

Summarised inspection findings

St Serf's Primary School and Nursery Class

Clackmannanshire Council

23 April 2019

Key contextual information

St Serf's Primary School nursery class is located a short distance from the main school building. The nursery class is registered for 60 children at any one time for children aged two years to those not yet attending primary school, with a maximum of ten children under three years of age. A few full-day places are available. At the time of the inspection there were 12 children aged under three year on the roll. Children have access to a large playroom with an additional room for children aged two to three years. An attractive and secure outdoor space is accessible from the playroom. There have been significant changes to the practitioner team in the twelve month period preceding the inspection.

1.3 Leadership of change

good

This indicator focuses on working together at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which reflects the context of the setting within its community. Planning for continuous improvement change should be evidence-based and clearly linked to strong self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure that the pace of change is well judged and appropriate to have a positive impact on outcomes for children. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the setting and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- The senior early learning and childcare educator provides strong positive leadership and direction to the nursery class. She models good practice and supports practitioners to develop their skills through monitoring and well-judged feedback. Going forward, it will be important for senior leaders in the school to provide strong strategic leadership and management support to the nursery team.
- Values of trust and respect underpin all aspects of the work of the nursery.
- Practitioners are making good progress in developing a curriculum rationale. This reflects current research and thinking on quality early learning and childcare. Practitioners have consulted with parents and carers to find out what outcomes they value, and what they want children to learn. Based on this work, the nursery team have established guiding principles with a focus on family, play, belonging and relationships. This is helping to shape the work and life of the nursery. It would be useful now to review the aims of the nursery to prioritise future improvement.
- There have been significant changes to the practitioner team over a number of years. Despite this, they work together well as a team. They have begun to make increasingly effective use of national quality indicators and challenge questions to explore strengths and identify areas for improvement. We have asked them to involve children more in self-evaluation for improvement.
- There is an appropriate improvement plan in place in the nursery. We were able to see how this is helping to give direction and focus to improvement work. The team are keen to develop their practice and capacity for improvement through professional learning and partnership with other agencies. It will be important to embed newly developing skills over time.
- Practitioners are enthusiastic about opportunities to lead and develop improvements in the nursery. We were able to observe how this is having a positive impact on children's

experiences. Good examples of successful practitioner leadership include, enhanced provision for children aged under three years, and enrichment of outdoor learning experiences.

- Practitioners should continue to develop approaches to monitoring and build on the existing strong approaches to self-evaluation. This should include a strong focus on the quality of children's experiences and opportunities to develop and apply early literacy and numeracy skills.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

satisfactory

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

- The ethos and culture of the nursery demonstrate the team's strong commitment to securing positive outcomes for children and families. Relationships are positive throughout. Overall, children are secure, happy and settled learners.
- Children aged two to three years appear at home and increasingly confident in their playroom. They enjoy exploring the big playroom and benefit from their interactions with older children. Children engage well in a range of opportunities to have fun using their senses. They make choices and play together with adult support. Sensitive, and well-judged interactions, support children and ensure all are included and involved in appropriate learning experiences. As planned, practitioners working with younger children should continue to develop further relevant professional knowledge and understanding.
- Children aged from three years are confident and relaxed in their playroom. They make choices from available resources and can choose to play outdoors throughout the session. Outdoor experiences provide children with scope to lead their own learning in more challenging and creative ways. Access to a range of loose parts and open-ended play resources is helping children develop their curiosity and creativity. This provides scope for children to develop their ideas and plans over time.
- We observed that the level of children's engagement during indoor play is more variable. A few children need more support to remain engaged in play throughout the session. Experiences are sometimes too adult-led or do not provide children sufficient scope to develop their learning fully. We discussed with practitioners how they could enhance opportunities for independence, challenge and depth across all aspects of learning. Practitioners should carefully review the value of larger group sessions.
- Practitioner's interactions with children are consistently warm and supportive. As a result, most children are keen to engage with adults to share their ideas. Work across the team is helping practitioners develop interaction skills to promote children's listening habits. There is scope for practitioners to develop further their skills in supporting and extending learning as they respond to children in the course of play. In doing so, it would be helpful for practitioners to explore their use of learning intentions to help them to enrich further the learning potential of contexts for play.
- Practitioners need to have more conversations with children about their learning, individually and in small purposeful groups. This will enhance children's sense of themselves as active leaders of their learning. It will also help children develop vocabulary to talk about their learning and to evaluate and plan next steps in learning.

- Practitioners know children well as individuals and increasingly as learners. They document children's learning using floorbooks, attractive displays and individual electronic learning journals. Focused professional learning is helping develop practitioner confidence and is beginning to improve the quality and consistency of observations. Recent improvements to observation practice is helping build a clearer picture of children's progress in learning. This is contributing to the development of a useful approach to tracking learning.
- In planning, practitioners take account of children's interests. They now need to continue to develop further their use of observations of children during play to increase depth and challenge across learning experiences.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners have worked well to make improvements to the learning environment to meet the learning needs of children and their interests as they play. There is an appropriate focus on health and wellbeing across the nursery.
- Practitioners have begun to develop a curriculum rationale for the nursery. In developing this further, they should ensure that they take full account of the principles of curriculum design. This will help ensure greater depth and challenge in learning for all children.
- There is an increasing focus on the development of children's early talking and listening skills. Practitioners plan and promote literacy and numeracy through group time experiences. There now needs to be significantly increased opportunities for children to develop and apply their skills across the curriculum, through problem solving and play.
- Links with community partners, including the local fire service, enhance aspects of children's experiences. There is scope to develop this further to help children make better links between the skills they are learning in nursery and the wider world of work.
- Recently introduced home visits help ensure that practitioners have a sound understanding of children's care and support needs before they take up places in the nursery. Transitions into and through the nursery are well planned and effective. Primary 'buddies' support children as they move to primary one. It will be important for the school to develop a shared understanding of high quality pedagogy across the early level.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Partnership with children and families is a priority for all practitioners. There are close, trusting relationships between practitioners and families. Initial home visits, settling-in evaluations and daily informal dialogue provide opportunities to share and celebrate children's interests and achievements. Formal meetings, online learning journals and regular sharing sessions provide opportunities for parents and carers to find out about children's learning.
- Parents and carers enjoy regular stay and play, and coffee and chat sessions. As planned, the team should reinstate their popular family learning workshops and implement ideas suggested by parents. Recent sessions during which parents and children learned about healthy eating were popular and well attended. The team are exploring approaches to engage families who find it difficult to attend parental engagement sessions during the school day. This includes increased use of video clips and the creation of home learning bags.

2.1 Safeguarding

- 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. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

good

This indicator reflects on the setting's approach to children's wellbeing which underpins their ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of each individual. A clear focus on wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all children to be the best they can be and celebrates their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- A good understanding of, and commitment to children's wellbeing underpins the work of the nursery team. Nurturing positive relationships with children and families is a priority for all practitioners. The team respect and interact with children as individuals. They take good account of children's individual preferences and needs. Children have formed strong attachments to keyworkers and other team members. As a result, children settle quickly in their play and demonstrate increasing confidence to try new experiences and ask for help or comfort if they need it.
- The team have worked with children to explore and create a nursery charter. This includes children's ideas about how they can play together in a way that keeps everyone safe and respects their nursery environment. Practitioners model positive interactions and support children to resolve issues over sharing space or resources. As a result, there is a positive ethos where most children play together well and are forming strong friendships.
- Practitioners have a sound understanding of the national wellbeing indicators. The drive to get it right for all children and families informs all aspects of their work. The wellbeing indicators are used to good effect to structure children's assessments and in conversations with parents and other professionals. Children demonstrate their developing knowledge of how to keep themselves safe as they risk assess the workbench, tools and materials.
- Practitioners celebrate children's achievements, for example through games and group times. They should continue to raise the profile of the language of wellbeing across all aspects of their work with children. The team recognise there is also scope to extend their work with families on the full range of wellbeing indicators.
- Children take responsibility for preparing snacks, setting the table and checking the safety of their outdoor play area. There is scope for children to influence the work of the nursery and to make decisions. Children share their views and enjoy exploring their ideas in small group discussions. Children are ready to take even more responsibility in their nursery. They would benefit from an increased range of opportunities to develop their early leadership skills.
- Practitioners have a sound understanding of statutory duties in relation to their work with children and families. They keep their skills and knowledge up to date through regular, appropriate professional learning.
- The nursery has a strong positive, inclusive ethos. Practitioners know children and families well and treat them all with respect and fairness. They make good use of information from home to inform decisions about the care and support of each child. Practitioners work with partner agencies to enable children and families to overcome potential barriers to wellbeing and

learning. They should consider how to support children to develop further their understanding of equality and diversity, for example by exploring gender based play across the nursery.

3.2 Securing children's progress

satisfactory

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
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- Overall, children are making satisfactory progress in their learning in the nursery. Children benefit from the positive support of practitioners and the friendships they are developing. Practitioners should now build on existing practice to enhance opportunities for children to develop and apply literacy, numeracy and mathematical skills through play and daily experiences.
 - Children aged two to three years are confident, engaged and happy learners. Children are developing their early communication skills with adult support. Appropriate experiences, including cosy story times, encourage children's love of books. Children are developing early awareness of number and mathematical concepts through play.
 - The majority of children aged three to five years are making satisfactory progress in their literacy skills. They are keen to engage in conversations about their play. Children are developing good listening habits and vocabulary to enable them to talk about their ideas and interests. Children enjoy singing and are learning rhymes. There is scope to develop this further. Children are becoming familiar with a range of stories and are keen to interact during the reading of favourite books. A few children choose to look at books in the book area. Children are encouraged to experiment with mark making tools indoors and out. The majority of children are becoming more confident when writing letters of their name.
 - The majority of children aged three to five years are making satisfactory progress in developing their counting skills. They are learning counting words and counting strategies such as counting down from five. Children are learning to recognise numerals through play with number lines and number lotto games. A majority of children can recognise and name familiar shapes during adult supported activities, for example using cutters to make biscuits. Children are developing some appropriate language to describe size and position, particularly during outdoor play.
 - Children aged three to five years are making satisfactory progress in health and wellbeing. They are kind and show consideration for others in their play. Children are developing their understanding of how to support their own wellbeing through daily routines such as tooth brushing. Children benefit from opportunities to play outdoors. This is helping children develop

physical skills as they balance, climb and run. Children are encouraged to be aware of risks in their play and to begin to think how they can keep themselves and others safe.

- Children make choices in their play and are developing confidence in their playrooms and outdoors. Practitioners recognise children's individual achievements in the nursery. They are developing useful approaches to sharing learning with families. As planned, practitioners should develop this further. There is scope to increase opportunities for children to contribute effectively to the life of the nursery and wider school community.
- Practitioners treat children and their families with fairness and respect. They understand the challenges children and families face, and potential barriers to wellbeing and learning. Practitioners provide appropriate additional support to secure positive outcomes for children. Further improvement to assessment and tracking will ensure increasingly accurate evaluations of children's progress over time. This will enable senior leaders and practitioners to measure the impact of interventions to ensure equity and make decisions about future development.

Choice of QI 3.3: Developing creativity and skills for life and learning

- Developing creativity
- Developing skills for life and learning
- Developing digital skills

- The nursery team have worked to improve the learning environment of the playrooms and outdoor area. They have made a positive start by increasing the range of open-ended and natural resources throughout. Positive changes to the routine and structure of the session mean that children have increased time and space to begin to develop their curiosity and imagination. Outdoor experiences already provide good opportunities for children to build on their ideas and to develop projects over time. Practitioners now need to focus on how experiences and interactions consistently engage children in rich, creative learning opportunities. As a team, practitioners should continue to develop their shared understanding of what creativity means for children in St Serf's nursery class.
- Practitioners listen carefully to children's ideas and, in the best examples, use discussion and interaction well to encourage children to explore their ideas. Overall, children now need increased opportunities to lead their learning, make connections, apply skills and reflect meaningfully on their learning.
- The team recognise when individual children need more support to stay on task or are moving too frequently between activities in their free play. Children enjoy accessing their local community to enhance their learning. Regular visits to the local library and recent work with a nearby home for older people offer new contexts where children can extend their skills. Children should be helped to make useful links between skills they are developing at home, in the community, and in nursery.
- Children are becoming familiar with a range of digital resources. They are beginning to use these to enhance aspects of their learning. There is significant scope to develop this further. Looking forward, practitioners should develop a clear rationale for supporting children's skills in using and exploring digital technologies. This will support children to enhance, deepen and personalise their learning across the curriculum.

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.