

Summarised inspection findings

St Joseph's Primary School Nursery Class

West Lothian Council

23 April 2024

Key contextual information

St Joseph's Nursery Class is part of St Joseph's Primary School in Whitburn, West Lothian. The setting has one large playroom, a large outdoor area and access to the wider school building and grounds. Children attend from Whitburn and surrounding areas. Children receive their entitlement to 1140 hours of early learning and childcare (ELC) attending Monday to Thursday between 8.30 am to 4.00 pm, termtime. The setting is registered for 30 children aged from three, to those not yet attending school. At the time of inspection, the setting had 26 children on the roll. The majority of children attending live in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) quintiles one to three.

An early years officer works with three practitioners and is responsible for the day to day running of the playroom. The team was established in August 2022 with most practitioners being new to the setting. The depute head teacher has delegated responsibility for the nursery and is supported by the visiting Early Learning and Childcare Area Support Manager.

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

- Relationships are very positive between practitioners and children. As a result, children are happy, very settled and engaged in their learning. Practitioners have created an ethos that is underpinned by children's rights and demonstrates a commitment to respecting the views of children. Children are developing friendship groups and almost all play well together in interesting, and relevant learning experiences. Almost all children sustain engagement in learning across the attractive and well-resourced indoor and outdoor environments. Practitioners motivate and support children to learn at their individual stage of development with a focus on developing their confidence and independence. They enhance and extend children's learning well by using the wider community as a rich context for learning.
- Practitioners have extensive knowledge of the children in their care. They know them as individuals, as learners, and as part of their family unit. They have worked hard as a new team to develop their pedagogy to provide high quality early learning and childcare. They are enthusiastic to continue to develop and improve in order to ensure the best possible outcomes for children. Practitioners' interactions with children are responsive, calm, nurturing and respectful. Most practitioners are skilful in using questioning to extend children's learning. Children have time and space to follow their interests with interested adults supporting them. They make use of a range of digital technology, for example tablet computers and an interactive board. Practitioners should continue to develop children's skills in using digital technology in creative and purposeful ways.
- Practitioners make careful observations of children as they play and discuss this as a team. They record selected information in attractive floor books and on an online platform to assess what children know and can do. They share this with parents online and parents contribute to

them. Practitioners could make greater use of the online platform to create an individual learning story for each child. They could help children reflect on their learning more. Practitioners use their observations as valuable assessment information to ensure they recognise what children need to learn next. This includes where children need support or challenge to help them make the best possible progress.

- Practitioners plan learning through an effective blend of being highly responsive to children's interests and offering more focused, adult-initiated learning. They track children's learning carefully through gathering and evaluating a range of information. As a team, and with senior leaders, they engage in professional dialogue to support and challenge each other about what this information tells them. This helps them plan and deliver experiences and interventions that help all children make strong progress in their learning, for example, developing a varied range of vocabulary.

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

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 in early language and communication from their individual developmental stage. Almost all children listen well to instructions and enjoy stories being read to them, including at the local library. They understand how to be part of an audience. Most children are developing their understanding of a wide range of vocabulary. Children are familiar with a range of texts and rhymes. Most children recognise their name in print and the majority recognise names of letters and the associated sound. Almost all children show interest in mark making in different contexts, including outdoors. Most children are developing detail in their drawings. Children who are developmentally ready are beginning to identify syllables through play experiences.
- Most children are making very good progress in mathematics and numeracy. They use number and a range of mathematical language with confidence and apply their understanding in routines and play. Children enjoy exploring measurement in stimulating experiences linked to their interests. Practitioners have introduced a focus on properties of two-dimensional shape and three-dimensional objects. As a result, children are beginning to identify properties and differences as they explore them in their play.
- Almost all children are making very good progress in health and wellbeing. They have a well-developed understanding of expectations and awareness of themselves as individuals. Children recognise different emotions and related facial expressions. This is helping them regulate their own emotions. Almost all children understand how to keep themselves safe. They demonstrate this during outings, as they challenge themselves physically, follow rules, and use a range of tools.
- Almost all children are making very good progress in their learning over time because of their nursery experiences. Children are developing independence and resilience through being encouraged to persevere and problem solve when they find things difficult. As a result, they are developing skills and attitudes to be successful learners. Practitioners' in-depth knowledge of children and their use of assessment information ensures that they identify potential barriers to children's learning. Evidence demonstrates that this is helping reduce any potential gap in outcomes for children and having a very positive impact on children's progress.
- Practitioners recognise and celebrate children's achievements in natural and meaningful ways. This supports children's wellbeing and builds their self-esteem. Practitioners should continue to encourage families to share achievements and milestones from home. Children contribute to

the life of the setting and local community in a range of ways. They enjoy being responsible for setting the dining hall for lunch and learning about donating through visiting a local foodbank and collecting for charity shops. Practitioners could track children's achievements to help demonstrate the range of skills they have gained.

- Senior leaders and practitioners actively promote equity for all and have high aspirations for children. They have extensive knowledge of the local community, including differing cultural, socio-economic and linguistic backgrounds of children. They use this, with assessment data to identify, and effectively reduce any barriers to learning. In a few cases, this helps children make accelerated progress. Senior leaders and practitioners should continue to develop the creative use of all available information and data to impact positively on the progress children make.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children were nurtured and supported throughout their daily experiences through kind and familiar relationships with the staff who cared for them. Children's feelings and cues were recognised and used to provide respectful and responsive care. Opportunities were threaded throughout the day to support children to consider and understand how they, and others were feeling. For example, feelings check in on arrival to the service. Achievements were celebrated through praise and recognition. As a result, children were relaxed, confident and secure.

The personal planning approach was effectively used to gather valuable information about individual children. Plans were regularly reviewed with children and families to keep staff informed about children's current needs, preferences, and interests. Support plans were consistently used to support children's health and wellbeing needs. When appropriate this was done in partnership with agencies working with the child and family. This helped staff to provide the right support at the right time for children to make very good progress in these aspects of development. For example, one child had a settling in chart to help them to overcome their challenge of separating from their parents on arrival. This chart offered choices such as, a hug, or a story, to help them to feel happier.

Snack and mealtimes experiences were sociable, unhurried, and relaxed. Staff recognised these times as rich opportunities to promote close attachments with children. Food choices were nutritious and were right for children's individual cultural and dietary needs. Healthy alternatives were given when children did not like what was on offer, and staff ensured that children were given enough food throughout the day. For example, when children had not eaten their lunch, they were provided with a more substantial afternoon snack. Supportive staff sat with children and role modelled good table manners, encouraging them to try the healthy food options available. This highly responsive approach supported children to develop healthy eating habits; whilst self-service opportunities helped children to practise lifelong learning skills.

Staff were knowledgeable about children's individual health and medication requirements. Effective management of medication meant that children's health needs were consistently supported. Children's safety, emotional security and wellbeing could be further supported through the provision of a cosier, nurturing space within the playroom for children to be able to relax.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

1.3 Play and learning

Children experienced a rich environment that empowered them to steer their own learning. Various approaches were used to promote children's developing language, numeracy, and literacy skills. Examples included using the word boost programme to expose children to more interesting words to help develop their vocabulary. Outdoor play opportunities were embedded in daily practice, and effective use of the community enabled children to embrace and appreciate belonging and contributing to community life.

Staff regularly encouraged parents to join groups to engage in their children's learning. Parent groups helped them to build on existing skills to support their child's learning at home. Home learning links had been introduced to include families in learning experiences which linked to current opportunities within the nursery. For example, shape finding activities to help children to continue to practise and revisit their learning with parents at home.

Children's choices were respected as they engaged in a healthy balance of child led and adult facilitated activities. Most of the daily routine ensured that children were able to direct their play and learning without interruptions from an adult agenda, allowing continuity in their play to extend thinking. However, there was a period of time when outside remained closed to accommodate staffing arrangements. Staff could consider solutions to ensure that children can independently choose where to play and when.

Staff actively listened to children and extended their learning in a way that was meaningful and valued the child's voice. An example of this was when a child was playing outdoors with sticks and suggested making a fire, which was facilitated by the staff member. Staff were skilled in consulting with children to establish what they knew and what they would like to find out. This approach to child centred planning contributed to children recognising that their views mattered.

Observations and skilled interactions enabled staff to respond and plan appropriately to meet children's individual needs, including additional supports where needed. Plans were in place to improve recording of significant learning and consideration of next steps in learning to capture individual children's learning. Next steps in learning should enhance opportunities for children to be consistently challenged as they learn through play.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The nursery was a highly valued and included part of the school community. Management and staff were extremely invested in the continuous improvement of the service. Staff were encouraged to reflect on their practice and were confident in making changes needed to improve outcomes for children. Children's views were looked for and used to inform the development of the service. This helped children to feel included and to know that their opinion mattered. As a result, children were being given very good opportunities to progress in their learning.

National best practice guidance was used as self-evaluation tools to monitor the quality of the service. This meant that children and families benefited from a service that had developed a culture of continuous improvement.

Staff were embedding a self-evaluation approach to help them to reflect on and make improvements to experiences and outcomes for children. As a result, the service had made several improvements, including introducing approaches to enable children to develop their senses, curiosity, and appreciation for the world.

The management team had identified gaps and further areas for improvement, which were being actioned in the improvement plan. This included enhancing staff skills in recording where children were in their learning and possible next steps to support children to progress at a very good pace. Similarly, a priority was to improve opportunities for families' views to be actively sought to inform the development of the setting. This would show that improvement planning was considered in meaningful partnership with families.

The improvement plan was regularly monitored alongside other aspects of the service to ensure progress of planned developments. Staff could confidently talk about improvement priorities. They were highly committed to leading such priorities to improve the quality of service, for example developing the outdoor learning space.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: very good

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.