

Summarised inspection findings

Mattocks Primary School Nursery Class

Angus Council

21 August 2018

Key contextual information

Mattocks Primary School nursery class is located in a freestanding building in the grounds of Mattocks Primary School. Mattocks Primary School has 73 children in the primary at the time of the inspection. The early learning and childcare class has a single playroom with direct access to the outdoor garden and a shared 'field' which both early learning and childcare and primary children use. Both outdoor spaces are secure and well provided with natural materials. Ten children attend morning and afternoon sessions. Pre-school children attend morning sessions. Ante-preschool attend afternoon. For much of the time a single practitioner is responsible for the care of children. This places limitations on children's freedom to choose to learn outdoors.

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

- Practitioners demonstrate strong commitment to the very appropriate values of the setting in all aspects of their work with children and families. Their commitment to the promotion of their values of positive relationships, love, laughter and active learning is evident in children's interactions and throughout the life of the setting. A similarly strong commitment to professional partnerships underpins effective transitions. This benefits children during their time in the setting, and as they move to primary. As planned, senior leaders should align the vision of the school and setting.
- There is a culture of positive change which is led at an appropriate pace. Practitioners know children and families very well. They have high expectations of children and are strongly committed to further developing play-based approaches to early learning pedagogy. Practitioners work with families to ensure high standards for all children. They are reflective about their work and strive to continually improve their practice. Change is informed by professional dialogue and current research on early learning and childcare.
- An appropriate improvement plan reflects the setting's self-evaluation and local and national improvement priorities. This is leading to improvement for children and families. For example, by helping build a shared vocabulary to enable children and practitioners think and talk about learning in more depth. Senior leaders should now take forward plans to incorporate the setting improvement plan more fully in the wider school plan. Recent improvements to approaches to self-evaluation should now be developed further with the support of senior leaders.
- Children are consulted and involved in improving the learning environment. For example in designing an indoor garden. There is scope to develop this further. Parent's views are sought and acted on. Practitioners should now continue to develop creative and imaginative approaches to involve children and families more fully in all aspects of the improvement process of the setting. Senior leaders should continue to develop more focused approaches to evaluate the impact of change. In doing so, they should ensure tracking and monitoring capture a full picture of the progress of children during their time in the setting.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very 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

- Children greatly enjoy their learning. They are warmly welcomed and confident in the setting. Children lead their own learning very well through the choices they make and the interests they develop over time. They ask good questions and build on each other's ideas and suggestions very well. Children make very creative use of imaginative play to extend their thinking.
- Creativity is at the heart of learning in the setting. The learning environment is rich and children feel at home in learning spaces indoors and out. They confidently ask for assistance when they need to. Children are motivated and engaged in their free play. Younger children have the freedom to explore and discover for themselves the potential of the wide range of open-ended materials available. Older children demonstrate focused and sustained episodes of rich, imaginative play. They are developing confidence in talking about learning through discussion of a range of learning dispositions.
- Children are independent and are developing good self-regulation skills. They are responsible and tidy up very well, willingly lending a hand in keeping the setting orderly and tidy. Children vote to make decisions about their play. As a result, they are developing a very good understanding of the importance of cooperating and working together to make the best use of opportunities for learning in the setting.
- Children enjoy high quality outdoor play every day. Staffing constraints mean that children's outdoors experiences are sometimes interrupted. This is very well managed to minimise the impact on children's play and learning.
- Interactions are very positive and encouraging. Practitioners are mindful of the individual interests and concerns of each child. When needed, they sensitively support individuals. There is a very effective balance of child-initiated and adult supported learning. Planning is based firmly on play and extends children's individual interest very well.
- Practitioners very effectively encourage children to develop their ideas. We observed how children are supported to develop their thinking about topics of interest over a number of days, sharing their knowledge with peers from primary one. Practitioners support children's learning through well-judged questioning and shared reading of a range of texts, including online information texts.
- Practitioners know children very well. Useful observations support them in creating an accurate picture of children's responses to learning experiences. Learning journals capture

children's wellbeing and skills for learning and life very effectively. Comments, samples of work and photographs document significant features of each child's learning journey. Along with senior leaders, practitioners should continue with plans to review learning journals to ensure they capture a more complete picture of learning across the curriculum.

- Practitioners monitor and track children's progress through their learning journals. This useful approach should be developed further to identify progress across all key aspects of early learning more clearly.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning pathways

- The curriculum is based on high quality play and offers motivating and engaging opportunities for learning. It is highly responsive to children's interests and needs and builds very well on what children have already learned. Practitioners make effective use of the experiences and outcomes from Curriculum for Excellence, recording progress in children's profiles. This should be developed further to ensure a more holistic account of each child's learning across key aspects of early learning.
- Literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing are promoted and developed well through a good balance of child-initiated and adult supported experiences. There is scope to give early literacy and numeracy a higher profile in play outdoors. Practitioners should continue to develop opportunities for children to explore a broad range of challenging mathematical experiences indoors and out. There is scope to continue to explore the use of digital technologies to extend children's learning
- The setting benefits from very well planned learning spaces. Children enjoy daily access to high quality outdoor learning. Very effective use is made of outdoor spaces to promote curiosity and problem solving. Constraints of staffing result in repeated interruptions of children's learning. Practitioners manage this very well to ensure minimal impact on children's motivation and engagement in learning.
- Transitions into the setting are flexible and well supported. Parents spoken to during the inspection told us about the seamless transitions to primary one. Children in the setting are made to feel that they are welcome members of the wider school community throughout the session. Extended transition experiences in the early years classroom, playground and dining hall ensure that child are well integrated into the life of the school before moving to primary. Throughout the session children work alongside their early level peers in primary to share their learning. Across stages in the primary, children support their younger peers very well during play in the school play field.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

See choice QI 2.7 below.

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 **very 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

- Strong, respectful relationships underpin all aspects of practice in the setting. Practitioners and senior leaders have successfully created a welcoming and nurturing environment for children and families. As a result, children are very happy and families feel welcome and included in the setting. Parents who spoke to us during the inspection told us that practitioners are very approachable and promptly respond to any expression of concern.
- Practitioners have a sound understanding of the wellbeing indicators of Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC). They ensure all children are supported to feel safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, respected, responsible and included. A range of meaningful experiences are helping to extend children's own understanding of the wellbeing indicators and how these relate to their daily lives. As planned, practitioners should continue to explore these indicators with children. This will support children as they develop confidence in talking about their experiences and feelings. Consideration should now be given to developing children's awareness of the rights of the child as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
- Children know that they are listened to and happily take responsibility for joint decision-making. They are considerate of the needs of their peers and understand why they sometimes need to accept the choices of others. Practitioners are very effective in nurturing a strong sense of community in the setting with every child respected and included.
- Additional support needs are identified and effective strategies are put in place to ensure children are supported to progress in their learning and development. Professional advice and support is accessed where appropriate to enhance the skills of practitioners. Children who face barriers to their learning are supported and included. This is having a positive impact on children's learning and development. The headteacher should now consolidate his understanding of statutory duties as they apply to early learning and childhood practice.
- Children are included in whole school leadership groups including the Eco and Learning Council groups. There is scope for all children to develop further their awareness of how they can be active in taking actions to improve their environment. This will help develop their early leadership skills more fully.

3.2 Securing children's progress

very 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

- Children are making very good progress across their learning. They show high levels of engagement, concentration and perseverance as they explore and play. Children have time to follow their interests and to develop their ideas over an extended period. The good balance of child-initiated and adult-supported learning enables children develop their curiosity, creativity and imagination well. Children are developing their early language skills very well through conversation, imaginative play and opportunities to share learning with more experienced peers. Their understanding of early numeracy and mathematics is developing well as they play with open-ended materials and through daily routines in the setting.
- Children are making very good progress in early communication and language. They listen very well during group activities. Children are developing good turn-taking skills in conversation and are learning to build well on the contributions of their peers. They ask questions to help develop their understanding. Children are helped to extend their vocabulary through thoughtful discussions of the definition of new words. As a result children are confident in expressing their ideas on a range of topics. Children show a very good interest in stories and non-fiction texts. They are confident in making up their own stories and are keen to share these with peers in the setting and in primary one. Practitioners frequently model writing for children using mind maps and labelled displays. Most older children are beginning to experiment with writing their own name. Children have opportunities to explore how they can use texts to get things done. Practitioners could now extend this further by providing additional real-life experiences to enable children to develop and apply their understanding of a wide range of texts in play.
- Children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. They count with skill during the routines of the session and less frequently during play. Children can recognise and name common shapes and are able to use mathematical language appropriately. They are developing their concept of measure and beginning to apply this in their problem solving during loose parts play. There is scope to develop mathematical thinking further by providing regular, relevant opportunities for children to apply their skills in real-life and imaginary contexts. A broader range of mathematical experiences should now be explored.
- Children are progressing very well in health and wellbeing. They cooperate and show a good sense of community. Children talk with increasing confidence about food choices and health and can explain why tooth brushing helps keep their teeth strong. With their peers in primary,

children are developing a shared vocabulary to enable them to reflect on the role of cooperation, perseverance and creativity in their lives and learning. Children have good fine motor control and demonstrate high levels of confidence in energetic physical play in the field and garden.

- Children are developing well across other areas of the curriculum, for example deepening their understanding of the natural processes through their study of the life cycle of butterflies. Their achievements are celebrated well through praise and encouragement. Children's achievements beyond the setting are recorded in learning journals and an achievement board. There is scope to develop this further.

Choice of QI 2.7: Partnerships

- Engagement of parents and carers in the life of the setting
 - The promotion of partnerships
 - Impact on children and families
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- Parents and carers are warmly welcomed in the setting. Their views are sought and acted on. Parents and carers provide useful feedback and suggestions and play an active role in the life of the setting.
 - Parents make valuable contributions to children learning journals. Practitioners could develop this further by involving parents more in supporting children to take their learning forward, for example through setting agreed learning targets for each child.
 - Alongside daily, informal discussions, practitioners have regular useful meetings with parents to update them on the progress their child is making. Parents and carers are kept informed of the progress children are making and of learning in the setting through a range of routes including newsletters, and social media. Formal meetings are arranged twice a year.
 - Book bags, a travelling achievement bear, and shopping assignments are used to involve parents in children's learning beyond the setting.
 - The curriculum is enriched by the contributions of a range of partners in the local community. Practitioners should continue to explore how to provide children with more meaningful opportunities to make links between what they are learning in the setting, and work and employment in the local community.
 - Practitioners have strong and highly effective partnerships with teaching colleagues in the primary school. This is helping to ensure that children experiences very positive transition experiences across the year.
 - Effective professional partnerships, including work with practitioners in the local early learning and childcare cluster, support well-judged improvement to the service.
 - The setting is at an early stage in developing family learning.

Practice worth sharing more widely

Early level learning and strong links between nursery and primary 1/2/ transitions:

The nursery class and primary stages have worked together to develop effective transitions arrangements for children. The main features of the approach include an extended programme beginning in August and running throughout the academic session, and a culture of shared learning involving children in the setting working with peers across the early and start of first level in the school. Children from the setting regularly learn alongside early level primary children, visiting on a weekly basis to participate in active learning sessions. This session, children in the setting and in primary 1/2 have written imaginative stories which they shared with each other, using peer evaluation to provide feedback to writers. Children also collaborate on shared topics of interest, deepening their understanding and sharing what they are learning. During the inspection we saw how children were observing the transition of caterpillars into butterflies, sharing learning in the process. Research carried out by early learning and childcare children meant that they were able to act as experts when reporting back to P1 colleagues.

Children from all stages of the primary play together in a common play field. In this way, the youngest children begin to develop friendships with older, more experienced peers from a very early age. The strong sense of community across age groups contributes to effective transitions.

Explanation of terms of quality

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quality 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.