

Summarised inspection findings

Strathesk Primary School Nursery Class

Midlothian Council

10 September 2024

Key contextual information

Strathesk Nursery Class is an integrated part of Strathesk Primary School in the town of Penicuik, Midlothian. The learning environment includes two playrooms and a quiet room with sensory resources. Children have access to outdoor play spaces and the gym in the school. They have lunch in the school dining room. Currently forty-nine children aged three to the start of primary school are registered with the service. The headteacher has overall responsibility of the setting and delegates the day-to-day management for the nursery class to a deputy headteacher and two senior early years officers. The nursery is staffed by seven practitioners, three of whom recently took up their posts.

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

- Practitioners promote a calm and purposeful ethos within the setting. Relationships with children and families are very positive and this is contributing to children feeling safe, secure and confident within the environment. Practitioners support children to identify their feelings and use strategies effectively to help children to manage their emotions successfully when they meet challenges. Children are well behaved and are kind and caring towards each other as they play.
- Following self-evaluation, practitioners have extended the learning environment, increasing the space for construction, small world and exploration of mathematical concepts. This has had a positive impact on children's engagement in play. Practitioners provide appropriate time, space and support for children to develop their individual interests. This allows children to make decisions about leading their learning and encourages them to be independent. As a result, they are motivated and engaged in their play. Children have free-flow access to a large outdoor play area. Practitioners provide a motivating range of experiences outdoors, including planting, loose parts and role play. While children have access to a breadth of resources indoors and out, they would benefit from opportunities to deepen their learning experiences. For example, through further stimulating provocations and richer resourcing to support creativity.
- Practitioners show a sound understanding of children's emotional needs. Interactions with children are nurturing, responsive and patient. Practitioners intervene sensitively in children's play using questioning and commentary, which extends and develops thinking. This is enabling most children to develop confidence as they achieve success in learning new ideas and skills. Practitioners make effective use of digital technology, for example an interactive whiteboard and digital tablets, to enhance learning opportunities.
- All practitioners make effective observations of children's interests and share and discuss appropriate responses as a team. As a result, planning for learning is highly responsive.

Observations are recorded using online journals and include photographs and descriptions of any significant progress children are making towards learning priorities. Practitioners make positive use of local authority progression pathways to identify these learning priorities. All practitioners are aware of the priorities for each child and take them into account as they plan for learning. Practitioners should now widen the scope of their observations consistently to capture a greater breadth of children's progress and skills across the curriculum. This will enable them to establish clearer links between observation, assessment, and future planning for individuals.

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

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

- Almost all children are making good progress in communication and language. They are keen to talk about their thoughts and ideas and are developing their listening skills well. Children mark-make indoors and out, and most older children are developing their skills in writing their name well. Most children enjoy listening to stories and a few independently access books. Practitioners now need to promote children's interest in books and stories and ensure that all children are accessing high quality story-telling. Children enjoy role-play and experiment with literacy skills as they play, for example mark-making as part of a holiday scenario. Children would benefit from further challenge, such as scribing and sharing their own stories. The majority of children benefit from engaging in literacy-focused group activities. However, practitioners now need to ensure that the group approach is developmentally appropriate for all children taking part. They should also ensure that wider opportunities to enjoy familiar stories and create narrative are part of daily practice.
- Most children are making good progress in mathematics and numeracy. They explore concepts such as pattern and colour through creative play. They use the language of shape, size, and position successfully, for example when comparing heights in the block area or playing with loose parts outside. Children count and explore numbers one to ten as they play, with a few children engaging with larger numbers and showing an interest in writing numerals. Children would benefit from further opportunities to identify and write numbers in meaningful contexts indoors and outside.
- Almost all children are making good progress in health and wellbeing. They are increasingly independent as they follow nursery routines and develop self-help skills. They access resources confidently to develop their ideas. As a result of the respectful approach taken by practitioners, most children are learning to share spaces and resources well. Almost all children develop their physical skills successfully as they challenge themselves to run, balance, jump and climb in the outdoor area and in the school gym.
- Practitioners use local authority progression pathways to track children's progress and identify specific learning priorities. Senior leaders and practitioners focus on monitoring children's progress towards these identified learning priorities. They now need to develop a strategic approach to tracking wider progress over time. This will help ensure that the breadth and depth of children's learning is captured.

- Practitioners display and value children's work, however they recognise that they could do more to celebrate children's achievements. They encourage families to share children's experiences through an online platform. The team should continue to develop further the range of ways children's achievements are captured and used to inform planning.
- Practitioners have built positive and trusting relationships with families, allowing them to respond well to children and their individual needs. Practitioners take account of any barriers to learning that exist and put interventions in place where additional support is needed. This helps to ensure that all children make appropriate progress from prior learning. The team is aware of the financial pressures that families may be experiencing, offering support sensitively where needed.

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.