

Summarised inspection findings

Aberfoyle Primary School Nursery Class

Stirling Council

20 February 2024

Key contextual information

Aberfoyle Nursery is based in a self-contained building in the grounds of Aberfoyle Primary. Children attend nursery from the age of three until they start school. There is one large playroom with access to two outdoor spaces. Regular use is made of the school and open spaces and nearby woodlands. The nursery provides early learning and childcare (ELC) for a maximum of 32 children between the hours of 8.00 am and 6.00 pm. The current roll is 20. Some children attend nursery for full days, some attend between 9.00 am and 3.00 pm term time only.

The headteacher of Aberfoyle Primary has overall leadership responsibility for the work of the nursery team. She works in close partnership with the experienced principal early childhood educator, the small team of practitioners and support staff. A local authority early years teacher also provides periodic support with improvement projects.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

good

This indicator focuses on ensuring high quality learning experience for young children. It highlights the importance of a very good understanding of child development and early learning pedagogy. Effective use is made of observation to inform future learning and identify the progress made. Children are involved in planning for their own learning. Together these ensure children's successes and achievements are maximised. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of interactions
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- All practitioners have nurturing relationships with children. They understand, anticipate and respond to children's individual needs very well. Practitioners are attentive and patient in their interactions with all children. The positive, welcoming and respectful ethos supports children to feel valued, secure and increasingly confident in their environment. Most children share resources and spaces well, appropriate to their stage of development.
- Most practitioners sensitively judge when to join and when to observe children's play appropriately. Practitioners have adapted their planning to achieve a better balance of child and adult-initiated learning. Most children engage well in a wide range of interesting play opportunities for most of the session. Practitioners should continue to develop their responsive interactions to help all children to remain engaged and motivated throughout the session. Most practitioners skilfully adapt their vocabulary, tone of voice and use of gestures to encourage children to participate. Practitioners should continue to develop further their use of commentary and higher-order questions. This would help to support a few children to sustain or develop further their ideas.
- Children concentrate and cooperate well as they explore the functions of interactive digital boards. Practitioners should develop further their use of digital technology to enhance learning. They should identify and build on children's prior learning and digital skills to provide creative and progressive experiences across the curriculum. For example, children's recent interest in art and design could be explored in more depth.
- Practitioners know and understand children and their families very well. Practitioners record regular observations of children's experiences in individual journals. Children are confident and proud of journals which contain examples of their work and pictures of their learning

experiences. Practitioners regularly discuss children's progress with parents. Together they identify 'learning possibilities'. The team should continue to develop further the language of learning with children and parents. This will help children to be able to talk about their learning and achievements.

- Senior leaders and practitioners carry out a range of useful activities to reflect on and assess children's progress across the curriculum. Practitioners meet with senior leaders three times a year to take a closer look at the progress children have made. Practitioners are beginning to use this evidence more strategically to inform changes to children's experiences, spaces and interactions. Practitioners link 'learning possibilities' for children to local authority and national guidance. The headteacher and principal early childhood educator have frequent, focused meetings with parents and other professionals. This is helping to ensure appropriate support for children who face additional challenges. The team take prompt action to ensure they meet all children's learning needs. Senior leaders should continue to support practitioners to build their skills and confidence measuring the progress children make over time. This will help to ensure that children make the very best progress and help to ensure continuity and progression across the early level.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

3.2 Securing children's progress

good

This indicator relates to the development and learning of babies, toddlers and young children. It requires clear understanding of early learning and development and pedagogy. It reflects the integrated way young children learn and the importance of experiences and development happening on an individual basis within a supportive, nurturing and stimulating environment. High quality early learning and childcare contributes significantly to enhancing children's progress and achievement as they grow and learn. It can benefit all children by closing the attainment gap and ensuring equity for all. It is about the holistic nature of development and learning ensuring these foundations are secure in order to achieve future attainment success. The themes are:

- progress in communication, early language, mathematics, and health and wellbeing
- children's progress over time
- overall quality of children's achievement
- ensuring equity for all children

- Overall, almost all children are making good progress in communication, early language, numeracy, mathematics and health and wellbeing. Children who require additional support are well supported by practitioners who work in close partnership with parents and visiting professionals.
- Most children make good progress as they develop their expressive and receptive language. Children increase their vocabulary as they talk in detail about their interest in animals and machinery. The majority of children benefit from targeted work that increases their vocabulary, confidence and pronunciation of individual words and sounds. Children initiate and enjoy opportunities to share a story or explore sounds, rhymes and songs. Most children would benefit from continued opportunities to develop their recent interest in creating, recording and sharing their own books and stories.
- Most children make good progress in numeracy and mathematics. Children enjoy using the language of measure as they play with tools in the construction area. Most children confidently identify numbers to 10 in play or as they count and check items for snack. A few children would benefit from opportunities to apply their skills in new and unfamiliar contexts in the community or outdoors. This would provide additional challenge for them.
- Almost all children make very good progress in health and wellbeing. Children enthusiastically vote for, or suggest ideas to improve their nursery, such as deciding on new resources to use outdoors. Most children make very good progress with their fine and gross motor skills through interesting, creative adult and child-led experiences. Children understand and are increasingly confident in their use of appropriate language to describe what is important for their own, and others' wellbeing. Almost all children respond with their whole body as they relax, dance and build their self-esteem in therapeutic use of music. Most children use the language of wellbeing with understanding and respond well to use of new characters that reinforce these concepts. Children have a good knowledge of their right to privacy and how to keep safe in areas, such as online, through simple activities that explore digital safety.
- Most children confidently share their achievements from home and nursery. Children, parents and practitioners celebrate children's successes frequently. Children benefit from changes to their attendance pattern, or planned experiences to support them to achieve across all areas of their development. Practitioners should continue to evaluate and record the impact of these adaptations on children's progress across learning.

- All practitioners have a detailed understanding of their local community, children's individual socio-economic needs and home lives. Senior leaders use home visits and their respectful partnerships with parents to maximise children's attendance. Senior leaders are sensitive and resourceful as they find ways to target additional support that would benefit children. This includes a range of practical support, including a clothes swap and partnership with a local supermarket to minimise food waste. The team should now monitor closely these interventions to demonstrate the impact on the progress of individual children.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children experienced kind and compassionate interactions from staff. They were warmly greeted by accessible and supportive staff, which supported them to settle quickly. Children were given physical reassurance and comfort when needed, contributing to them feeling nurtured. Staff responses and interactions were consistently respectful and sensitive maintaining children's dignity. This had a positive impact on children's self-esteem and attachment with staff.

Encouragement and praise by staff enabled children to become independent particularly when dressing for outdoor play, toileting and self-serving during meals. Staff gave children time to do so providing a good pace for children's learning. Resources such as 'now and next' boards and the fix-it folder further empowered children. This enabled children to build self-confidence and to plan and sequence tasks.

Staff knew children well and personal plan information held was up to date. Positive and strong relationships with families assisted the staff to meet children's individual needs. This enabled the service to offer additional support where needed.

Children's wellbeing needs were met, as allergy information was discreetly managed. Accident and medication systems contributed to children's continuity of care. Appropriate forms were completed and permissions were in place for the administration of medication. This ensured information was passed on quickly to maintain children's health.

Snacks and lunches were nutritious and varied, contributing to children making healthy eating choices. Children were able to be involved in the planning and preparation of snacks by choosing to be snack helpers and supported by adults to make balanced food choices. Children were able to choose their lunch on arrival and decide when to eat during the lunch time period. This gave children more control over their day. The service should continue to reflect on the lunch time experience with a focus on promoting the social aspect of eating together.

Children's interactions with each other were positive as they responded well to staff expectations such as sharing and taking turns. Approaches to distressed behaviours were restorative maintaining children's dignity. Children were able to discuss their feelings and carried out an emotional 'check in' on entry to playroom which staff were responsive to. The newly developed nurture space was used well by children and staff to promote their emotional wellbeing and friendships.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

1.3 Play and learning

Children's understanding of numeracy and literacy was enhanced through specific planned experiences and resources. This included the 'terrific talkers' 'dough gym', LIFT (language is fun together), numeracy drop-in days and story and numeracy sacks. Staff gave positive reinforcement of words to support children's language development. Most children were able to express themselves freely and fluently and engaged in conversations with their peers and adults.

Children's efforts were recognised as staff consistently praised them. Achievements within and outwith the setting were valued and celebrated throughout their journals and the use of the

achievement tree, along with respectful displays of children's work. This contributed to children's positive self-esteem.

Children made decisions about where to play, making use of the free flow access to the outdoor space during most of the day. Staff responded well to children's choices about where they wanted to play and what they wanted to take part in. For example, managing the time for forest play to support children to also access the drumming session. This contributed to children's enjoyment and empowerment in leading their own play. The service should now continue with plans to further develop outdoor learning experiences.

Children were mainly busy throughout the inspection and accessing all areas of provision. The various groups, sessions and developing links within the community provided further challenge to meet specific needs and extended learning. Staff should continue to review and reflect on their interactions with children to ensure consistency and enable children's problem solving.

Children with additional support needs were very well supported. Staff were all confident and knowledgeable regarding specific strategies and approaches for individuals. They worked closely with other professionals to ensure consistency in approaches. There were clear written plans and evidence of regular review. This was enabling children to achieve and promoted positive outcomes.

Children had ownership of their learning through planning which identified children's interests and was responsive and balanced. Children had access to their journals, which they contributed to with adult support. These were a shared document with input from families evidencing learning from home. These supported children to reflect and build on previous learning.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

There were varied opportunities for families to provide their views on the quality of the service, supporting their inclusion. This included discussions when parents arrived, questionnaires on different activities, drop-in days, and meetings with keyworkers. This enabled families to influence practice which supported the continued improvements.

Children's voices were captured within the self-evaluation process as they were consulted on their views. This was evident within their journals, planning and mind mapping activities. This included consulting with children on use of funding for the development of outdoor play and learning. This meant that children could influence matters that affected them, enabling them to feel included and respected.

Children were experiencing quality care and support due to effective use of quality assurance models to support the monitoring of staff and outcomes for children. This included use of tools such as 'How good is our early learning and childcare?' and the 'Quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare', which was evident across self-evaluation. The quality assurance calendar supported the measurement and assessment of quality and the prioritising of tasks and improvements. The improvement plan identified realistic targets and was contributing to the continued improvements. Management presence and support in the nursery fostered communication and trusting relationships with staff supporting staff confidence in their champion roles.

The effective management and leadership had a positive impact on staff direction, stability and motivation. Staff appraisals and support meetings had been carried out along with wellbeing meetings and staff told us they felt supported. This contributed to the positive ethos and commitment to improvement as a whole team.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.