

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education and Children's Services Committee
DATE	24 th January 2023
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Kingsford Early Learning & Childcare
REPORT NUMBER	CFS/23/002
DIRECTOR	Eleanor Sheppard
CHIEF OFFICER	Shona Milne
REPORT AUTHOR	Gael Simpson & Andrew Jones
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report responds to the urgent notice of motion from 8.11.22 and details the actions taken in responding to an incident that occurred at Kingsford Early Learning & Childcare Setting in August 2022 to provide assurance to Members that all efforts have been taken to prevent similar incidents occurring across the Early Learning and Childcare estate.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 notes the content of this report;
- 2.2 instructs the Chief Education Officer to continue to support improvement at Kingsford Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) setting;
- 2.3 instructs the Chief Education Officer to continue to monitor compliance with local procedures designed to keep children safe; and
- 2.4 Instruct the Chief Officer Corporate Landlord to continue to be proactive in addressing any vulnerabilities identified across our children's estate.

3. Background

- 3.1 On 3rd August 2022 a learner was able to abscond from Kingsford ELC provision, opening the main entrance door and was missing from the setting for a significant period of time. The child was found by a member of the public and the police were contacted, returning the child to the safety of their home.
- 3.2 A thorough investigation has been undertaken to understand how this incident was able to occur and a number of mitigations have been put in place.

4. Action taken in response to the incident

- 4.1 A review of the security systems in place at Kingsford ELC provision has been undertaken to ensure that the playroom doors and main nursery entry area are secure and appropriately alarmed. This review has resulted in:
- An interim internal door alarm system from the playroom to the entrance area has been added. A more permanent solution will be fitted when parts become available.
 - An external alarm system has been reviewed and updated
 - Risk assessments have been reviewed and updated
 - A further review of ELC security has been undertaken by ACC School Estate Team
- 4.2 Learner registration and oversight has been improved. This has included:
- A review of the registration system and processes with new systems put in place to ensure visibility of learner numbers and improve staff awareness
 - Children's pegs have been moved to the main playroom to encourage independence and ensure learners have no need to leave the playroom
 - Staff are regularly checking and updating numbers within the setting to ensure clear oversight
- 4.3 The Kingsford staff team has been guided to review roles and responsibilities to ensure all staff are aware of their duties in keeping children safe. This has included:
- Training delivered in respect of health and safety management to ensure all staff are able to discharge the duties associated with their position
 - All Kingsford ELC staff have undertaken training in relation to ACC updated Child Protection & Safeguarding training and Runaway Child Procedures and now report that they fully understand their responsibilities
 - Work has been undertaken to ensure all policies and procedures are readily available and known to ensure all staff are aware how to access these in the event of an emergency
 - An Acting Senior Early Years Practitioner has been working with the team to increase capacity and ensure clear processes and policies are in place
 - Recruitment has been undertaken to secure a new permanent Senior Early Years Practitioner to support and enhance the skills within the team
- 4.4 Assurance was sought from other operational ELC provisions. This assurance was sought by:
- Early Learning and Childcare Locality Leads reviewing all ELC provisions to identify any other settings with similar vulnerabilities to Kingsford and the Health and Safety team were engaged appropriately. This review concluded that the Kingsford situation was unique to the design of the Kingsford building.
 - The Locality Leads contacted staff teams operating over summer to ensure that they were fully aware of procedures
 - The situation was raised with school leaders at the start of school session 2022/2023.

- 4.5 External expertise was secured to build confidence in the changing staff team at Kingsford and a more confident and positive team dynamic is helping to positively drive improvement. The Education Service continues to work closely with the Senior Leadership team to secure continuous improvement with regular and robust quality assurance discussions taking place.
- 4.6 Corporate Landlord have liaised with all Early Learning and Childcare settings to gain some assurance of security arrangements in each setting. To ensure a consistent approach to the physical security of nursery settings, a Nursery Security Standard has been produced by the School Estate Team. All settings were issued with a Nursery Security Standard in November 2022, which details the desired level of security which should be present in all settings, and managers at all sites were requested to confirm whether their setting meets the standard, or to highlight any areas of concern. The School Estate Team is working directly with the settings where additional actions are required to achieve the desired standard, and works are being instructed as a priority (see Appendix A). Temporary arrangements, such as the use of local audible alarms on exit doors, are in place within these settings to ensure children remain safe, prior to permanent works being undertaken and staff on site have reviewed risk assessments to ensure all safety steps have been taken.
- 4.7 The Service has liaised with all Head Teachers/Centre Managers to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for senior leaders to be assured of the quality of provision in their school. School Risk assessments are in place and should ensure the safety of all within the setting. These supports continue to be quality assured through agreed Quality Assurance arrangements.
- 4.8 All Early Learning and Childcare settings have been issued with a reminder of the Runaway Child Procedure which is situated on the Health & Safety Pages of Education Sharepoint. All settings have been asked to work with their teams, confirm that this has been reviewed and all risk assessments updated, will all staff fully aware of their duties and responsibilities in keeping children safe. 100% of Local Authority ELC settings have confirmed that staff are aware of their responsibilities in keeping with this procedure. Confirmation of staff awareness and understanding of this procedure will be built into service Quality Improvement checks as we move forward.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Additional costs are anticipated as a result of the survey of nursery settings and the identification of works required to ensure settings meet the new security standard. These costs are expected to be met through existing revenue budgets.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report. The steps already taken and recommended actions will assist the Council to meet its duty of care to pupils.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 No negative environmental impacts have been identified.

8. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	Risk of not improving outcomes for learners	Quality Assurance processes in place and heightened officer support offered to build capacity	L	Yes
Compliance	Risk of not complying with national / local guidance	Increased professional learning offer provided to staff to ensure compliance	L	Yes
Operational	Risk that schools/ELC settings do not accurately identify the areas for improvement that will make the greatest difference to learners	Quality assurance arrangements in place to support identification of risk	L	Yes
Financial	No risks identified			
Reputational	Risk that poor quality of provision will present a reputational risk to the Council	High levels of assurance are taken Quality Improvement and Inspection visits	L	Yes
Environment / Climate	No risks identified			

9. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
Impact of Report	
<p>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</p> <p>Work to ensure that every school community provides a safe and respectful environment for young people and staff.</p>	<p>Internal and external scrutiny provides helpful assurance that there is sufficient focus on child protection and safeguarding and that policies and procedures are followed effectively.</p>
<u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u>	
<p>Prosperous People - 95% of all our children, including those living in our priority neighbourhoods, will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026</p>	<p>Ensuring the health and safety of all children and young people within our service is an essential part of our delivery and support to improve outcomes.</p>
<p>Regional and City Strategies</p> <p>Regional Cultural Strategy</p> <p>Prevention Strategy</p> <p>Children’s Services Plan</p> <p>National Improvement Framework Plan</p>	<p>Meeting the health and wellbeing needs of our children is essential in delivering positive outcome. Improving the workforce aligns with various city and regional strategies, increasing capacity and building a stronger system to provide a safe environment for children and young people to thrive.</p>

10. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	Not required
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required
Other	None

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11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

12. APPENDICES

13. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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Appendix A

SECURITY WITHIN NURSERY SETTINGS – DESIRED STANDARDS

Completed by Corporate Landlord



OVERVIEW

The health, safety and security of pupils and staff in our Early Years settings is of the highest priority. It is important that secure lines are established to reduce the risk of children leaving the safety of the nursery unsupervised. This document sets out our desired standards for security within nursery settings. Our school estate varies in age and layout, therefore not all nurseries may meet this desired standard. Any areas of concern should be reported in the first instance to the Head of Establishment, Early Years Locality Lead or QIM.

ENTRANCE

- The Nursery setting should have a dedicated secure entrance. This is the main point of entry for drop off and pick up. This entrance should be secured with electronic locking (maglocked) at all times to prevent unauthorised entry to or unsupervised exit from the nursery. Staff should be present at these doors at pupil drop off and pupil collection times.
- There should be a buzzer door entry system or doorbell to notify staff of anyone requiring access to the nursery. Staff should physically go to the secure doors to meet any visitors and follow signing in procedures.
- Externally, the secure doors should have a fob reader for controlled access.
- Internally, where an electronic maglock system is in place there should be a high level “push to exit” (green) button located 1.8m from finished ground level.
- All maglocked doors should be connected to the fire alarm system so that they disengage automatically to allow escape in the event of the fire alarm being triggered. There must be green break glass units (with clear protective covers to avoid misuse) adjacent to every door with maglocks, and these should be at a height which allows them to be operated by wheelchair users.

WITHIN THE SETTING

- Within the secure line of the setting pupils should ideally have access to cloakroom(s) and toilets directly off the playroom(s).

- There should be direct access from the playroom(s) to a secure outdoor play area to allow free flow play.
- The outdoor play area should be suitably lit, to allow outdoor play during extended hours provision.
- The secure outdoor play area should be designed with an exit gate leading into a safe area, e.g. the main playground, which can be suitably secured but which allows children and staff to move away from the building and reach the designated fire assembly point in the event of an emergency, without being required to re-enter the building.
- Any emergency exit doors within the Nursery should have local audible door guard alarms to alert staff to pupils exiting these doors. These local door guard alarms can be activated or deactivated by staff.
- Some settings may require local audible door guard alarms on other doors e.g. - where there is a pass door(s) between the school and the nursery which is not fobbed and is not part of the main secure line. In some instances maglocks may be appropriate but this will be subject to obtaining the relevant statutory approvals (Building Warrant). **Building Warrants are considered on a case by case basis and there is no guarantee that the use of electronic locking will be approved by Building Standards.**

EXTERNAL PERIMETER SECURITY

- There should be a secure boundary (fence, wall or other effective barrier) around the outdoor play area.
- Where this boundary forms part of the perimeter of the overall grounds, it should be min. 1.8m high.
- Where outdoor play areas bound parts of the school playground, this boundary should be min. 1.2m high.
- It is important that outdoor play equipment is not positioned next to the boundary as this could be an aid for climbing and scaling the boundary line.

Aberdeen City Council operates an open grounds policy, which means the school gates can be secured during school hours but are left open out with school hours. Settings where nurseries operate longer than school hours should note this and be aware of the public having access to the school grounds during nursery operational hours.

FURTHER POINTS TO NOTE

Making alterations to a building can help make it more secure for its users, but staff play an equally important role in ensuring the safety and security of users.

Staff should have procedures and supervision arrangements in place, specifically in areas close to exit doors to reduce the likelihood of children leaving unnoticed.

Where possible, the layout of the nursery play space and furniture should be considered to create a natural separation between activity spaces and exit doors (whilst ensuring fire escape routes are not compromised).

Under no circumstances should any fire escape door in any part of the nursery or school building be locked or held closed in such a way which would prevent or impede exit in an emergency.

Doors controlled by electronic locking (maglocks) are linked to the fire alarm system and will disengage in the event of activation.

Review of Nursery Settings November 2022 – Summary of Findings

- Managers at all nursery settings were asked to review the new Nursery Security Desired Standards document and to confirm the extent to which their nursery met the new standard, and/or to highlight areas where improvements to the security arrangements may be required.
- All nursery settings responded to the request. All aspects of the new security standard were found to be already fully in place in six of the settings.
- Corporate Landlord officers have followed up directly with the remaining settings to identify any works which are required, to help the settings meet the new standard and improve the consistency of approach to nursery security across the estate. These works are being prioritised to address areas of highest concern first.
- The main areas of work which are being taken forwards as a result of this review include:
 - **Emergency Exit Local Alarms:** The review highlighted a requirement to fit local audible door guard alarms to emergency exit doors, as these were not present on some doors in some settings. This work has been prioritised, and where specific risks of a child leaving the building unnoticed through an emergency exit door have been identified, immediate action has been taken to ensure alarms have been fitted in these settings.
 - **Nursery Main Entrances:** In some settings, the main entrance to the nursery is secured through the use of mechanical handles and locks, electronic keypad systems, or entry to the nursery is controlled through the school's main reception. An intercom system is not present in some settings, making it difficult for staff in the setting to be made aware that a visitor is waiting. Officers are assessing the need for electronic magnetic door locking systems and intercom systems in these settings, as set out within the desired standards document, and are instructing the necessary works where appropriate to do so, to ensure consistency across the estate.
 - **"Push to Exit" buttons:** Where electronic door locking is in place in some settings, the emergency 'push to exit' button is not at the height stipulated within the new desired standards. Works are being instructed where necessary to ensure these buttons are installed at the desired height, to ensure consistency across the estate.
 - **Play Area Fencing and Gates:** In some outdoor nursery play areas, the fencing around the play area is lower than the height stipulated in the new desired standards, and/or the arrangements for locking the gate to the play area require to be improved. Officers are working with these settings to specify and instruct the works required, to ensure they are in line with the new standard.
 - **External Lighting:** Some nurseries which are now operating extended opening hours have reported that the existing external lighting is inadequate to support the use of

outdoor play areas in the late afternoons during the winter months. Works have been instructed across these settings to improve the external lighting provision as required.

- As a result of the review, officers have now identified the works which are required in each setting to help improve the consistency in approach to nursery security across the estate. The highest priority works have already been carried out, with further works expected to be completed in the near future. In some cases the layout of the building may mean that making changes to existing security arrangements is not appropriate. In these cases, officers will continue to work with and support staff within the settings to ensure the most appropriate arrangements are in place to mitigate any risks identified.