additional support required by a few children. This information is necessary to support children to make progress in their learning. Practitioners now need to improve their skills in using their new records and strategies to ensure barriers to children's learning are promptly identified and minimised.

Further aspects of setting improvement

The setting needs to continue to improve the four safeguarding issues from the original inspection of May 2024, which have not yet been fully addressed. In addition, the setting

should address the two further safeguarding issues identified during the further inspection of December 2024.

What happens next?

The setting has made insufficient progress since the original inspection. We will liaise with The City of Edinburgh 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 The City of Edinburgh 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 it has made.

May Geddes
HM Inspector