

Summarised inspection findings

Whitecraig Primary School Nursery Class

East Lothian Council

5 November 2019

Key contextual information

Whitecraig Primary School nursery class provides early learning and childcare for children aged from three years. The nursery has one playroom with access to an enclosed outdoor play area. Children use the school grounds for additional physical play and woodland experiences. There has been significant change to the composition of the nursery team since May 2018. The nursery offers morning or afternoon sessions with no full day places. Prior to August 2018 the nursery provided morning sessions only.

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 teaching
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- Children are happy, settled, and enjoy their time in nursery. They are familiar with routines and make choices from available resources in the playroom and outdoors. The new nursery team are committed to achieving best possible outcomes for children and families. They have made positive progress in improving partnership work, nursery routines, and outdoor learning environments for children.
- Outdoor experiences support children to develop their curiosity and creativity through play with loose parts, and natural materials. As planned, practitioners should build on this to provide increasing opportunities for children to experience depth and challenge in their learning when playing outdoors. They should also continue to improve playroom experiences to provide high quality learning contexts for all children. Senior leaders in the school need to support further improvement to learning and teaching approaches through effective leadership and direction, alongside robust monitoring and planning.
- Children are beginning to make use of digital tools, using an interactive whiteboard to find some information of interest. They have made use of online maps and interactive media to help explore their local area, identifying their homes. Practitioners should continue to develop this, to enable children to explore a wide range of digital resources to extend their learning.
- Practitioners understand the importance of relationships in supporting children's early learning. They are effective in using sensitive interactions to encourage children to begin to share their play and resolve disagreements. This helps children sustain their engagement in play and learning. Group times are not yet consistently effective in supporting children to extend their thinking and develop good listening and talking skills.
- Practitioners are in the process of improving approaches to planning to enable children's ideas and interests to inform and shape experiences and environments. As discussed, the nursery team now need support to improve their use of assessment to inform effective planning. This will enhance personalisation and challenge in learning, and enable practitioners to support children to make best possible progress.

- Floor books are starting to provide contexts for adults and children to engage in purposeful conversations about shared interests. Practitioners should build on this and their use of children's individual learning journals. They should encourage children to explore possibilities and begin to plan and evaluate their experiences. This will help children develop language to talk about learning, and build their sense of themselves as successful leaders of learning.
- Practitioners are working to inform parents about the learning happening in the nursery through 'Sharing the learning' sessions and daily conversations. They have just begun to explore the potential of using simple learning goals with children who attend in the afternoon. They should extend this work and involve families as much as possible in planning and recognising children's achievements and successes in learning.
- The recently appointed early intervention advisor tracks the progress of children identified as needing additional support with their learning. This is at an early stage of development. The nursery team have identified the need to develop effective approaches to track and monitor progress. This will enable them to support children to make best possible progress in learning.

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

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

- Approaches to assessment, tracking and monitoring do not provide a clear picture of children's progress in learning over time. As a result, practitioners are not yet able to build on children's progress effectively enough. Overall, children are making satisfactory progress in their learning. However, there is significant scope to improve approaches to support skills development and secure children's progress across key aspects of early learning. This will ensure children make the progress they are capable of, and develop and apply their literacy and numeracy skills more fully, across learning.
- Most children are making satisfactory progress in health and wellbeing. A positive focus on wellbeing is helping children develop self-regulation skills. We discussed how practitioners could make more use of the school grounds to develop children's physical skills further through challenging, adventurous play. Most children are developing fine motor skills using tools and a range of construction materials. They are learning about the importance of caring for their teeth and hygiene in keeping well. Practitioners need to ensure that learning experiences and snack choices support children to develop their awareness of healthy eating consistently and well.
- Most children are beginning to develop vocabulary and confidence to share ideas and talk about their play. There is scope to develop further children's awareness of sounds and patterns in spoken language through an increased focus on songs and rhymes. Most children enjoy sharing stories with adults. A few children engage with books independently. The majority of older children are beginning to write their own names, they enjoy taking turns writing the snack menu. Children should now be supported to develop their early writing skills further in meaningful contexts. The nursery team now need to develop their use of story, and support children to make and use a wide range of non-fiction texts in play and meaningful contexts.
- Most children are becoming aware of numbers and early counting routines. A few children are more confident in counting. The majority of children are developing some appropriate language to describe position and size, for example when playing with loose parts. Practitioners need to provide more and better opportunities for children to develop numeracy and mathematical skills through play and challenging problem solving experiences.
- Practitioners celebrate children's achievements in nursery through praise and 'Star of the Week' awards. They should continue to explore creative ways to gather information about children's achievements beyond the nursery. This will enable them to build on what children have already achieved and learned, and help engage families in learning.

- Practitioners know children and families well. They are developing a good understanding of the challenges in the local community. The early intervention advisor is developing useful links with agencies and groups in the community to enhance support for children and families. This is beginning to have a positive impact on outcomes. Senior leaders need to improve tracking and monitoring to evaluate impact and inform future interventions to promote equity. They need to continue to improve planning for children who require additional support with learning.

Other relevant evidence

- Transitions arrangements help ensure parents and children get to know about primary one before children make the move. Practitioners need to work more closely with teachers in primary one to develop a shared understanding of high quality early learning and teaching. Moderation activities will support practitioners and teachers to develop appropriate, increased expectations of children's learning across the early level curriculum.
- The staff team in the nursery work well to improve outcomes and experiences for children in the nursery class. However, as a matter of urgency, there is a need for whole school strategic approach to improving learning, teaching and assessment that includes the nursery class.

1. Quality of care and support

A strength in the setting was the nurturing staff team who fully understood the need for children to feel valued, loved and secure. This created a caring and friendly environment. Children were friendly towards us and confidently told us about and showed us around the environment.

The staff team had been developing their approach to improve partnership working with parents. Parents spoke highly and were appreciative of the opportunity to be involved in their child's nursery experience for example, during stay and play sessions.

Staff had recently completed personal plan forms for children and were in the process of developing a tracking system. We discussed that new personal plan formats needed to be established to ensure meaningful six-monthly reviews were being carried out with parents and children. Furthermore, staff need to ensure that observations and next steps reflect children's progress to inform their assessments of learning. Staff should consider the wellbeing indicators when planning children's care and support. Children would benefit from staff attending training on tracking progress, writing of observations and plans for play. See recommendation one.

Whilst we acknowledged that staff knew children well, strategies for children with additional support needs were not always recorded. The nursery team should work closely with the support for learning teacher and any other agencies to better record, implement and evaluate strategies. This would help support them to measure whether strategies were meeting needs and enabling children to reach their full potential. See recommendation two.

The snack experience was unhurried, relaxed and provided opportunities for children to be involved in menu planning and preparation. Staff need to be mindful of children's need for choice and best practice around nutrition when planning snacks.

Being part of the community was important to the setting and children benefited from the relationships that had been built with other generations within the local community. We felt that children's health and wellbeing could be further enhanced by making better use of the school grounds to experience outdoor play in a natural setting.

Care Inspectorate grade: adequate

2. Quality of environment

Not assessed

3. Quality of staffing

Staff knew children well as individuals and respected each child's unique personality. Children engaged confidently with staff, inviting them into their play and enjoying conversations together. Staff promoted an ethos of inclusion for both children and parents. Children benefited from staff working well together to create an ethos of respect. Communication was a strength in the nursery team ensuring that children experienced continuity of care.

Whilst we recognised the work staff had already undertaken, staff would benefit from support to further develop their skills in promoting high order thinking. This would further promote children's creative and critical thinking about their learning.

Staff were supportive of children's ideas and interests. This was evidenced through interactions and in floor books where we saw examples of staff taking forward children's ideas. However, staff now need to review the nursery routines. This was of particular need in the afternoon session where the routine impacted on children's experiences as they were involved in a group activity that was not of benefit to their play or learning. Staff need to ensure children can be immersed in and direct their own play and learning.

Staff actively sought opportunities to visit other settings to improve their practice. Self-evaluation was beginning to evolve, and we could see that some areas of improvement identified during the inspection were beginning to be highlighted through this work, for example the nursery environment. However, further work was needed to ensure children were able to freely access a wide range of experiences and resources to stimulate their natural curiosity, learning and creativity.

Staff were reflective of their practice and demonstrated enthusiasm and commitment. It was clear they were keen to improve experiences and outcomes for children. To help drive improvements and ensure they are sustained, staff needed to have support from the headteacher through professional development, self-evaluation and quality assurance processes. See recommendation three.

Care Inspectorate grade: adequate

4. Quality of management and leadership

Not assessed

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the setting had no requirements and no recommendations. As a result of this inspection, there are no requirements and three recommendations.

Recommendations

- To effectively support, develop and track children's learning, the service should improve the way in which observations and next steps are recorded within children's learning stories. This should result in records containing meaningful observations and that are specific to the learning intention. This is to ensure that the care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state, 'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.14) and 'My needs as agreed in my personal plan, are fully met, and my wishes and choices are respected' (HSCS 1.23).
- To effectively meet children's needs, clear plans should be kept on strategies used to support children who require additional support. This will help to ensure children receive the right care to help them reach their full potential. This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state, 'My care and support meets my needs and is right for me' (HSCS 1.19).
- To drive improvements and ensure they are sustained, the headteacher should develop and implement a robust system of professional development reviews, self-evaluation and quality assurance processes. This is to ensure that staffing is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state, 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes (HSCS 4.19) and 'I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed' (HSCS 4.23).

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.