

Chairman's Report.

Gordon Park Early Learning Centre

Reporting Period: October 2024 – October 2025

It is with great pride and gratitude that I present this Chairman's Report for Gordon Park Early Learning Centre, covering the period from October 2024 to October 2025. This has been a year of significant transition and achievement for GPELC — one that has tested our adaptability while reaffirming the strength and dedication of our entire community.

The past year has been marked by one of the most significant changes in the history of our setting — the move from the Pavilion to our new home at Ellon Academy Campus. While this transition brought inevitable challenges, it also offered new opportunities for growth and development. I would like to acknowledge the patience, hard work, and flexibility shown by our staff, our parents and the children throughout this period. Their support has ensured that, despite the upheaval, our high standards of care and education remained uninterrupted. Throwing our minds back to September 2024, our Centre was faced with an unexpected and challenging development when we became aware that the Pavilion — our long-standing home of over four decades — contained Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC). Due to the instability of this material when water damaged, and combined with the age of the Pavilion, we were instructed to vacate the building immediately and to temporarily relocate to the Ellon Academy Community Campus.

At that stage, we were advised that remedial works would take place during the October half-term break in 2024, with the expectation that Gordon Park Early Learning Centre would return to the Pavilion following the holidays. However, as the October holidays progressed, it became increasingly evident that no work was taking place during our relocation. Despite our consistent efforts to seek progress updates and clarification from the local authority, communication was limited, leaving us uncertain about the long-term future of our former premises.

After several months of correspondence and continued monitoring, we were informed that the local authority no longer viewed the Pavilion as a viable asset and would not be investing in the necessary remedial works. Consequently, it became clear that a return to the Pavilion would not be possible. While this news was disappointing, our team responded with characteristic professionalism and resolve. The transition to Ellon Academy Campus, though unplanned, has since become a positive chapter in our story — offering stability, modern facilities, and new opportunities for collaboration within the wider community.

Once it had been identified in Q1 of 2025 that GPELC could not return to the Pavilion, the Committee began work to identify all the options open to us in the Ellon area; we engaged with the local authority and the Care Inspectorate, with local councillors and with our MP in Westminster via a Teams call to garner their support. We continue to prioritise the children and their health, safety and care with all of our decision making. The committee and management viewed multiple vacant settings in Ellon and went through the long and diligent process of eliminating the options based upon feedback from the Care Inspectorate and local authority. Presently, as it stands, our setting at the Ellon Academy Community Campus is the very best to be found in our area. Later in the evening, we'll discuss the future of the setting and provide more feedback on the other settings we viewed and assessed in line with the guidance provided by the above regulatory bodies.

Gordon Park continues to uphold its reputation for excellence in early years provision. We have not only maintained our accreditation standards but have continued to build upon them through ongoing professional development and staff training. Our dedicated team of practitioners have demonstrated remarkable commitment to continuous improvement, ensuring that every child in our care benefits from a nurturing, stimulating, and inclusive learning environment.

Over the past year, the committee has worked hard to be a consistent and supportive presence for both our staff and management team. We've made it a priority to stay connected and engaged through regular monthly leadership meetings, which have really strengthened communication and collaboration across the setting. We've also taken steps to modernise and improve how we promote and manage GPELC. This includes keeping our general practice current, refreshing our approach to publicity, and making better use of digital tools. We've increased our presence on social media, welcomed a dedicated Social Media Co-ordinator to help us connect with families and the wider community, and made great use of our Family app to streamline online applications and enquiries. This has helped to reduce unnecessary admin and create a smoother experience for both staff and parents.

I'd also like to note some changes within our team. One member of staff has moved on, and we're very grateful to Mark, who selflessly assumed the responsibilities of the financial officer on a voluntary basis. His support and commitment have been invaluable as we continue to strengthen our financial management capabilities. In addition, the committee has been proactive in seeking external funding to support our ongoing development. Over the past year, we've applied for a number of grants, including the **Tesco Stronger Starts** programme, **Morrisons**, the **Rotary Club of Ellon**, and the **Port of Aberdeen**. Some of which were successful. These applications reflect

our continued commitment to securing the best possible resources and opportunities for our setting and the families we serve.

It would be remiss of me not to discuss the setting in a little detail at this point. We are a self-supporting setting with charitable status, we rely heavily on the generosity and involvement of our families and local community. Fundraising has been a challenging but rewarding endeavour, especially in the current climate, yet our committee members (that's you Nicole) and volunteers have worked tirelessly to sustain our operations and enhance our resources. I'd like to extend my sincere thanks to all who have contributed time, ideas, and energy to ensure our Centre continues to operate. Parent participation remains a cornerstone of Gordon Park's ethos. The engagement and collaboration of parents not only strengthen our financial sustainability but also enrich the experiences of the children in our care. The Centre's success depends upon this shared commitment, and I encourage all families to remain actively involved as we move forward.

As we look towards the year ahead, we do so with optimism and renewed purpose. The challenges of the past 12 months have strengthened our sense of community and confirmed the value of what we provide. Our new location offers a strong foundation from which to grow, and we remain committed to ensuring that Gordon Park Early Learning Centre continues to deliver outstanding early years education for generations to come.

On behalf of the Committee, I extend my sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed to the success of the Centre during this period. Together, we have navigated change with resilience and emerged stronger, ready to embrace the opportunities that lie ahead.

I would like to take this opportunity to express heartfelt thanks to our Manager and staff for their professionalism, care, and dedication. Their ability to adapt to change while maintaining the highest standards of service is truly commendable. To my fellow committee members and volunteers, your guidance, enthusiasm, and generosity of spirit continue to drive the success of our Centre. And for that, I am most grateful. Thank you.

Christopher Whetham Chairperson Gordon Park Early Learning Centre October 2025

Strategic Priorities: 1: Ensure Staff stay up to date with training & competencies.
2: Maximise utilisation of spaces at GPELC.

- 3: Long term planning for potential move to Castlepark setting.
- 4: Focus on fundraising through grants and community engagement.
- 5: Appoint new committee members for GPELC.