

Summarised inspection findings

St Francis Xavier's RC Primary School Nursery Class

Falkirk Council

5 March 2019

Key contextual information

St Francis Xavier's RC Primary School and Nursery Class is a large denominational school close to the town centre in Falkirk. At the time of the inspection, the school roll was 424 with the nursery being registered for 40 children in the morning and 40 in the afternoon. The school grounds are extensive, varied and well used. However, many parents expressed concern over the poor fabric of the building.

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 setting has a vision, values and aims in place, which reflects aspects of the provision. The team are committed to supporting children to learn and develop through play. All practitioners are strongly committed to delivering high quality early learning and childcare. They recognise that a refreshed vision, values and aims would support the improvements that have begun this session. This should be developed and shared with children, staff, parents, carers and the community. Once established these should be revisited and reviewed regularly to reflect developments in early learning and childcare and to underpin and inform daily practice.
- Current thinking in early learning and childcare is beginning to be used to develop the work of the setting to support continuous development and improvement. This has included the introduction of a 'huddle' each day when practitioners talk about the observations made of children's ideas and interests. This is having an impact on the responsive planning to engage children in learning. Moving forward the planned management of any changes should include the use of self-evaluation frameworks to monitor and support improvement over time. This should have a clear focus on developing high quality early learning and childcare.
- Leadership across the setting is beginning to develop more fully. The newly formed leadership team take responsibility for cluster and local authority targeted improvements within the setting. This has included work to lead improvements to the learning environment, moderation of quality observations and assessment and recording of children's progress. Plans are in place to continue to develop leadership across the team. Practitioners should become more outward looking to further support self-evaluation and build further capacity for improvement.
- Practitioners report that they are well supported by the leadership team. The leadership team have implemented changes at an appropriate rate to ensure that everyone understands and can implement these changes effectively. A member of the leadership team has responsibility for developing and monitoring the work of the setting, which includes peer monitoring and playroom monitoring. The monitoring calendar should now include a clear focus on the quality of learning and teaching to ensure that children are challenged and make the best possible progress.

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

- There is a respectful ethos and culture where all children are treated and valued as individuals. Practitioners are sensitive to the varying needs of the children attending the setting. This is resulting in children feeling safe and secure and allows them to be increasingly successful and confident in their learning. Most children are motivated and engage well with the range of spontaneous, well-planned and real-life opportunities that capture and sustain their interests. The opportunity to move freely between the indoors and outdoors and weekly visits to the forest is encouraging most children to access a range of experiences. While children have positive experiences in the outdoors and at the forest, there is the potential to investigate and explore the natural environment more frequently. This will support and enrich children's curiosity and enquiry skills.
- Children are consulted in planning for their own learning through the use of talking and thinking floorbooks. Children's interests and ideas are used as a starting point for planning which offers a flexible and responsive approach to the planning process. These approaches are in the initial stages of development. Practitioners should build on existing consultation methods with children to increase further the depth and personalisation of learning. This will enable children to make decisions and actively lead their own learning.
- Practitioners readily engage in conversation with children to talk about experiences and to encourage them to share their thoughts and ideas. Practitioners respond well to children in a consistently warm and caring manner. In the best examples, skilled interactions are used to promote children's thinking and curiosity. This good practice should be shared across the setting. This will help develop consistency in the use of questions and comments to support, challenge and extend children's learning.
- Practitioners know children as learners. They have appropriately high expectations for all children. Practitioners observe children as they play and learn. Key observations and images are documented in individual electronic learning journals that are effectively shared with parents. In order to make these more meaningful for children, practitioners should consider ways to enable children to have greater ownership of their electronic learning journal. This will support them to recognise themselves as learners. Practitioners should continue, as planned, to develop their skills in gathering significant learning observations and identifying next steps in learning.
- Tracking and monitoring of children's learning is at an early stage of development. Practitioners share an understanding of how this will be developed and are engaging in professional learning to ensure that it is well understood across the setting and secures positive outcomes for children.

- Children who are facing additional challenges in their learning are well supported through individualised planning. In discussion with staff, we agreed that this could be recorded more robustly to ensure that progress can be monitored and evaluated.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Overall, children receive a broad balanced range of experiences across the playroom and the outdoor environment. This is based on well-planned play that is responsive to children's interests. Children have free flow access to outdoors. There is scope to provide more opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy outdoors. Arrangements for transition from nursery to P1 are well organised and supportive of children. There is still more work to be done to ensure curricular transitions across the early level. Recent improvements to the playroom layout have improved the breadth of the curriculum, however, there is scope to improve this further.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Staff in the nursery know children and families very well. Electronic learning journals are used to share children's experiences with their families, there is scope to improve the consistency of these journals. Parents add comments to their child's electronic learning journal, this is strengthening the links between home and nursery. Staff have rightly identified parental engagement as an area for development. Home visits and opportunities for parents to learn with their child have been planned as next steps.

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. At the time of the inspection, there were no identified areas for development.

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

- There is a welcoming atmosphere within the nursery and staff have created a climate of mutual respect. Staff know each child and their families well and are attuned to their needs. Children are considered as individuals with unique personalities and interests. Strong relationships with children and families underpin the work of the nursery. This allows staff to provide families with the support they need and to tailor their individual approaches.
- Practitioners model positive behaviour and have appropriately high expectations for children. As a result, children are kind and responsive to each other, and are supported well by staff to share, negotiate and take turns. Children are encouraged to show consideration and develop positive relationships with others. The setting has a strong sense of community where everyone is valued. Parents responding to inspection questionnaires indicated that they feel their child is treated fairly and with respect.
- Practitioners have a shared understanding of wellbeing in the nursery and how they support each child in their development and learning. They encourage children to share their views and opinions and show that they value their voice. Children do not yet have an understanding of the wellbeing indicators. Practitioners now need to work with children to explore what it means to be safe, healthy, active, nurtured, respected, responsible and included and to share this work with parents. There is potential for a deeper exploration of children's rights to ensure a shared understanding across the setting and how this informs planning for children's learning.
- Outdoor learning is making a good contribution to children's sense of wellbeing. They enjoy the freedom, exploration and fun they have in the natural and traditional play areas within the nursery and school grounds. This supports them to develop confidence, resilience and take risks. This has a positive impact on their sense of wellbeing.
- All practitioners actively engage and comply with statutory duties. The leadership team have a well-developed knowledge and understanding of legislative requirements. They are proactive in ensuring that these have a positive impact on children and their families. We discussed with staff ways to develop their personal plans to ensure that children's care, learning and medical needs are met effectively. These should be reviewed regularly to ensure children make the progress they are capable of.
- The setting values and respects the diversity of the children and families they work with by including them in celebrations of cultural festivals and special events that are important to them. Practitioners strive to provide a fully inclusive nursery and plan to engage more families in the life of the setting. It will be important to monitor the strategies used to promote inclusion and equity to ensure that there are no barriers to participation.

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

- Within the setting, there is a strong focus on the health and wellbeing of children in order to support children's development. This is reinforced with a strong emphasis on identifying children who need support. Children are independent in daily routines such as preparing snack and getting dressed to go outdoors. They talk confidently about and understand the importance of safety when using woodwork tools and sharp knives. Children's physical skills are developing well through a range of indoor and outdoor experiences.
- Most children are making good progress in early language. They listen well to stories in their cosy story corner and confidently ask appropriate questions during conversations with adults. Most practitioners interact well with children during free play to extend communication and support children's language development. Practitioners should now think about how writing skills can be a focus through meaningful contexts both indoors and outdoors.
- Most children are making good progress in early numeracy. They count naturally through routines and games. They use mathematical language appropriately as they play to compare size, length, weight and shape of different objects. Real-life contexts, including going to the local shops, children are able to recognise different coins and are becoming aware of the purpose of money. Practitioners now need to continue to support children to develop early numeracy and mathematical skills through real-life contexts.
- Staff are able to articulate the progress children have made in their learning. Electronic learning journals are used to record episodes of learning and experiences. The tracking of children's progress across literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing is not yet sufficiently robust to reflect accurately the progress children are making. As planned, practitioners should continue to develop further their skills in recording high quality observations and identifying clear next steps in learning. This will ensure children can be given the right level of challenge and make the progress they are capable of.
- Children are developing an early understanding of science concepts such as properties of materials through experiences such as baking, making dough and mixing their own paints. This is helping to support the development of skills and attitudes for lifelong learning. Children are developing a good awareness of the natural world and their local community through visits to the forest, exploring the school grounds and walks to the shops and the nearby care home. Staff should maximise the opportunities for children to explore the natural world as a focus for their learning.

- Most children are confident, resilient and are developing independence skills. We discussed with staff, ways to support children more effectively to make choices and decisions about their learning.
- Practitioners capture and celebrate children's achievements from within and out with the setting. Parents are encouraged to contribute to this. They should now continue to build on children's achievements from home to ensure prior learning and skill development are consistently built upon.

1. Quality of care and support

We found warm, caring and compassionate relationships that took account of children's cultures and differences. Celebrating festivals including Chinese New Year and supporting children with barriers to learning including English as an alternative language (EAL) showed families dignity and respect. Staff knew children well responding to their individual needs. In particular they intervened quickly to seek the appropriate support when a child had an additional support need. Children were making good progress as a result.

Transition arrangements nurtured children so they felt safe and secure including when moving from home to nursery or nursery to school. There were opportunities for parents to share information about their children through meetings and children regularly visited the school so they were familiar with staff, routines and the environment. The service planned to introduce home visits for all families prior to children beginning their nursery placement. We would encourage staff to evaluate transitions throughout each session striving to achieve a smooth calm approach.

Personal plans were regularly reviewed and developed taking account of children's changing needs. E-journals were used to share children's experiences with parents who were able to add comments strengthening the link from home to nursery. It was recognised by the service that there was scope to improve the consistency of the content of the journals and the need for children to be included in their development.

Children were having fun benefitting from focused play that was enhanced by the wide range of interesting and challenging opportunities. Play equipment encouraged positive social interactions, creativity and curiosity through for example, well planned role-play areas, the play dough station and the wood bench. This impacted positively on the wellbeing of the children helping them to achieve. The overall flow and pace of the session allowed children to have long uninterrupted sessions of play. This focused play allowed children to engage at a deeper level. A responsive planning model was in the early stages of being introduced in the service aimed at supporting children to achieve through experiences that took account of their interests and preferences. It was recognised that this system needed continued review and development.

Good practice guidance supported the development of healthy eating in the service. Children were included in planning snack menus, were building confidence when preparing snack foods and were developing skills when cooking. A secure and calm dining experience nurtured children who were enjoying the social experience and tasting different healthy foods. We discussed how the service could support children to become more familiar with the language of the wellbeing indicators exploring these through evaluating their experiences.

We found that general practice in the areas of managing medication and recording accidents and incidents were managed well. Staff were aware of their responsibilities to safeguard children in their care and had regular training to refresh their skills and knowledge in the protection of children.

Care Inspectorate grade: good

2. Quality of environment

The environment was relaxed and welcoming providing a nurturing space for children. A balance of organised and freely chosen play including the use of loose parts and natural materials supported children to develop social and physical skills, confidence, self-esteem and creativity. For example, staff were confident supporting children to access a range of risky play experiences including the use of sharp knives when preparing snack and tree climbing in the forest. Children were developing skills assessing and managing their own risk. We discussed ways to maximise the use of the forest to support children's experiences exploring their natural environment including managing free-flow access on a daily basis. Children enjoyed early science experiences including exploring concepts such as sinking and floating when playing in the water and discovering metal objects using the magnets. It was agreed that there was a need to develop a calm, quiet sensory space for children who want some time relaxing on their own or in small groups.

The service used good infection control practices having reflected on good practice including 'Infection Prevention and Control in childcare settings (day care and childminding settings). Children and adults used appropriate practice including the use of hand washing practices to prevent the spread of infection. The service was registered with food standards agency and practised safe food handling practices when preparing snacks and supporting children with cooking activities. Overall, we found that effective practice supported children to be safe, healthy and responsible in the service.

We found that children were protected in a safe and secure environment. Staff were confident when planning risky activities using a risk benefit approach. As a result, children were supported to achieve, to be responsible and to become risk aware. Appropriate safety measures were in place to minimise hazards and meet children's individual needs and stages of development.

Care Inspectorate grade: good

3. Quality of staffing

Staff interacted with children in a respectful nurturing way recognising the emotional benefit and value they could add at opportune times. This contributed to children's emotional wellbeing and confidence. Parents commented positively on the nurturing approach of staff supporting children in the service. Staff understood and supported the individual needs of children providing opportunities for them to develop skills for life. For example, they visited the local shop to buy snack foods learning about money. Children were recognised as capable and responsible and were engaged in their learning as a result. Staff helped children to understand routines and develop their language and communication skills. Their confidence and self-esteem was developing as they received praise and encouragement from staff.

The senior management team have supported staff to reflect on practice through team meetings, visits to other settings, training and professional dialogue. As there have been recent changes in the staff team they should continue to develop a collegiate staff team approach. Meaningful quality assurance systems will support this. Areas for improvement identified by the service included developing improved questioning and more effective use of restorative language in interactions and professional note taking. This would further promote and support inclusion. The senior

management team were in the early stages of working with staff to recognise their interests and skills supporting them to take a lead role in developing aspects of the service. Outdoor learning and parent learning groups were identified by staff as areas they planned to develop.

Care Inspectorate grade: good

4. Quality of management and leadership

The leadership team were committed to improving outcomes for children and families in the setting. Some use of 'RACI' matrix supported the process of discussing, agreeing and communicating roles and responsibilities in taking areas forward. For example, developing the quality of observations to show children's progress and identify next steps. There was a clear focus on building a strong team, addressing areas for improvement and taking the service forward based on a foundation of current thinking, research and current good practice. We would suggest that the management team use a calendar of monitoring that covers all aspects of the service, including staff practice and the quality of children's experiences. This will create a focussed approach to making improvements that will impact positively on children's outcomes.

Management were in the early stages of leading self-evaluation and improvement planning procedures. This was beginning to lead to improvement including the development of the environment. This has supported children to be more engaged in their learning. There was recognition of the need to continue to develop approaches to embed self-evaluation in practice using a range of recognised good practice guidance, tools and standards. This will support staff to look at what they do well, how they can improve and how to take forward changes. It was recognised that encouraging a more collaborative approach to self-evaluation with staff involved in improvement task groups will build confidence and give increased opportunities for distributed leadership and skills development across the team.

Care Inspectorate grade: good

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

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.