

Summarised inspection findings

Auchtermuchty Primary School Nursery Class

Fife Council

29 August 2023

Key contextual information

Auchtermuchty nursery class is part of Auchtermuchty Primary School. The headteacher has responsibility for the management of the nursery. There are two playrooms, one for children under three, and one for children aged from three until they start primary school. The current roll is 36. In January 2023, a change was made to increase the overall number of early learning and childcare (ELC) places. This requires the nursery to have a maximum of 28 children inside at any one time. A programme of forest and community visits alongside use of the garden area facilitates this change. The nursery is open from 9 am until 3 pm.

A full renovation of the nursery is planned for August 2023. This will make necessary improvements to the indoor environment. In recent years, the nursery has experienced significant challenges with staffing. These include turnover of staff, a long-term vacancy, absences over the winter months, and changes to shift patterns from January 2023. Alongside the school, the nursery has experienced frequent changes of leadership. Current support from the local authority includes a peripatetic teacher and a part-time early years development officer who work as part of the wider team.

1.3 Leadership of change

satisfactory

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 have a sound knowledge of the context of their local community. They use this knowledge well to respond to what is important to children and families. Practitioners use the school's refreshed values in a few aspects of their work. The team use 'be safe and be kind' in meaningful ways with children. This helps children begin to gain a developmentally appropriate understanding of a few of the values. Practitioners should use creative strategies to engage new families in exploring the vision, values and aims. This should support all children and families to have ownership of the vision and values.
- The headteacher is supportive of the work of the nursery team. Practitioners meet with the headteacher regularly to discuss children's progress, improve communication within the team, and agree improvements. The early years development officer and peripatetic teacher provide valuable support to inform and implement self-evaluation activities. Recently, the team have worked together to make initial improvements to the layout of the playroom. Practitioners collaborate well with children to improve outdoor spaces. The team have adapted routines to increase the frequency of visits to the forest. Practitioners are motivated by the initial positive changes. The team demonstrate an enthusiasm to improve the quality of their work. Overall, many changes are very recent with early signs of positive impact in a few areas. The team would benefit from continued focused support to identify and implement improvements to spaces, experiences, and interactions. This will support children to make improved progress in their learning.

- Practitioners are clear about their 'learning leader' responsibilities. These include increasing parental engagement and improving outdoor learning. Practitioners understand identified improvement priorities. The team use audit tools to begin to identify ways to improve children's early literacy. Children's experiences are beginning to show positive initial signs of improvement. The team should continue to use self-evaluation to identify and inform their leadership of focused areas of improvement. The leadership team should support practitioners to develop their skills and experience of measuring the impact of improvements.
- Practitioners value professional learning opportunities. The team are motivated to develop further their knowledge and skills. Practitioners use local and national guidance to inform initial improvements. The team would benefit from planned, focused individual feedback on the quality of learning and teaching. This should support practitioners to continue to improve their practice. Practitioners would benefit from increased opportunities to look outwards to inform their planned improvements. The team engage in a few useful self-evaluation activities including discussions with children and families. The team need to continue to implement structured, focused self-evaluation to inform the pace of change.

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

- There is a positive and nurturing ethos in the nursery class. As a result, most children feel safe and secure. Practitioners have fostered warm, positive relationships with children and their families. Children are kind and considerate of each other. A few older children support younger children very well. Most children share spaces and resources well. Practitioners use a few of the nursery values to support children to look after each other and the environment. Most children continue to need practitioners to reinforce and model how to take care of the spaces, playroom resources and corridor areas.
- Overall, most children are engaged in their learning. Most children follow their own interests both indoors and outdoors. Practitioners encourage children to lead their own learning. There are a few children who are not yet able to do this for lengthy periods of time and as a result, become disengaged in learning. Senior leaders and practitioners should continue to use national practice guidance, 'Realising the Ambition: Being Me' to ensure children receive an appropriate balance of well planned, adult-led, adult-initiated, and child-led experiences. Older children enjoy accessing an interesting outdoor space throughout their day. Children also benefit from regular visits to a nearby wooded area. Positively, practitioners involve children in planning what they will learn in this area. The team use the local area to increase children's awareness of the world around them. Practitioners should involve children in the planning of these visits to maximise learning opportunities.
- Overall, practitioners have a good understanding of children's particular strengths and development needs. They interact with children in a supportive and unhurried way. The majority of practitioners make effective use of questions and commentary to support and extend children's learning. They value children as independent and capable learners.
- Practitioners make observations of children's learning and development and record these within learning journals. The team include photographs and comments to illustrate children's particular interests and the progress they are making. Children are very proud of their profiles and access these independently to revisit and celebrate previous learning. Practitioners continue to develop their skills in capturing high quality observations. Practitioners are beginning to capture more clearly children's skills in very recent observations. Practitioners are also beginning to become more confident in identifying key next steps in learning for individual children. It will be important that the team evidence clearly when children have overtaken next steps in learning.

- Practitioners plan learning that is both responsive and intentional. They are developing the use of learning walls and floor books which are beginning to make learning more visible. The peripatetic teacher is re-establishing learning conversations with practitioners to identify those children who may require additional support and challenge. Senior leaders and practitioners should continue to develop approaches to track children's progress more effectively.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners provide a play-based, responsive curriculum. They organise the small playroom and outdoor area effectively to enable children to experience learning across different areas of the curriculum. The team make effective use of children's suggestions to shape a few learning contexts. A positive example of this is the exciting and rich outdoor area. Practitioners now need to refer more to the design principles when evaluating blocks of learning and the wider curriculum.
- Practitioners support children and their families well as they start nursery. Practitioners working with children aged under three skilfully help children become settled and secure in their playroom. There is a sensitive, individualised approach to supporting children and their families. The team work closely with families to develop this. P6 buddies are helping children move on to P1. Children share stories, enjoy shared learning, and celebrate events such as Burns day together. Practitioners plan activities jointly with colleagues across the early level using a shared story continued in P1. There is scope for practitioners and school staff to work together more often to ensure children receive improved continuity in their learning when they start in P1.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Practitioners welcome families into the nursery at the beginning and end of the day. The route to enter and leave the building has been changed. The revised route to enter and leave the building now minimises the amount of people situated in the narrow cloakroom. This is helping to ensure a calmer start and end to the session.
- Parents and practitioners discuss valuable information about children’s learning, health needs and interests. The team use a range of approaches to communicate with and provide information to parents. Practitioners share regularly information about children’s experiences using an online platform. Parents review and comment on children’s personal learning journals. The team distribute newsletters and booklets, and use attractive notice boards, and daily conversations to share information about nursery routines and activities. Practitioners should continue to encourage parents to engage with their children’s learning and share achievements from home. This will support the team to inform their planning of spaces and experiences.
- Practitioners offer opportunities for parents to join children in activities in the nursery. This includes parents’ groups for children that are also open to the local community. Practitioners and parents work together well to plan activities for these groups, responding to families’ specific needs and interests. The team foster effective partnerships with the local community. Practitioners should continue to work with all partners to evaluate and celebrate the positive impact these sessions make on children’s development.

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

satisfactory

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

- Children benefit from positive, nurturing relationships with practitioners. Most children are confident in the playroom and outdoors. Children frequently approach practitioners to express their needs or ask for help. They understand adults care about their likes and dislikes. Overall, children's behaviour is positive in line with their age and stage of development.
- Children develop independence skills well as they help cut fruit to prepare a healthy snack or clear their plates after lunch. Practitioners have recently revised lunchtime routines. The majority of children are coping well with this change. A few older children support younger children well to pour milk or clear their plate. Practitioners have recently ordered new cutlery and smaller jugs for children. This will support more children to develop their independence and fine motor skills at lunchtime. The team should continue to monitor and evaluate lunchtime experiences to ensure children enjoy a sociable, healthy lunch experience.
- Practitioners facilitate leadership opportunities for children. Children very much enjoy checking fruit and vegetable orders or taking lunch choices to the school office. Children are becoming familiar with these roles. They are proud to share what their responsibilities are. The team should continue to expand the range of leadership opportunities and support children to identify skills they develop in these roles.
- The team use experiences, routines, and attractive displays to begin to use the language of a few of the national wellbeing indicators in their work. Children share what helps them to be healthier and what they need to do to keep themselves and others safe. Practitioners should continue to support children to explore the full range of wellbeing indicators. This will help children develop a deeper understanding of their own and others' wellbeing. The team should also consider how to include the children's involvement in the local community as part of this work.
- All practitioners are clear about their statutory duties. The team know their roles and responsibilities in relation to keeping children safe and when working with families. Professionals complete a variety of records to ensure children's *needs are documented*. *The team have a clear understanding of these needs*. Practitioners agree strategies with families and other agencies. Senior leaders should continue to monitor carefully the documentation and review of children's personal plans. This will support the team to be clear and confident about the purpose and documentation of different plans in recording children's progress.
- Practitioners plan a few celebrations of cultural events across the year. The team could provide a wider range of experiences and resources to engage children in exploring diversity and rights appropriate to their stage of development. This will help children to develop further an awareness of the world in which they live.

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

Children aged 2-3 years

- Children are confident communicators as they share toys and space with their friends. Children follow simple instructions well, begin to name objects, and use gestures to communicate their needs. Children are determined and curious as they transport materials and help to sweep up sand. The youngest children enjoy the freedom and challenge of their outdoor area as they investigate the properties of water and mud.

Children aged 3-5 years

- The majority of children are making satisfactory progress in communication and early language. They are keen to converse with other children and adults. The majority of children use subject-specific vocabulary appropriately, for example, when they are planting seeds and preparing snack. Children show a keen interest in books and regularly seek out familiar adults to read their chosen texts. A few children identify their favourite books in the nursery and from home. Children would benefit from more planned opportunities to participate in singing and reciting familiar songs and rhymes. The majority of children participate in mark making indoors and outdoors. There are a few examples of strong emergent writing. A few children now require greater challenge to extend their early writing skills.
- Children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. The majority of children are developing an understanding of number through real-life contexts and can recite and order numbers up to 10. A few children are able to identify numbers beyond 10. The majority of children count regularly as they play. A few children identify three-dimensional shapes as they create models with wooden blocks. Children explore measure as they play in the water and use scales for baking. Children need more opportunities to develop their understanding of time, data handling and money in planned learning experiences.
- Children are making good progress in health and wellbeing. They benefit from daily fresh air and vast outdoor areas to develop their physical skills. They run, jump, balance, and ride wheeled toys. Children show confidence exploring the wooded area to find tall trees to climb. They are developing their fine motor skills well in different contexts, such as when threading or using tools at the woodwork area. Most children can describe what being healthy means. They have a developing awareness of the importance of handwashing. They show good levels of independence as they dress for outdoors. Each day a few children are encouraged to take on the role of snack helpers. This promotes their understanding of healthy eating and provides them with real life opportunities to use utensils.

- Information displayed across the playrooms and within children's personal learning journals indicate that most children are making satisfactory progress in learning, with a few children making good progress. Senior leaders now need to support the team to demonstrate children's progress over time more effectively. In doing so, the team should review and develop further their current processes for recording and tracking children's progress.
- Children are proud of their achievements they document in journals and share with their parents. Practitioners encourage parents to share children's achievements and interests from home. They use this information to provide new learning opportunities in the nursery. For example, a few children shared their favourite books from home, which sparked an interest in flowers and planting.
- Practitioners know their children and families well. They are aware of the different challenges families may face and take positive steps to mitigate these. They offer opportunities for children and parents to learn together. Positively, practitioners working in the two to three room also offer these opportunities to families who do not attend the nursery. Practitioners should continue to keep under review how they promote and ensure equity for all.

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.