



**Perth and Kinross Council
Education and Children's Services**



**Extended Learning and Achievement Visit Report
Teddy Bear Care Nursery
10 and 11 November 2015**

Perth and Kinross Education and Children's Services (ECS) is in partnership with Teddy Bear Care Nursery to provide Early Learning and Childcare for children aged three to five years old.

The centre is subject to external scrutiny by Education Scotland (HMI) with evaluations awarded for national quality indicators based on the provision for three to five year olds. The Care Inspectorate regulates the service measuring against the National Care Standards. These inspections take account of the entire service and are carried out on a risk assessed basis but are normally no longer than two years apart.

The centre is subject to support and challenge from ECS through the Centre Improvement Framework with regular quality assurance and support visits. Each visit has a clear focus on aspects of the centre's work which is based on improvement planning and self-evaluation. An Early Years Support Teacher regularly visits the centre to provide children with access to a teacher and to support staff in developing learning and teaching. An Early Years Development Teacher supports work with children aged 0-3 years old.

The purpose of this visit was to support the centre in the process of self-evaluation and was conducted by a team of two officers from across Education and Children's Services. The themes subject to scrutiny were based on core Quality Indicators from The Child at the Centre and reflected the most recent Education Scotland Advice Note which outlines the raised expectations in relation to the centre's implementation of all aspects of Curriculum for Excellence particularly focusing on curriculum and self-evaluation.

At the time of the Extended Learning and Achievement Visit Teddy Bear Care Nursery had 50 children registered of which 14 children were aged between 0 and 2 years, 20 were aged between 2 and 3 years and 16 were aged 3 to 5 years. The nursery accommodation consists of a separate baby room and a suite of three playrooms for children aged 2 to 5 years.

There is a small garden which provides a variety of opportunities for children to develop their physical skills and to learn across the curriculum whilst benefitting from fresh air and exercise.

Evidence was gathered from: observations in the learning environment, discussions with management, staff, children and parents, children's portfolios, evidence displayed throughout the nursery, feedback from previous

ECS monitoring visits, the Centre's Standards and Quality Report, Centre Self- evaluation and the Centre Improvement Plan.

The focus of the visit to the 2 to 5 year olds was achievement, learning and leadership. During the visit most children were 2 years old, 7 children were in their ante pre-school year and 9 were in their pre-school year.

ACHIEVEMENT

Strengths

Overall, children at Teddy Bear Care Nursery are making good progress in their learning across the Early Level of Curriculum for Excellence. They are given very good opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge within the context of play. Literacy and numeracy are embedded in play contexts and children demonstrate their knowledge and skills both inside and outside.

Almost all children listen well and talk about their experiences and interests; particularly during snack and lunch times when adults provide high quality focused attention to support conversations. All children enjoy stories that staff read to them and some independently choose books to 'read' by themselves. Storytelling is a feature of the Improvement Plan and children are developing skills in making up their own stories using 'story stones' as a stimulus. Most children are becoming aware of words in the environment and the majority recognise their own name.

Children have a very good range of opportunities to develop fine motor skills through activities such as snack preparation, playdough, weaving and construction. Most children are beginning to write as they mark make using writing tools, and a few attempt to write their own names when they sign in at snack.

Most children are showing increasing awareness of shape, measurement, comparison, counting and number recognition. Staff plan opportunities for children to use these skills in real life contexts; for example when they count tally marks to create a bar graph indicating the types of features on a dinosaur, and by ensuring there are numbers throughout the environment. Baking activities support the development of children's understanding of weight and volume.

Children are very well supported to feel safe and secure within the nurturing ethos of the nursery. In line with the centre's commitment to restorative approaches children are encouraged, and given time, to resolve problems independently. They are very well behaved, polite and courteous to adults and other children.

Singing is a strong feature of life in the nursery which benefits the children's development of early literacy skills. Music and movement also supports physical skills and awareness of rhythm and rhyme.

Children's physical development is well supported through dedicated time for daily activity in the physical room and in the garden. Regular walks to the nearby woods and on transition visits to Crieff Primary School when the focus is on Physical Education provide enhanced opportunities for fresh air and exercise.

Children are inquisitive and engage in many opportunities to investigate and solve problems. The focus on natural resources such as stones, sticks and leaves, the mud kitchen and imaginative play helps them to explore their world both inside and outside.

Children's achievements in nursery are recognised and praised. Achievements within nursery and from home are displayed on the 'Tree of Success' and indicate children's growing confidence and developing life skills.

Areas for improvement

Staff should build on the current good practice to plan further pace and challenge to reflect children's age and stage of development such as exploring areas of interest in more depth.

Continue to revisit Talk, Listen, Communicate (TLC) strategies to ensure all staff have a sound knowledge and understanding of the development of children's early communication skills.

Ensure consistency of approach to support children's understanding of spoken language for example using Makaton signing.

LEARNING

Strengths

The learning environment is very well presented and organised to provide a wide range of learning opportunities both inside and outside. Staff have thoughtfully planned the rooms to provide a stimulating learning environment. Across the nursery, creative use of soft furnishings and lighting ensures a warm, calm, nurturing ethos where children are comfortable and engaged in their learning through play which is relaxed and joyful. The garden area is well organised and used daily to support physical play and outdoor learning.

Very good use is made of the local community to extend learning opportunities across the curriculum. Children regularly visit the shops, local parks, other nurseries and schools. Parents and businesses have enhanced children's understanding of the world of work by visiting the nursery to talk about what they do. Children helped the local residential home to enhance their garden through painting garden gnomes to the benefit of both generations.

Staff sensitively respond to children's interests and help them to think about what they already know and what they would like to learn. Most children,

including some 2 year olds, focus very well on chosen activities for extended periods of time. They play well together and older children are developing empathy by helping younger children as they play. Staff identify children's next steps and support them to make progress during group time and in other planned activities.

Staff in the team speak several languages including Polish, French and Afrikaans which helps support children for whom English is an additional language. Commendably, English speaking staff are also learning Polish to further enhance communication. Parents also complete 'All about Me' books in Polish should they prefer. These are then translated by staff.

Staff know children well and are aware of specific needs. They engage positively with parents and support agencies as needs arise. Two children have Individual Education Plans and are supported through the Early Years Inclusion Service. Speech and Language and Occupational Health Services are also advising staff on strategies to support children.

Staff plan learning based on Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes. There is good evidence in the 'Talking and Thinking Books' and wall displays that children are involved in planning learning that reflects their interests and prior knowledge. Staff record learning and progress in folders which children and parents can access freely.

Personalised transition from home to nursery and room to room supports children move comfortably into and through the nursery. With support from the Early Years Development Teacher the centre is developing an enhanced transition experience which involves the children visiting one of the local school regularly throughout the year. This provides all children with the opportunity to experience school life no matter which school they will move on to.

Areas for improvement

With children aged 2 to 5 years working together; Curriculum for Excellence and Pre-Birth to Three guidance needs to be carefully blended to ensure children experience learning that fully reflects their age and stage of development.

Planning should focus on expected outcomes of planned learning rather than the current emphasis on activities to ensure that staff and children are aware of the learning that is taking place.

Children require further support to talk about their past and current learning. They should also be aware of their identified next steps and how they are progressing.

LEADERSHIP

Strengths

The centre manager is fully involved in the day to day life of the centre and provides valuable support and direction to her staff. With almost a year in post the manager is well established in her role and provides positive leadership based on a clear improvement agenda. The nursery owner maintains a close interest in and is fully supportive of the nursery. Both the owner and the manager are positive role models for staff and have a clear vision for the centre.

All staff have opportunities for training and development to support them in their work. They take responsibility for key groups of children and plan within their areas of responsibility. Staff have been allocated specific areas of responsibility which encourages them to take leadership roles within the centre.

Parents report that they feel welcome and included in the life of the centre. They are confident their children are safe, happy and nurtured. Parents are encouraged to share their views about their children's learning and at any time are welcome to discuss this with staff.

Progress with the Centre Improvement Plan is evident and is impacting positively on learning opportunities for children. For example the enhancement of heuristic play is supporting the development of young children's curiosity, inquiry and creativity.

Areas for Improvement

The centre promotes an ethos where staff and children are becoming more reflective however staff now need to become more familiar with the use of national documents such as the Child at the Centre and the National Practice Guidance (Building the Ambition) to support the centre on its journey of continuous improvement.

Continue to develop staff opportunities for shared leadership to ensure their knowledge and involvement in the improvement agenda secures positive outcomes for children and their families.

Children aged 0-2

Staff responsible for children under 2 work well as a team to ensure all babies and toddlers are secure and safe in the nurturing environment. There is a very good range of natural resources and messy play activities are planned daily.

Staff have established daily routines which reflect the wishes of parents and allow for flexibility to encourage individual development and respond to need. Planning takes account of children's schemas, interests and next steps in development. Songs are used in small group time and spontaneously to stimulate babies and toddlers in their language development.

Parents are provided with daily sheets of information relating to their child as a method of ongoing communication.

Areas for improvement

Staff should review planning approaches to be entirely flexible and responsive in order to take account of this very young age group and their individual needs.

Conclusion

This extended learning and achievement visit confirms that Teddy Bear Care Nursery is moving forward positively on its improvement journey. Management and staff have created a calm, nurturing environment where children aged 2 to 5 years work well together as they learn through play. Staff team members work well together to provide a valued service for children and their families. The centre works well in partnership with ECS and takes account of all available advice and support.

In going forward key strengths and recommendations for improvement are summarised below:

Key strengths

The warm, caring ethos created by management and staff that ensures all children are welcomed and comfortable.

The attractive, stimulating environment that supports children's development and learning across the curriculum.

The strong links with the community and the use of the local environment as a valuable learning resource.

The support of the owner and manager in ensuring a high quality service for children and their families.

Key recommendations for improvement

All staff need to continue to increase their knowledge of national and local guidance to ensure the Early Learning and Childcare they provide is current, relevant and the best it can be.

Staff should ensure a stronger focus on learning and plan appropriate pace and challenge to meet the needs of all children.

Management and staff should use the areas for improvement in this report together with self-evaluation to inform future priorities for development.

Teddy Bear Care Nursery HMI Report

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